

THE USE OF MOBILE PHONES ON CAMPUS: A READJUSTMENT FOR FUNCTIONALITY AND SELF-RELIANCE

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Abstract

The use of Mobile Phones popularly called GSM on campus is adequately viable and necessary. In as much as it is necessary, there have adverse effect on the students, who in their ignorance, use the mobile phones to their detriment. Such effect include, spending all day singing and dancing, absenting from lectures, spending no time in libraries, engaging in examination malpractices, spending school fees on the purchase of expensive phones, engaging in armed robbery and prostitution to buy expensive phones, lack of interest in the purchase of textbooks. In the light of these, the paper suggests the following for functionality and self-reliance: Students should not be allowed to take their mobile phones to the campus, no use of phones in all examination halls, no use of phones in lecture halls.

Introduction

GSM is an acronym for Global System for Mobile Communication which is the most widely accepted standard for digital cellular communications (David, 2006).

This medium of communication is widely accepted by all and sundry, in every human society. As a result, this means of communication is very much accepted in the Nigerian school system - in the primary, post-primary and in the tertiary institutions. Restriction is not accrued to any individual, in as much as the individual is capable of purchasing this means of communication. Therefore, the student at the tertiary level tend to use this medium of communication to their detriment or use it against the standard set out for the Nigerian institutions which now constitutes a part of the examination malpractices in most of our Nigerian tertiary institutions.

According to Inyang, (2005), examination malpractice, otherwise known as examination fraud, refers to any illegal act of examiners, examinees or both before, during or after the examination with the intent to make the examinee earn an unmerited grade or gain an undue advantage over others.

Inyang, further highlighted the forms and types of examination malpractices which include pre-examination stage malpractice, malpractice during examination and post-examination stage malpractice. He explained that each form is accompanied with many types of examination malpractices depending on the method of perpetration.

Inyang enumerated the different types of pre-examination stage malpractice to include: registration of illegal candidates, inflated centre quota, impersonation, sitting arrangement and relocation.

Also, Akinade, (1989) listed other types of pre-examination malpractice to include bullets/missiles, super-print, and body writing. Inyang (2005) and Akinade (1989) postulated types of malpractices during examination to include leakages of examination questions, purchase of examination answer scripts, direct contracting, examination tutorial sure banks (ETSB), grafting, dubbing, exchange of question paper, exchange of answer scripts, ECOWAS (or ECOMOG/OAU), network exchange, cooperate settlement, stamp method etc.

Inyang further gave post-examination stage of malpractice to include: delay sealing, substitution, computer manipulation script tracing, tracing candidates and gifts.

All these forms of examination malpractices are true, but are traceable to the National Examinations such as WAEC and

NECO and are not often prevalent in the higher institution of learning and JAMB Examination. The most current and prevalent form of examination malpractice is that which is traceable to the use of mobile phones in the perpetuation of malpractice. For instance in the April 17, 2010 JAMB Examination, students used mobile phones in collecting answers which are most often in Alphabets. Therefore, the JAMB officials themselves are involved in the circulation of JAMB examination questions and answers which they themselves sale to candidates all over the country. In the same vein, mobile phones are used by the students to copy expected answers to questions into the system, which they unfold during the examination to copy into their answer scripts. Some students claimed they use it (Mobile phones) to download the major points which they claim they interpreted in the main examination.

In the light of these Etuk and Ogwola (2008), stated that generally, examination malpractices nowadays assumes many different ways than the types under the three forms classified above. Also, the Founder and Executive Chairman of the Examination Ethics Project (EEP), a Non-Governmental Organization leading 'War' Against Examination Malpractices in the country revealed that thirty-three types of examination malpractices are today in vogue as the phenomenon has become a multi-billion naira business. (Olubusuyi, 2004).

In the light of the above, the paper recommends that mobile phones should not be used by students in the classroom, especially in the examination hall. This is because the use of mobile phones in the classroom constitutes a menace in the lecture hall, constitute another form of examination malpractice as well as steals the students' time, thereby depriving them from studying, going to the library, etc. In the end, they spend all day listening to music as well as dancing all the time.

History of GSM and Its Advent in Nigeria

GSM is an acronym for Global System for Mobile Communication (derived from Groupe Spacial Mobile) which is the most widely accepted standard for digital cellular communications. Even though the idea of a cell based radio communication system originated at the Bell Labs in the early 1970s, the idea was not implemented until mobile communication systems experienced a rapid growth in Europe, particularly in United Kingdom and Scandinavia. (David, 2006).

In the early 1980s when the initial growth of cellular phones was just starting in Europe, a need was felt to have a uniform standard for mobile phones that could be used in different regions. To overcome the problems posed by the rapid growth of mobile phones, the Groupe Spacial Mobile (GSM) was formed by the Conference of European Posts and Telecommunications (CEPT). The GSM had to meet the following criteria:

- Spectrum
- Smooth International roaming
- cheaper mobile phones
- enhanced voice quality
- compatible with ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) and other systems ability to provide new services.

CEPT passed the responsibility for the GSM specifications in 1989 to European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI). GSM's main aim is to describe the functionality and the interface for each component of the system and to give guidance on the design of the system. Even though, the phase I of the GSM specifications were published in 1990, the commercial use of GSM didn't start until 1991 (David, 2006).

Today, GSM is not just of European standard; GSM networks are operational in more than 80 countries around the world. The number

of GSM subscribers is increasingly at exponential rate.

The use of GSM phone in Nigeria started in the late 90s. At the earliest time, it was found in the hands of the political elites and in the early 2000 MTN introduced the product into the Nigerian market and it started mostly in Lagos and Abuja at very expensive prices and was patronized only by few who could afford it. Later it spread to other parts of the country, subsequently, ECONET – today known as ZAIN introduced their product thereby making the use of mobile phones a little bit affordable to the masses.

Later GLO network came with their product. At this point, there was competition in the market thereby, giving way to price fall in the GSM market. Today, many Nigerians can afford to have at least one GSM phone. Today, also there are many other GSM networks like STARCOM, ETIZALAT, etc.

The Effect of Mobile Phones on the Students in the Tertiary Institution

GSM (Global System for Mobile Communication) is the most acceptable means of communication, accepted by all and sundry. As much as it is accepted and easiest means of communication, it also poses serious problem to the student in the tertiary institution, which also constitutes part of examination malpractice.

These include:

The use of mobile phones especially camera phone, (one which has ability to store picture and video and audio information), for pornographic exploration while in the lecture hall, one can easily imagine what would happen if this goes on while lectures are on, the student lost interest in the lesson and focuses his/her attention only on having sexual intercourse.

Again, it is easily noticed in various campuses that students spend endless time listening to music, dancing and watching movies

while on campus. This precious time could have been used in studying in the library. This is why today, many students prefer to copy assignment from friends.

Moreso, students prefers to have the most expensive phones, thus, money meant for school fees, textbooks are diverted to buying expensive handsets. Mobile phones today, have sent many students into engaging in armed robbery and the female students engaging in prostitution.

The worst part of it is that many students today see mobile phone as the easiest and simplest way of carrying out examination malpractice without being caught. This actually works against the achievement of educational development and therefore, the use of GSM mobile phones on campus must be addressed by the school authorities and stakeholders in education to achieve effective and functional education.

This is necessary because Nigeria since her Independence has become more aware of the need to achieve her education to meet the needs of Nigerians and the Nigerian society. Some of the efforts aimed at achieving functional and relevant education for Nigerians are outlined in the National Policy on Education (2004). Government for instance is emphatic about relating the country's educational goals and objectives to the needs of the individuals and the society.

To achieve functional education for the Nigerians and the Nigerian society, the issue of the use of GSM phone on campus must be addressed and possible steps should be taken to readjust the use of phones on campus (Udofot, 2002).

Conclusion

To achieve educational development in Nigeria today, all aspects of examination malpractices and irregularities on campus must be addressed. Although, mobile phones are

widely accepted, we should not only look at the advantages of mobile phone and forget about its effect on the student in the tertiary institution. Therefore, government, stakeholders in education, teachers, parents, all and sundry must be involved in the fight against the negative use of mobile phones on campus.

Recommendations for Functionality and Self-Reliance

If the Nigerian Government is to absolutely eradicate examination malpractice in the educational system, the issue of examination malpractice should be taken seriously and the issue of the use of mobile phones in any schooling environment should be taken seriously as well.

Students or candidates for any examination, especially those writing Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) examinations should not in any way, be allowed to use mobile phones while the examination is on.

This method should also be applied to the students in all the Nigerian tertiary institutions, that is, no use of mobile phones in examination halls. Moreso, students should be told to drop their mobile phones at home before coming to the campus.

Also, the Security Units of the schools or tertiary institutions should be beefed up, such that students are checked before entering the campus to ensure they are not with their mobile phones to constitute menace on campus.

Furthermore, the teachers and lecturers should be up and doing in that during supervision of any examination, they should endeavour to check and be sure that students do not have their mobile phones while in the examination hall.

It is hoped that if this recommendations are put to practice, the students will be more serious in their studies and so acquire desirable skills and attitudes that would not make nonsense of their educational qualifications and discredit institutions of learning and the nation as a whole (Udofot, 2008).

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