



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: A
ARTS & HUMANITIES - PSYCHOLOGY
Volume 14 Issue 2 Version 1.0 Year 2014
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Effective Invigilation as a Panacea for Examination Malpractices among Students of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract- Examination by whatever name it is called is very important to educational system as air is important to life. Examination serves very many useful purposes at any education system and level. The useful purposes of examination at any education system can be marred by its conduct especially if it allowed for examination malpractice. Examination malpractice is one of the plagues that be devilled tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Examination malpractice in the tertiary institutions is on the increase daily taking different forms and dimensions. However, the menace thrives well when examination invigilation is very slack. Examination invigilation rests solely on invigilators and other stakeholders in the conduct of examinations invigilation. Therefore, examination invigilators determine the quality of examination invigilation. Effective invigilation of examination can only be made possible through effective invigilators who will reduce if not totally eradicate the menace of examination malpractice and this is the thrust of this paper.

Keywords: *education (al) system, tertiary institution, examination malpractice, examination invigilation, effective examination invigilation, examination invigilators.*

GJHSS-A Classification : FOR Code : 930401



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I. INTRODUCTION

The relevance of examination to the teaching-learning process cannot be over emphasized. Examination still remains a major way/means of assessing the learners' ability and of determining the extent of accomplishments of the teacher's goals and objectives of a course. Regardless of the level of education, examination serves so many useful purposes such as for promotion, classification or placement employment, appointment awarding scholarship, etc. Generally, students feel alright and unruffled throughout the (period of) lecture time but become feverish at the mentioning of the word 'examination' or at the closeness of examination date or the commencement of examination.

Examination creates a dichotomy between good and bad, success and failure, promotion or retardation. Since nobody wants to associated with failure, every student struggles to see that he (she) passes his/her examination by all means. Generally, students are desperate to pass their examination because of the useful purposes examinations serve. While some would approach passing examination by

honest means, many others would engage themselves in different forms of malpractice. As such, the conduct of examination or examination invigilation becomes very crucial.

II. EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

The Nigerian education system is passing through a time of crisis. There are so many problems that bewildered the system and these problems have almost stiffened the essence of its existence. Many of these problems may not be new. However, the point of concern about them is that they have now taken a new and sophisticated dimensions. Moreover, the incidence of these vices are on the increase despite the public awareness of those problems. One of those vices is examination malpractice. It ranks high, competing for the first position among other vices that are plaguing education industry in this country.

Examination malpractice as a phrase can better be understood by analyzing the two words that make up the phrase. Examination, according to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English "is a spoken or written test of knowledge". In other words, examination is a test of one's ability, stuff, skill or knowledge in a particular subject. This definition pre-supposes a time/period of learning or acquiring knowledge, skill or ability after which a test (examination) is administered to determine the extent of the knowledge or skill acquired.

Malpractice on the other hand, is defined by the same Dictionary as "unlawful activity usually for personal advantage by a person in a position of trust and responsibility". It means that malpractice is an act or behaviour that is against the law or it is a violation of the stipulated rules and regulations just for personal gain or for selfish reason by trusted and responsible people.

From the analysis of the two concepts that make up the phrase, examination malpractice can then be defined as unlawful activity usually for personal advantage by any person in a position of trust and responsibility in the conduct of spoken or written test or knowledge. It is the violation of rules and regulation just for selfish reason by any of the parties involved in the administration of spoken or written test of knowledge, skill, stuff or ability. By this, examination malpractice is not an act of students alone. It involves all the parties

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concerned with the administration of examination. Examination malpractice takes different forms and dimensions. The cases reveal that the perpetrators of this unlawful act are indeed people put in position of authority to keep the secret of examination but who through their selfish ambition or personal gains violate the stipulated rules and regulations in order to leak the examination or make the best in the examination. The following are some of the cases of examination malpractice in both internal and external examinations.

1. Hawking and sales of live question papers before the commencement of the examination.
2. Leaking of questions (papers) by teachers and those involved in the process of producing such questions.
3. Impersonation: This involves the use of other people to sit for an examination on one's behalf. It is writing examination in another person's name. At times, it involves changing of passport photograph and identity cards. Those being employed/engaged to do this are at times often referred to as 'machineries'.
4. Exchanging notes, (question paper with jottings, answer scripts), written documents, whispering and verbal transfer of answer to mates in the examination room. In some cases supervisors or invigilators could be agents of such practice within the examination room.
5. Giraffing: sideways peeping at others' works.
6. Bringing in to the examination room, intimidating and relevant materials (jotted notes, textbooks, handouts, mimeographs, jotting on bodies, handkerchief sophisticated electronics such as calculator, GSM, etc on which relevant material of the notes on examination being taken can be recorded and retrieved.
7. Allowing students to re-write the examination after the normal examination had been concluded. This is common in internal examinations at any level of the education system (primary, secondary, tertiary).
8. Stealing of answer scripts or taking of empty or written answer script out of the examination hall.
9. Coming late for the examination and leaving the examination room so early. Leaving the examination room without the permission of the invigilators.
10. All other acts that constitute problems to the peaceful conduct of the examination. Such includes making noise, murmuring or whispering or reading question aloud, talking or discussing with mates/others in the examination, disobedience or being rude to the invigilators, etc.

The lists above are by no means exhaustive as new, sophisticated and even murderous means are being devised by perpetrators daily.

III. WHY INVIGILATING EXAMINATIONS

Invigilating examination is rooted in the free and fair justice logic/philosophy. Since examination is very important to the progress of students and since everybody wants to pass examination, therefore invigilating examination becomes imperative so as to give room for every candidate to operate in the same and similar conducive atmosphere.

Examination invigilation ensures orderliness in the conduct of examination. Everyone abides by the rules and regulations for the conduct of examination hence orderliness is ascertained. It is human for some students to evolve "short cut" means to passing examination. As such, there is the need to ensure fair play on the part of all the examinees. Therefore the process or conduct of examination should be well moderated to ensure justice and fair play.

Examination invigilation aims at ensuring conducive atmosphere for all examinees.

Further, invigilation ensures and assures standard. Standard can only be ensured when things are done according to the lay down regulations.

IV. INVIGILATION AND EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

The quality (process) of invigilation goes a long way to minimize or aggravate cases of examination malpractice. If invigilation is effective, cases of examination malpractices if not avoided will be drastically minimized whereas if the invigilation is slack and very ineffective cases of examination malpractice will be on the increase and thereby become the order of the day.

Many well meaning Nigerians especially educators have expressed great concern over the quality of supervision and invigilation of examination in Nigerian schools. For example, Salim (2000) indicted many invigilators of Joint Matriculation Examination (JME) for being negligent in their performance of their duties as invigilators. These invigilators according to Salim:

- a) did not search candidates before they were allowed into the examination room.
- b) allowed candidate to smuggle questions papers out of and answers into the examination rooms in the course of the examination.
- c) turned a blind eye to cheating and other irregularities.
- d) were on the payroll of candidates.
- e) allowed agents of candidates with genuine or forged State Security Service or Police identity cards access to the examination rooms to assist candidates.
- f) paid more attention to selling snacks to candidates than to ensuring proper invigilation.

Most of those negligent attitudes of JME invigilators are also found in many of the tertiary institutions examination invigilators of various programmes.

V. WHEN EXAMINATION INVIGILATION IS SLACK

What happens when invigilation is slack in examination is better imagined than experienced. Malpractices will be set loose and indiscipline will have its sway. Things will indeed fall apart and the centre will no longer hold.

Invigilation becomes slack when: the invigilator is not interested in the work, the invigilator is not active and is not in control of the examination hall/room, the invigilator fails to exercise his authority as expected on the examinees, the invigilator is sleeping, dosing off or when he is sitting at a corner reading newspaper or doing his own private meditation or prayer.

When invigilation is slack in examination none of the stakeholders really benefits from it. Students will have free day in cheating. They can copy from the answers they had written to questions from home and they could copy one another. The whole hall/room will become noisy and rowdy. Even normal teaching period would be better in term of conduciveness than that.

The invigilator who is responsible for such will not enjoy himself as he will be in constant fear of chief invigilator who can come in anytime. If such happens his integrity is at stake and may be queried or loose opportunity of being used in any other available time or exercise.

The course lecturer will not enjoy marking as marking will not task him or pose any challenge since many students have copied themselves. The marking becomes boring as he will be reading the same thing from each of the students.

Students will always bear the most of the brunt. Students may be marked down or their results may be cancelled thereby having failure grade or outstanding in the course.

Examination invigilation is not a passive but rather a very active activity. It is not a time for the invigilator to relax or rest from the teaching efforts but rather a time to be more lively and very active in its conduct.

In addition, we have heard cases of invigilators of examinations sleeping, dosing, leaving the examination hall completely to relax outside the hall, sitting at a corner/place throughout the period of examination. All those behaviours or attitudes are aiding and albetting examination malpractice and this should not be.

VI. TOWARDS EFFECTIVE INVIGILATION OF EXAMINATIONS

Effective invigilation of examinations starts with a conducive examination hall/room. This is to say that the examination hall should be well arranged to ensure orderliness, easy passage and attractiveness. The hall should be furnished with adequate furniture for if the furniture is not adequate it can cause disorderliness as students will take advantage of such to complain while examination is in progress and thereby start to cheat. If the furniture is not well arranged easy movement of the invigilator becomes difficult and he will not be able to see well through and among the students to curb malpractice through eye contact and easy movement to the examination malpractice suspect/cheat.

Examination invigilator should have a right attitude towards invigilation. The invigilator should see examination as a serious business. He should see it as a serious aspect of teaching and more the concluding part of teaching exercise. That if the examination is well conducted or otherwise it goes a long way to affect students performance either way. The invigilator should then know that justice must be put in place in examination invigilation. He should ensure justice as pupils performance will be affected by how free and fair the examination invigilation is. It is a wrong attitude for the invigilator to see the period as a time to relax or a time to help students to pass.

The invigilator should be completely sensitive to situations in the examination hall. Students are very smart, cunning and trickish. Normal interaction situation e.g borrowing a writing material from colleague student can be turned to opportunity for cheating. So invigilator should be mentally and physically alert to identify and resist any trickish or cunning move of students to cheat. He should be very vigilant and watchful being sensitive to every move, talk or murmuring of students.

Invigilator should also have eagle eyes being able to see afar and be able to detect malpractices that may be going on away from where he is. Invigilators eyes must be sharp and should ensure that he moves them to and fro, right-left, top down, forward-backward, etc so he can ensure eye invigilation through eye contact with students that may want to cheat. Students should not be able to predict his eye focus. He should be able to move his focus round the hall and should not be one way focus.

Invigilator should not in anyway collude with students to perpetrate malpractice. Some invigilators just because they want to be tagged 'good' to students do collude with students to cheat in the examination. Some even dictate answers to students or prepare workings to some problems in the examination. Some collude with subject teacher who would bring answers for the invigilator to dictate or work for the students.

Such invigilator may leave the examination hall for students 'free for all time' to cheat.

Invigilator should fully concentrate on his job of invigilating. He should be very much fully on ground. He should not have distorted attention. He should not allow his attention to wander away or be attracted by incidents or events far away or around the premises of the examination hall. It is when the invigilator is fully concentrated that he can see and discover every prank that students may want to play towards cheating in the examination.

Invigilator should not allow himself to be bribed by students. Desperate and lazy students can go any length to achieve their aims. Such students can bribe invigilators during examinations: Invigilators that are not sensitive and not careful enough will easily fall prey to those students. The bribe can be in cash or kind. For examples, students can arrange and give 'envelope' to the invigilator; they can equally buy him foods, drinks and some can even agree to offer themselves (females) to the invigilator so that they can be allowed free day in the examinations. Furthermore, invigilators should equally not cheapen himself among his students. A lecturer who befriends his students or is having illicit relationship with his students cheapens or weakens his authority to discipline those students. For such lecturer, the students will take advantage always and specially during examination. Therefore, invigilator should be disciplined and not allow himself to be bribed by students or cheapen himself among his students.

Invigilator should not want to be good to students by turning a blind eye to cheating and other examination irregularities. If invigilator is not an accomplice with students in cheating during examination, he should not turn a blind eye to cheating and cheats. He should be firm and call a spade a spade and follow examination regulations to treat each case of malpractice and irregularities. He should be upright in his duty. He should not pretend to be doing the work while the work is not being done thoroughly.

Invigilator should ensure compliance of all students to examination rules and regulations by ensuring a conducive examination atmosphere. Invigilator should be impartial in his dealings with all students in the examination hall. He should make every candidate pass through the same condition or process, for examples, checking of students before and as they enter into the examination hall, checking of certain documents during examination, etc. He should be free and fair to all students during examinations. There is no leadership or godfather among students during examination. All are same. He should not give special or preferential treatment to any student either because he had known him before or because of other relationship with the student.

Invigilator should cooperate with the Chief invigilator and other invigilators to ensure effective

invigilation and reduce (eradicate) malpractice. Cooperation is necessary among invigilators so as to be thorough and effective in the work. Since they have the same purpose and are being guided by the same rules and regulations, they should cooperate together in the discharge of their duty. Students should not see any invigilator as 'cheap' while tagging some others as being strict. Invigilators should all be disciplined, firm and fair. There should be good working relationship between invigilator and chief invigilator.

Invigilator should know the process of booking malpractice culprit/suspect without disturbing the peaceful atmosphere in the hall. Booking examination malpractice suspect is one of the jobs of an invigilator in examination. The booking of examination malpractice suspect should be done without causing attention, uproar or disturbing other candidates. It should be done without much noise and it should be done properly and thoroughly following rules and regulations guiding it. The invigilator should not forget to dispatch the examination malpractice forms filled by the suspect and the exhibits packaged in the envelope so designed and forward such accordingly with other answer scripts envelopes. However, the invigilator should take proper delivery of the malpractice envelope to the chief invigilator for proper recording.

VII. CONCLUSION

Examination malpractice is an indicator of a corrupt system of education. A corrupt (bad) system of education is not the best for any one even the corrupt. All stakeholders: Management, academic, non-teaching staff with full determination can work together to reduce or eradicate examination malpractice especially in our examinations and create a better image and a good name for ourselves since good name is better than silver and gold.

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