

## EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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### Abstract

*This paper exhaustively discusses examination malpractice in higher institutions. Its discussion focuses on the concept of examination malpractice, types of examination malpractice, causes, effects on the individual, institution and the society at large, preventions/control. It further outlines the role of a guidance counsellor in curbing the menace of examination malpractice in our institutions of higher learning by administering some counselling techniques and theories. It concludes by making relevant recommendations on how students can eschew the challenges and ensure continuous notion to believe in themselves and abilities at all times, proper reorientation of students in tertiary institutions, as these will help the younger generation to be more focused and determined.*

### Introduction

Examination malpractice in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria is very alarming. No graduate in Nigeria higher institutions will claim not to have heard or seen his/her colleague being involved in one form of examination malpractice or the other. Many higher institutions of learning in Nigeria have recorded one form of nasty behaviour of students or the other in the hall of examination. Examination malpractice ranges from copying from a close friend, smuggling textbook or short note, bribing invigilator before, during or after examination, offering sex for marks etc. Today, it is nearly impossible for one to graduate without being influenced in one way or the other. Due to the misconception among young people, a number of students at the tertiary level have lost their focus from their academic works to other activities of which they derive self-pleasure. Counsellors must not sit back and allow students rot in the hands of this worm that is eating up students' intellectual ability. It is, therefore, counsellors' responsibility to orientate and re-orientate students against this menace, because its consequences would be so grievous to bear.

### Key words

**Counselling:** This is a process in which a professional trained person (counsellor) helps a person (client) faced with every day challenges to overcome his/her problem.

According to Echebe (2009), defined as "an interaction between a counsellor and a counsellee (client) which makes the client to cope with life challenges through the help of a counsellor". Counselling is a helping relationship.

**Examination:** This is the process of answering either written or oral questions in a view of assessing the individual that is answering the question(s). According to English Dictionary, it is a formal test involving answering written or oral questions under a time constraint and usually without access to textbooks. Examination is an assessment tool used to determine behavioural change, learning abilities or for job placement.

**Malpractice:** This is an act of deviant behaviour. According to Oxford Dictionary, it is a careless illegal or unacceptable behaviour by someone in a professional or official position.

## Counselling Against Examination Malpractice

- Examination malpractice is an act in which one engages in activities that are not co-ordinance with the rules and regulation of the examination.
- Examination malpractice is a deviant act/behaviour in examination.
- Examination malpractice includes all forms of cheating which directly or indirectly falsify the ability of the student(s). Outside an examination hall, it involves all examination related offences.

Exam malpractice can occur before, during or after the examination. Some forms of examination malpractices include:

- Collaboration with examination invigilator/supervisor to provide written /oral answers to a student in the examination hall.
- Dubbing
- Impersonation: Using the identity of a candidate to sit for an examination of which one is not eligible. In 2014, in University of Port Harcourt, a student was suspended for a semester as a result of impersonating another student in an examination. In the same institution in 2016, an impostor was arrested by the school security in an examination hall.
- Carrying illegal materials into the examination hall: Some students smuggle in other examination materials into the hall. In 2013 at College of Education now Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Iwofe campus, it was reported that 60% of sandwich students took textbook, notebook and other materials into the examination hall.

- Giraffing: This involves copying from close friend/seatmate in examination by stretching the neck.
- Taking question paper/answer booklet out of the examination hall.
- Computer storage/Retrieval: This involves use of phones etc in the examination hall.
- Illegal removal of answer scripts from the hall of examination.
- Copying field work or term paper from others: In 2014, a Senior Lecturer from the Department Of Guidance and Counselling, Nnamdi Azikiwe University in SCASSON conference narrated how a Master's Degree student sat at home to write her full project work without actually carrying out the field work but rather copied the work done by her colleague/friend.
- Submitting of projects/assignment by a staff on behalf of a student.
- Soliciting for help after the examination.
- Secretly breaking into lecturers' office in order to obtain question papers or substituting a fresh answer script for the original script.
- Using of mercenaries in the examination hall

These are all forms of examination malpractices. Students engage in such act just to attain academic success in school. Hence, the worth of examination is violated. Over the years, institutions of higher learning have been faced with these challenges. The effect of examination malpractice over the years has caused so much grief, worries, anxiety and other psycho-social imbalance in the student(s), lecturers, the institutions and the Nigeria society at large.

### **Causes of Examination Malpractices**

The causes of examination malpractices are:

- Laziness: Most students have little or no time for their studies. Some students engage themselves in other activities that take most of their time on campus.
- Fear of failure: Students who are not sure of themselves often resolve to examination malpractice, since they do not want to fail.
- Inadequate preparation for the examination: When campus students think they have more time to study their books and procrastinate their studying time, usually ends up not been prepared.
- Corrupt invigilators/supervisors: Students know their lecturers and how to get them. Students know that if they offer money to the invigilator, they would be allowed to cheat in the examination hall.
- The myth of students: There is a general trend in our campuses towards cheating in an exam hall. Most students believe that without cheatings it is nearly impossible to get high score or to pass a certain course no matter how one reads for the course.
- Desperation of students: The quest for pride, self-glory and recognition by lecturers, course mates etc just to proof they are the best students in a particular course can also lead students to indulge in malpractices.
- Slow start in lecturing tends not to cover the course outline, many will demand their students to read up the uncover topics. Thereby, making the students to be confused on what to expect in the examination.
- Other lecturers may cover half of their course outline but set questions that cover the whole course outline.

### **Effects of Examination Malpractices**

The effects of examination malpractices in higher institutions cannot be over emphasised. The following are some effects of examination malpractices:

- Creativity and resourcefulness are hampered: As a result of malpractice in examination, those who indulge in it find it difficult to think outside the box not even to make effect their course of study. It is said that, Nigeria has unemployable graduates in the labour market graduates who cannot perform in their field of study.
- It wrecks great havoc on the education, social, economic, religious and political lives of the society.
- Employees are engaged in a job they are not qualified for since they do not merit the certificates they possess.
- Many graduates today cannot be employed because they lack basic skills.
- Graduates that are ignorant of their field of study as a result of malpractice in school.
- Some employees have injured themselves with equipments in their work place as a result of lack of technical know-how and inability to apply theories and technics in real life situation.
- Involving in examination malpractice can jeopardize one's education and future, especially if one is caught in the act. Some students in the University of Port Harcourt, LandMark, University of Ibadan have been suspended. Some even expelled as a result of examination malpractice. Lecturers that are involved or aided students in the act are not even spared. Some lecturers have been demoted and some were even sacked.

### How to Prevent/Control Examination Malpractices

- Lecturers should be properly trained in their fields as to technically cover their study outline for a particular semester before the examination.
- Semester break should not be too long as students are reluctant to resume from a long break.
- Course advisers should have knowledge in guidance and counselling to be able to guide their students on their academics performance.
- School counsellors should be employed in all higher institutions of learning to guide the students on study habits, career prospects, requirements on various courses and good study techniques.
- Photo card or students' ID should be used during examination to curb impersonation or the use of mercenary.
- The school should provide large halls, adequate seats and invigilators for every examination.
- The school Examination and Ethics Committee (EEC) should rise to the challenges of examination malpractices.
- Students should adhere to examination rules and regulation (examination guidelines).
- Students should also meet their senior colleagues and lecturers to get more clarifications on the courses.
- Students can actively participate in class by making meaningful contributions to the subject matter and jotting down important points and noting key areas pointed-out by the lecturer.

### The Role of a School Counsellor in Examination Malpractice

Since school counsellors are faced with this challenge, it is, therefore, time for school counsellors to rise up to the challenges. Hence, it will take hold of our institutions as there is no other time than

now. School counsellors can administer the following counselling techniques to students that are engaged in examination malpractice.

**Orientation service:** Students needs orientation and reorientation. This will help them to know the dangers involved and what they stand to risk.

**Assertive training:** The training of individuals who are not assertive. '**how to say no**' and '**when to say no**'. The assertive training will help students to make a decision not to cheat in the examination and will also help them find ways of not cheating. The student undergoing this training can say "**I will not involve myself in examination malpractice and so i have to read my book**" saying this at the beginning of every semester will prepare the student physically, mentally, emotionally and academically for the academic task ahead.

**Cognitive restructuring:** This involves changing undesirable thoughts or mental processes of an individual so that the individual will behave in a more socially and personally desirable way.

**Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT):** School counsellors can make students to be more rational and logical in their thought and behaviours. This is very effective in curbing examination malpractice, as people become what they think about. Also, examination malpractice emanates from irrational and illogical thoughts.

**Humanistic theory:** This theory co-founded by Abraham A. Maslow focuses on individual. According to Maslow, human beings are good and are self-determined to actualize their goals in life (self actualization). It also talked on inner motivation which makes people to work hard in order to achieve success in life. School counsellors can motivate students in studying their books, and emphasize the need for independence, a person's self-

growth, self motivation and self-actualization. Students should take pride in their success rather than looking for a cheap means of getting results/ certificate they cannot defend.

### **Recommendations**

- Students should always visit their course adviser or the school guidance counsellor before taking any major decision on campus to avoid taking wrong decisions.
- Students can engage in group study that is focused and determined.
- School administrators should check the activities of students on a regular basis.
- Youths (students) friendly centres should be established in every higher institution where students can easily access.
- The media, both electronic and printed, should project good models that the youths can imitate.
- Parents should visit their children on campus to know how they (students) are faring.
- Parents should also maintain good relationship with their children at home.

### **Conclusion**

So many employees have lost their jobs simply because they possess certificates they cannot defend. Students should know that engaging in examination malpractice in higher institution of learning can mar their education and affect them physically, spiritually, socially, mentally, psychologically and economically, so abstinence remains the sure way to a secure future.

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