

## Educational Foundations: A Tool for Curbing Examination Malpractice in Higher Institutions in Cross River State

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### Abstract

*The persistence occurrence of examination malpractices has been a concern to the development of quality education in institutions of higher learning in Cross River State. Despite effort made by different institutions and other stakeholders in education in preventing and eradicating examination malpractice, the problem continuous unabated. This paper aimed specifically to bring attention to how improved evaluation method and student self-efficacy can be used in abating examination malpractice. The study adopted the survey research method and purposively sampled five departments each from two universities. Two thousand seven hundred (2700) in the 2019/2020 academic session constituted the study population. A 12-item questionnaire tagged Teacher Opinion Questionnaire (TOQ) and interview schedules were instruments used for data collection. Two research questions were used to guide the collection of data. The instruments were validated by three measurement and evaluation experts and it had a reliability coefficient of 0.79 using Cronbach Alpha method. Data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The findings of the study indicated assessment for learning, effective monitoring of teaching and learning, encouragement of self-discipline and hard work, are some measures that provide better and long lasting solutions to cheating in schools. Recommendations of the study included prompt recording of continuous assessment scores/grades, effective monitoring of teaching and learning; compulsory class attendance by lecturers and students and students' counselling services should be made compulsory.*

**Keywords:** Examination Malpractice, Evaluation Ethos, Self-Efficacy, Formative Evaluation, Punishment.

### Introduction

One of the major problems confronting our knowledge industry is examination malpractice. The scourge has generated so much concern and discussions among Nigerians in recent time because of its devastating effects on the school system as well as on our labour market. According to Isangedighi (2007), examination malpractice is a manifestation of dishonest behaviour. He viewed it as a deliberate act of commission made by an examines single or in collaboration with the persons to attempt and obtain examination scores/grades higher than he/she is capable of obtaining. Cheating is neither new to school nor peculiar to Nigeria. It is a matter of serious global concern (Udoh, 2019; Nkawehi, 2013).

Examination malpractice in Nigeria is as old as the country itself. Amed (1996) as cited in Ukpokor (2004) noted that the first case of examination malpractice in Nigeria occurred in 1914 when Cambridge school certificate examination question paper leaked. Similarly, in 1948 a Nigerian candidate had his paper cancelled because he was in possession of a note on history

during the 1948 June matriculation examination (Olaoye 1981 cited in Ukpior, 2004). The ugly phenomenon has since been on the increase and has assumed a highly sophisticated baneful dimension at all levels of education across nations.

In ancient China people were made to take civil service examinations in individual cubicles to prevent cheating among candidates and at that time examination malpractice attracted death penalty if found guilty, yet people still cheated (Brickman, 1961 in Isangedighi, 2007). Also in recent time China, what should have been a hushed scene of 800 students diligently sitting their University Entrance Examination, erupted into siege warfare after invigilators tried to stop them from cheating (Moore, 2014). In Malawi it was reported in Nyasa times that 392 candidates were disqualified during the 2013 MSCE examination (Nkawihe, 2013). The examination council of Zambia had observed that the number of examination malpractices had been on the increase with 542 cases reported during the 2012 examination session (Udoh, 2013).

The chairman of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASSU), University of Lagos, has described as “unfortunate and tragic”, the spate of malpractices and the “sex-for-admission” scandal that rocked the institution (Dike, 2019). The lecturer involved has been sentenced to a 21 year jail term (the Punch, 21 Feb. 2020).

Indiscipline in schools is not strange but what matters is the strategies to curb it. In the 1980s and 1990s education in some western nations experienced various social crises such as drug abuse, violence, school malpractices as well as increase in low academic achievement index which led to low public confidence in the school system (Parkay & Stanford, 2004; Department of education, 2004). Consequently, there were calls for schools to go “back-to-basic” and teachers’ accountability drives initiated by parents and other interest groups dominated the wide spread agitation against educational malpractices. Many militant youth groups singled out the school curricular as the source of the problems. The schools greatly expanded their curricular offerings and instituted a wider variety of instructional strategies (Parkay & Standford, 2004; Ornstein & Levine, 2006, Smith, 2007).

Cheating in examination is an indiscipline behaviour which is largely a product of person-environment interaction (Gosselin, 2003; Isangedighi 2007; Amalu & Okon 2018). A discipline person is one who finds meaning in the world outside himself and become well adjusted while the indiscipline person is one whose perception of the world around him is unwholesome, thus, tending to undermine his capacity to adjust, that is, he cannot adjust easily. He has negative thinking of himself (Myers, 2007; Amalu & Okon 2018).

Albert Bandura (1986), a social psychologist, propounded a theory of self-efficacy, developed from the concept of ‘locus of control’ that is power of positive thinking. According to the concept of self-efficacy, if you think in a positive terms, you will get positive results. “Children and adults with strong feelings of self-efficacy are more persistent, less anxious, and less depressed” (Myers 2007:47). They also live healthier lives and more academically successful and have less tendency to cheat in examination (Maddux & Gosselau, 2003). The implications of the concept of self-efficacy here is that as teachers encourage student positive thinking they (student) develop the spirit of ‘I can do it’. According to Chipoma (2014) educators should stimulate system self-efficacy through strategic focus on assessment.

Teaching with assessment ethos is a strategy that can produce good result (Anderman and Midgley, 2004, Bandura, 1995; World Bank, 2008). As Bandura (1995) noted, evidence shows that classroom atmospheres are to a large extent determined by teachers’ beliefs in their instructional efficacy. By extension, how well teachers teach is influenced by the belief systems

of staff which create school cultures that can have vitalizing or demoralizing effects on how well schools functions in a social entity.

Adoption of assessment for learning (formative evaluation) promotes frequent interaction between the teacher and the learner which enables the teacher to know the strength and weakness of the learners. It identifies which learner needs remediation. It makes students receive feedback from teachers based on performance that allows them to focus on subject areas they have not yet mastered (Ihekweba & Osuala, 2012). A student who mastered his/her learning may have high resistance to cheat in examination (Osuala & Oguoma, 2013; Onuka & Durowoju, 2013).

Punishment measures commonly in practice to curb examination malpractice and other academic dishonesty appear not yielding the expected results, as the scourge has heightened and taken frightening dimensions in both developed and developing countries (Nkawihe, 2013; Udoh, 2013; Shapiro, 2012; Ogunji, 2011). Punishment measures such as cancellation of results, withdrawal from school, being reminded in custody are measures considered as short-term. However, long-term and better solution to cheating in examination lies in overhauling the procedure and the evaluative dimensions of teaching to allow for effective readiness of examination approach to teaching and evaluative procedures takes cognizance of individual needs such as values, interest and abilities (Isangedighi, 2007; Bandura, 1986).

The suggestion by this paper to use educational foundations for curbing examination malpractice is apt in view of the belief that the programmes offered in educational foundations unit generally form the basis of teacher education. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines 'foundations' as a "principle, an idea or a fact that something is based on and it grows from". Educational foundations as used in higher institutions of learning refers to principles, ideas and the bases on which programmes of teaching profession has its roots and guidance (Ojebiyi & Ogunbiyi, 2012). Student self-efficacy is considered in this study as a subset/variable of Educational Foundations courses in view of the fact that psychology of learning and school counselling services emphasize student's hardwork and development of self-confidence as a key to academic success (Myers, 2007; Chipoma, 2014). The development of students' self-efficacy also leads to less emphasis on cheating (Amalu & Okon, 2018).

In a global perspective education foundations courses include but not limited to the following: educational psychology; philosophy of education; educational guidance and counselling; educational tests and measurement etcetera (UNICAL Student Hand Book 2013-2014; Ojebiyi & Ogunbiyi, 2012). According to INTASC model core standards (1993), effective teachers are guided by reflection and problem-solving orientation. Thus, where there are education malpractices, the most probably first point of call for a possible long term solution was to return to basics, that is, review the foundations courses.

### **Statement of the Problem**

One common school concern shared by all levels of education and across different countries of the world is examination malpractice. Indeed, it is not a social virtue, thus examination malpractice attracts a zero tolerance by examination bodies, school departments, including educational foundations. The zero tolerance stance entails punishing persons' quality of violating examination rules and regulations to serve as a deterrent to others. The punishment measures in practice had not provided the desired result; malpractice in examination goes on unabated. The purpose of this study was to suggest the use of educational foundations (teaching with assessment ethos through perceived self-efficacy) for curbing examination malpractices in our higher institutions of learning.

### Research Questions

1. In what way can teaching with evaluation ethos be used to curb examination malpractices in higher institutions?
2. To what extent can perceived self-efficacy of students helps to curb examination malpractices in higher institutions?

### Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design conducted to examine the extent to which evaluation method and student self-efficacy can be used to curb cheating in school examinations. It is a descriptive study. The target population for the study was all the University Lecturers in 2019/2020 school year in Cross River State. Both purposive and random sampling techniques were adopted. Faculty of Education of two universities in Calabar were purposively selected and in each of the schools, five departments were also sampled purposively, making a total of 10 departments. Three hundred lecturers were selected through stratified random sampling technique. Ten heads of department also provided information making a total sample of 310. Two instruments were used for the study, a 12-item questionnaire tagged Teacher Opinion Questionnaire (TOQ); and two questions as interview schedule. The questionnaire had Agree (A) and Disagree (D) options and were expressed in percentages. The instruments were subjected to face and content validity by three experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The questionnaire has a reliability coefficient of 0.79 using Cronbach alpha technique. The two interview items were also subjected to same analysis and had the same reliability index. The data collected were assembled, categorized and analyzed using frequency counts and percentages in a tabular form.

### Findings

**Research Question 1:** In what way can teaching with evaluation ethos be used for curbing examination malpractices in higher institutions of learning?

**Table 1:** Evaluation measures to curb cheating in higher institutions as express in frequency and percentage

S/N	Responses	N	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Effective monitoring of teaching.	300	258	86	12	14
2	Prompt recording of continuous assessment scores.	300	210	70	90	30
3	More scores for continuous assessment.	300	204	68	96	32
4	Use of independent examiners for end of semesters examinations.	300	168	56	132	44
5	Effective monitoring of class attendance for students and lecturers.	300	258	86	12	14
6	Compulsory attendance of departmental organized seminars.	300	237	79	63	21
<b>Total</b>				<b>74</b>		<b>26</b>

Sources: Field data 2019

Table 1, evaluative measures taken to curb examination malpractices were expressed in frequencies and percentages and the data were categorized into agree and disagree. The responses in their order of magnitude and as preferred measure by the respondents were as follow: Effective monitoring of teaching and effective monitoring of class attendance for students and lecturers each 258 (86%); compulsory attendance of departmental organized seminars 237 (79%) and prompt recording of continuous assessment scores 210 (70%). Allocation of more score for continuous assessment 204 (68%) and the last and the least is the use of independent examiners for end of semester examinations 168 (56%). The total average for the agree category is 74% while the disagree category is 26% on average.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent can perceived self-efficacy of students help to curb examination malpractice in higher institutions?

**Table 2:** Overall frequency and percentages of opinion of responses to items on influence of perceived self-efficacy of students on examination in higher institution in Cross River State

S/N	Responses	N	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Encouragement of self-discipline and hard work.	300	250	83	50	17
2	Encouragement of positive thinking about oneself.	300	246	82	54	18
3	Improvement of self-motivation towards learning.	300	258	86	42	14
4	Development of high task expectancy.	300	246	82	54	18
5	Development of less feeling of anxiety in achievement setting.	300	204	68	96	32
6	Development of high self-confidence in ability to perform task.	300	237	79	63	21
Average				80		20

Sources: Field data 2019

It can be observed from Table 2 that the percentage scores of items 1-6 range between 68% and 86% indicating respondents agreement with the items, while the range for disagreement of same items is 14% to 32%. These items sought the opinion of stakeholders as to the extent to which perceived self-efficacy of students can curb examination malpractices in higher institutions in Cross River State. The overall percentage of 80 agreed that perceived self- efficacy of students can help to curb examination malpractice in higher institutions of learning in Cross River State.

**Table 3:** Frequency counts and percentages of Heads of Department interview responses on measures to curb examination malpractices

S/N	Responses	N	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Insufficient funds makes number of continuous assessment inadequate.	10	9	90	1	10
2	Increased number of time for student counselling.	10	6	60	4	40

From Table 3, it can be observed that there is overwhelming agreement by HODs that increase in funding for departments would have a corresponding increase in the number of continuous assessment per semester. This assertion HODs conforms with the findings by Onuka and Durowoju (2013). It is believed that increased number of continuous assessment reduces the high anxiety associated with one-shot-form of examination and its increasing cheating tendency.

It is also observed that 60% if the HODs were of the opinion that increased time for student counselling would reduce cheating in schools. This finding affirms the funding of Amalu and Okon (2018) that the more the students are exposed to counselling the less their cheating tendencies in examination. It is observed that 60% of the HODs were of the opinion that increased time for student counselling would reduce cheating in school. This findings affirms the finding of Amalu and Okon (2018) that the more the students are exposed to counselling the less their cheating tendencies in examination.

### **Discussion of Findings**

From the responses as shown in Table 1, items 1-6 indicate evaluative measures use to eliminate cheating in examination as opined by lecturers. These measures although slow, but are long-lasting and more enduring than short-term punishment measures. This findings confirms with the opinions of Parkay and Stanford (2004), Smith (2007), Gosselin (2003), Myers (2007) and Chilpoma (2014) that the use of instructional strategies was more appropriate and effective in checking the scourge of examination malpractice than punishment.

Specifically, items 2 and 3 with an average percentage of 69 shows that assessment for learning which is a formative evaluation is a very effective measure of curbing examination malpractice in higher institution. Its vitality is in the immediacy of information it provides for teaching and learning. This concurs with the opinion of Ihekwaba and Osuala (2012), World Bank (2008), Bandura (1995), Osuala and Oguoma (2013).

This result is in tandem with the findings of Myers (2007) and Amalu and Okon (2018) whose studies reveal that students strong feelings of self-efficacy enhances academic success and produces less tendency to cheat in examination. This result is perhaps born out of the belief that cheating is a psychological act and therefore needs to be tackled psychologically (Isangedighi, 2007). However, an average of 20 percent disagreed with the belief or opinion that student perceived self-efficacy can help in tackling examination malpractices in high institutions most probably. They consider other education foundations solution as being paramount (Onuka & Durowoju, 2013). It is concluded in this study that students' self-efficacy can be used to solve examination malpractices in schools.

### **Conclusion**

The paper aimed to identify possible strategies for curbing the problem of examination malpractices. The scourge has eaten deep into the fabric of the school and society and therefore requires a combination of short and long terms measures to eradicate it, though the instruction strategies promise to be enduring.

### **Recommendations**

Following the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. Lecturers should record continuous assessment information as promptly as possible to avoid pilfering

2. More scores should be allotted to continuous assessment than the end of semester exams scores
3. There should be effective monitoring of class attendance for lecturers and students
4. Learning activities should also be monitored strictly
5. Counseling services should be made compulsory for all students
6. Positive behavior should be encouraged by rewarding those involved
7. Students should be encouraged to appreciate learning and to think positively.

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