

**INNOVATIONS IN TACKLING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES IN  
HIGHER INSTITUTIONS: THE EXAMPLE OF SCHOOL OF EDUCATION,  
FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, OKENE.**

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**Abstract**

*Examination malpractice is one evil in the educational system that has become terminal. Schools continuously have been trying various methods and tactics to solve the problem considering the harm it does to both the perpetrators and the organizing institutions. Examination malpractice not only leads to loss of credibility of the certificate obtained but also expulsion of students from schools, loss of jobs of conniving staff and derecognition of schools as examination centres. Unfortunately, these punitive measures have achieved very little in checking the evil. This paper therefore looked into a more proactive and preventive innovation in effective invigilation as is being done by the school of education in Federal College of Education, Okene. Considering the results so far, the paper concludes that effective invigilation can go a long way in tackling examination malpractice. To consolidate the gains of the innovation, this paper recommended online registration of all education and GSE courses and provision of more examination halls to avoid overcrowding during examinations.*

**Keywords:** Examination Malpractice, Invigilation.

Education, according to Ammani (2009) is required by societies to enable new members not only fit into their work roles in the world, but also to satisfy the labour needs of the economy. Education therefore, is meant to produce qualitative individuals for the eventual development of the society. This it does through the process of developing in a child or adult the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive values to the society in which he lives (Fafunwa, 1974). Education is programmed to develop the mind of its recipient for an effective outcome. Denga (1991) cited in Sule (2009) argues that, education is the fulcrum on which all other spheres of

development revolves and that investment in education means investment in manpower development, political sanity and survival, health and healthy living, economic progress, socio-cultural development and industrialization. It equips the individual with the information necessary for high level of human functioning (Emaikwu, 2012). However, to be regarded as an educated person, an individual is expected to pass through the whole process of examination conducted by a competent and recognized body or agency.

According to Emaikwu (2012) examination as part of evaluation in education is aimed at determining a learner's level of skill acquisition or intellectual competence and understanding after a given training. But when examination is not properly conducted or its results manipulated, the expected feedback may be compromised. Consequently the result of such evaluation leads to wrong decision and judgment which affect the teacher, the learner (which is the human resource), the entire education industry, as well as the society. Unfortunately, this is the condition that is mostly obtainable in the training and development of human resources across educational and training centres in Nigeria (Paul, Wada, Audu & Omisore, 2013).

Knowing the effects of examination malpractice on both the culprit and the society, several measures have been adopted by different agencies concerned with conducting examinations, to check the menace, for example, JAMB moving from pencil and paper (PPT) to computer based test. Some of these measures have yielded results, while several others have been ineffective. The reliability of results of examinations from institutions of learning can largely be predicated upon the effectiveness and reliability of examination processes. This paper examines some innovations in the conduct of examinations by the school of education, which has minimized the cases of examination malpractice in Federal College of Education, Okene.

### **Examination Malpractice**

An examination, which can be in essay or objective type, oral or written, theory or practical, constitutes an integral part of the education process. It is conducted in order to determine the extent to which knowledge and skills have been acquired. Based on examination results, decision could be taken on admission into educational institutions and employment in the labour market. As an instrument for decision-making, examination is always prone to fear and anxiety. Many examinees would want to pass the examination by all means. Hence, they resort to different forms of malpractices before, during and after examinations.

Examination malpractice according to Balogun (2010) is any conduct contrary to laid down regulations governing examination procedures particularly in formal education enterprise. It can take place before, during and after writing an examination. It is worthy of note that the problem of examination malpractice cannot be blamed on the examinee alone as the examiners and authorities, parents and the society equally share in the blame. This is shown in the different forms and causes of examination malpractice.

### **Forms of examination malpractice**

Examiners and examinees are both involved when it comes to the forms examination malpractices take and they involve mainly what transpires before, during and after the examination. The examiner may leak out his questions to students before the examination or may allow the rewriting of the paper after the examination. Malpractice by examiners is more common in the arbitrary awarding of marks to students and also in the changing of scores by custodians of answer sheets e.g exam officers, typists and staff of exams and records office.

Fasasi (2006) identified other forms that examiners can be culpable of examination malpractice. These include deliberate extension of time by supervisors and invigilators, changing of scores, selling of examination grades, question papers and prepared answers and trading of sex for question papers, marks and grades.

Forms of examination malpractice by the examinees equally involve all the three stages, that is, before, during and after examinations. They include, buying of question papers, impersonation, collusion between candidates and officials, assault and intimidation, mass cheating, submission of multiple scripts, use of coded or sign language (Magaji, 2006). Others identified by Usman and Obadiah (2004) in Muazu (2009) include, getting assistance in the hall, bringing into the hall prepared materials relevant to the questions, copying or writing relevant points on palms or hiding the materials in “precious parts”, handkerchief, underwear, pocket, shoes etc, communication through exchange of answer booklets, question papers on which answers have been written.

### **Causes of examination malpractice**

In the causes of examination malpractice all the stakeholders in education seem to be guilty in one way or the other. For example, Muazu (2011) noted that among causes of examination malpractice are employment of unqualified teachers by education authorities, poor infrastructural provisions like adequate classrooms and laboratories and over admission of students in regards to existing facilities.

Muazu (2011) is also of the opinion that government has failed in its fight against examination malpractice by its non-enforcement of examination malpractice Decree 20 of 1984, which stipulated 21-year jail term for offenders. Even though there was a moderation with Decree 33 of 1999 which stipulated an imprisonment for a term of five years or fine of N50,000.00 to N100,000.00 for malpractice offenders, no one person is known to have been convicted of examination malpractice offence. On the part of the parents, their expectation from their children puts them under pressure to bring home good results whether they are prepared for such or not. Muazu also identified parents misplacement of priority on children’s career as being another factor. Parents preference of some careers for their children, especially when they do not possess the potentials to be such, encourage them to engage in examination malpractice.

Societal values have also contributed in encouraging examination malpractices as success is celebrated over failure irrespective of the means of acquiring it. Related to this is the regard for paper certificate over competence.

### **Consequences of examination malpractice**

The evil of examination malpractice is not a one-stop affair, it spreads like a cancer. It erodes confidence and trust. It affects efficiency and productivity and at the end national development is adversely affected.

According to Ijaiya (2001) examination malpractice indicates a declining quality of education. Since education is the sector that produces the manpower for development, it implies that if the quality of education is compromised through examination malpractice, development would invariably be low.

Fasasi (2006) opines that those who engage in cheating at a lower level are likely to continue at higher level of education. When they graduate into the society, their previous attitudes can easily lead them into corrupt practices in other higher endeavour. Other than its negative effect on national development, examination malpractice is capable of bringing shame to its perpetrators. For example, there have been occasions when students are expelled from schools; staffs lose their jobs, certificates withdrawn, examiners blacklisted and schools derecognized as centres for public examinations.

### **Tackling exam malpractice through effective invigilation**

Solutions to tackling the menace of examination are usually predicated upon the causes identified. Mu'azu (2011) identified student enrolment explosion as one of the causes of examination malpractice in higher institutions. According to him, classrooms that are designed to accommodate 30-40 students now accommodate 200-500 students. Meanwhile the UNESCO standard for teacher-learner ratio is 1:25. While overcrowding already affects learning as many students stay outside the classroom during lectures, the situation is made worse during examination. Invigilating an over-crowded hall is unbearably tasking on the invigilators and hence students have a field day cheating. Sitting is not spatially arranged, and movement of invigilators within the examination hall becomes difficult. Where an invigilator is made to cover a hall sitting 100 students, it will be an uphill task to expect that cheating in such hall will not be common place.

Alabi (2014) observed that the quality of invigilation goes a long way to either minimising or aggravating cases of examination malpractice. If invigilation is effective, cases of examination malpractices if not avoided will be drastically minimized, whereas if invigilation is slide and ineffective, cases of examination malpractice will be on the increase and thereby become the order of the day. Salim (2000) indicted invigilators during a JAMB examination for being negligent in the performance of their duties. As invigilators, according to him they;

- (a) Did not search candidates before they were allowed into the examination halls.

### *Chukwudi Umejiaku*

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- (b) Allowed candidates to smuggle question papers out of and answers into the examination rooms in the course of the examination.
- (c) Turned blind eye to cheating and other irregularities.
- (d) allowed agents of candidates with genuine or forged State Security Service or police identity cards access to the examination rooms to assist candidates and
- (e) Paid more attention to selling snacks to candidates than ensuring proper invigilation.

The result was that so many candidates had their results withheld.

The job of an invigilator involves;

- (i) Checking the students into the examination hall according to their sitting arrangement.
- (ii) Distributing the examination materials (answer booklets and questions and other materials as may be required by the questions).
- (iii) Making sure that students obey the examination rules, for example, not talking or disturbing in the hall, not giving or receiving assistance, not copying from others, keeping to the stipulated time etc.
- (iv) Taking attendance by making sure the students sign in and also sign out upon receiving the answer script from the students.
- (v) Receiving all the answer booklets from the students at the end of the stipulated time.
- (vi) Booking an examination malpractice offender.

Invigilation, however becomes slack when the invigilator is not interested in the work and is not active or in control of the examination hall or fails to exercise his authority as expected on the examinees. These happens when the invigilator decides not to be vigilant by sleeping while invigilating, discussing with either other invigilators, passersby or even the examinees, reading newspapers or making or receiving phone calls, eating while invigilating, remaining at a spot without moving round the hall or by helping some of the students with answers. An invigilator also fails in his/her duty when he/she condones cheating or deliberately turns a blind eye to students cheating.

Alabi (2004) pointed out some necessary requirements towards an effective invigilation and these include;

- (i) Conducive examination halls. Halls should be properly furnished and well arranged to make for orderliness and easy passage or movement.
- (ii) Having the right attitude toward invigilation by the invigilators. An invigilator here is expected to see the job as serious as teaching and not a period of relaxation.
- (iii) Being completely vigilant and alert to identify and resist any misbehavior by the students in the hall.

- (iv) Being completely impartial by not colluding with friendly students to cheat while concentrating on other students.
- (v) Refusing to be bribed by students in cash or in kind.
- (vi) Ensuring compliance of all students to examination rules and regulations.
- (vii) Fully concentrating on the job by being fully on ground. An invigilator should not have a distorted attention.
- (viii) Cooperation between an invigilator and the chief invigilator.
- (ix) Disciplining of erring students, for example making sure that a student caught cheating is properly booked.

### **Innovations in examination invigilation: the example of school of education, Federal College of Education, Okene.**

The schools of education in colleges of education could be rightly referred to as the mother school, as every student in the college is a student of the school. This is not different in the school of education, Federal College of Education, Okene. The school offers all education and general studies courses which are majorly compulsory to all students. This therefore, makes invigilating examination a herculean task for the school. To help tackle the problem of inadequate number of invigilators, the college in 2003/2004 session decided to centralize invigilation. By this, all the lecturers in the college were required to help invigilate all education examinations and thereafter go back to their respective schools. As a result, examinations in the college always started with education papers in the first week of examination. As much as it provided the school with enough hands to invigilate examinations, it did little to tackle the problem of examination malpractices as quite a number of the students capitalized on the lapses of the method of invigilation then to cheat. Some of these lapses include;

1. As much as many invigilators were posted to large halls, invigilation was not as thorough as it was supposed to be as some invigilators took the opportunity to excuse themselves and allow others to do their job. Some invigilators see being posted to the same hall as an opportunity to gossip or gist. This affords the student the chance to cheat.
2. Absenteeism was also common as some invigilators acquainted with the chief invigilator would ask for special favours by being posted to where already there were invigilators.
3. Some halls that had as many as 50-60 students could have just one invigilator posted to them.
4. Students were allocated to halls according to their course combinations only, without any defined sitting arrangement.
5. More often than not, students were made to use the same hall throughout the period of education examinations.
6. Checking in students one by one was difficult as they would already have been seated before the invigilators arrival.

The result of the above lapses was that,

- i) It was easy for students to impersonate one another.
- ii) It was also easy for them to write likely answers on the desks before each examination.
- iii) It accounted for the high number of students caught cheating and eventually expelled from the college.
- iv) Unidentified scripts were usually rampant at the end of script marking. It was also usually difficult to trace their course combinations.

The above scenario took a new turn from the 2011/12 session when several innovations were adopted by the school in invigilating her examinations especially as invigilation was again decentralized to schools.

First, the school produced a class list of all the students according to their departments which formed the attendance sheets as against the blank sheets that were easily manipulated by students to impersonate.

Second, invigilating was individualized. A maximum number of 40 students is assigned to a lecturer to invigilate. This makes for accountability. The invigilator monitors closely what his students do from beginning to the end. Even in large halls, each invigilator mainly oversees his assigned students. This also helped to tackle the problem of students either erroneously or mischievously walking away with their scripts after signing out without submitting them.

Third, checking the students into the hall became very easy. Armed with the class list, the invigilator checks them in one after another. He/she is at liberty to arrange the sittings as he/she deems best. Checking in the students this way helped to reduce the incidences of impersonation as the invigilator may dictate an impersonator.

Fourth, with the help of the class list cum attendance sheet, permutation of halls for examinations was made possible. The examination officers can now assign new halls to each set of students for different papers. This made it impossible for students to write on desks that they would be using since they do not know the halls that would be allocated to them until close to the examination time.

Fifth, this new method of designating halls per invigilator with names of each lecturer written on his/her pack has made absenteeism difficult. An absenting lecturer would have to get a replacement.

The reduction in the cases of reported examination malpractices during school of education papers indicates that the innovations have paid off. For example, records from the exams complaints committee showed that 69% or 18 out of 26 referred to the committee in both first and second semester examinations of 2004/05 session were during school of education papers (FCE. Okene, 2005). In the first semester of 2007/08 session 9 out of 11 cases that appeared before the committee were during the school's examination. Worse, still, 100% was recorded against the school during the second semester examinations. Overall 15 out of 17 cases were in education papers.

However, since these innovations were adopted, those embarrassing postings have changed. As much as a large percentage of complaints to the committee still come from the school's examinations, the number of offenders has greatly reduced. For example, none of the cases in the second semester examinations of 2011/12 session was during the school's examinations. In both semesters of 2012/13 only 7 cases of examination malpractices from the school were reported to the exams complaints committee (FCE, Okene, 2013)

### **Conclusion**

So many things have been written on examination malpractice in Nigeria especially in the higher institutions and its effect on both national image and national development. Few, however have been written on practical solutions to tackle the menace, other than suggestions for stiffer punitive measures. This paper, did not dwell much on the obvious causes and consequences of examination malpractices, but rather identified one major area where authorities concerned have continuously failed and that was in the area of invigilation. Effective invigilation is not only proactive but also preventive. It therefore submitted that if innovations in invigilation as carried out by the school of education in Federal College of Education, Okene could prove effective in reducing the cases of examination malpractices, then further innovations in that area can eventually save the education industry further embarrassments of malpractices.

### **Recommendations**

As a follow up to consolidate the success already recorded by the recent innovations in invigilation of examination by the school, the following recommendations are made.

1. On line registration of education and general studies courses by the students. Already, the students register all their courses online with their passports attached. If same could be done for all the education and general courses, it would go a long way in tackling the problem of impersonation during exams. This is possible since the attendance sheet would now be generated from the online register, so that admission into the examination hall would be strictly based on presentation of the online receipt which also bears the students' photograph.
2. Training of officers for the registration. The present situation where students resort to business centres within the college to do their online registration, is not only cumbersome, but also time wasting. To facilitate expeditiously online registration, officers either academic or non-academic should be trained to carter for the registration of students online.
3. Other schools in the college should be encouraged to adopt these innovations by the school of education to create a harmony within the system.



4. Of course, doing anything online, requires not just computer literacy, but also availability of computers either PCs or laptops. These should be made available to all lecturers, as it would go a long way in facilitating any job online.
5. The college should make serious efforts in improving on the network services of the college server. Presently internet network is usually weak and unreliable and hence makes any online work difficult. In the alternative, modems should be provided alongside computer systems.
6. Efforts should also be made to provide more halls for examinations to avoid congestion in the available halls,

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