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## EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE; A CHALLENGE ON ACHIEVING POLYTECHNIC EDUCATIONAL PROSPECT

Dusu, Paul Bot<sup>1\*</sup>, Anthony Gotan<sup>2</sup>, Satdom Sabina Bamaiyi<sup>3</sup>, Zingfa, K. Danbaki<sup>4</sup>, Dusu Perpetua<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of General Studies

<sup>2</sup>School of Health Information Management and Biostatistics

<sup>3</sup>School of Environmental Health Plateau State Collage of Health Technology, P.M.B 013 Pankshin, Nigeria.

<sup>4,5</sup>Crown Basic Great Academy, Firin Gada, Jos-North, Plateau State, Nigeria.

**\*Corresponding Author:-**

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### **Abstract:-**

*The issue of examination malpractice in the Polytechnic system has become rampant in recent times, to the extent that it is affecting the prospects for which Polytechnics were established. This paper focuses on the challenges of Nigerian Polytechnic prospects due to examination malpractice and also examines Polytechnic management, students and staff level of involvement in this practice. The paper further looked at ways of managing such practice by the Polytechnic system. Content analysis from secondary source was used in the discussion. The paper concluded that the menace must be eradicated to achieve some of the Polytechnic prospects and also suggested that all hands must be on deck to fight this ill-action that is producing graduates that are gradually becoming liabilities to the society.*

**Key words:-** Challenge, Examination Malpractice, Polytechnic Education and Prospect

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Examination malpractice has consistently remained a bane of Nigerian educational system for which the polytechnics are not an exception (Dusu, Gotan, Deshi & Gambo, 2015 and Solomon, 2014). This is due to the fact that there have been much lamentation concerning the falling standard of education in the society where arguments raised include: the low academic capacity and standard being displayed by graduates of today's educational institutions vis-à-vis their counterparts of yester-years (Yakubu, 2002 and Emaikwu, 2012), and the prevailing cases of examination malpractices that are gradually engulfing the Polytechnic educational system.

Within the Polytechnic institutions, the issue of examination malpractice is becoming a cankerworm that is gradually affecting the quality and capability of graduates being produced by the academic system. Kofi & Kwabena (2014) and Solomon (2014) see examination malpractice as any activity that goes against the rules and regulations governing the conduct of examination in an institution of learning. This puts examination malpractice as the action that portends grave danger to Polytechnic education. This implies that examination malpractice is any form of misbehaviour that leads to the alteration of or tempering with the prescribed ways of conducting examination in any given system, which puts examination malpractice as an action that is either covert or overt while Argungu (1997) cited in Bala (2013) views examination malpractice as any irregularity which is premeditated and perpetrated by candidates or their agents with the intention of gaining undue advantage over others in an examination. This is seen as an illegal 28alibre28r by students, lecturers and any staff of the institution before, during or after the examination (Bala, 2013 and Solomon, 2014), so that students can attain success easily and cheaply.

The problem of examination malpractice in Polytechnics is occasioned by numerous factors. The most significant factor is the materialistic nature of the today's society. Nigeria as a nation values money and material things, as was clearly observed by Ezeani (1996):

*The love for money in Nigerian context is very glaring. Money is everything to an average Nigerian. He believes that money is almighty. It can achieve anything and Everything. It is a key to paradise on earth, to prosperity, authority, social importance And national honor. Its accumulation becomes a value. Nigerians' concept and Judgment of things are mostly in terms of their materialistic and at times consumable Value. Nigerian society has become one largely dominated by acquisitive rather than Productive instinct. Progress in Nigeria is defined and determined in terms of material Success and achievement (p.148).*

Examination malpractice is worsening in our Polytechnics to the extent that it is gradually bringing our education system to ridicule, this is true when we consider the 28alibre of individuals involved in the practice. In terms of those involved, authors have pointed out that school authorities, proctors, students are all guilty of this act. It is those who refuse to participate that are rather regarded and treated as deviants.

## **Conceptual Definition of Terms:**

*Challenge:* Challenge can be viewed as difficulties in a job or undertaking that is stimulating for one engaged in it. This involves something that, by its nature or character, serves as a call to battle, a tasking activity or a special effort that could affect the expected outcome of a needed target.

*Polytechnic Education:* This refers to non-university tertiary education which is technical in nature and provide courses such as technological and business programs at National Diploma (OND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) levels Yakubu (2002). Technical education is a subsector of the educational sector which is designed to impart knowledge and necessary skills in order to provide competent and well-skilled manpower for industrial and technological development. Polytechnic educational system was established in Nigeria with the aim of turning out middle-level manpower needed for industrial and technological development of the country; no meaningful national development can be achieved by this nation without sound and qualitative technical education.

*Prospects:* Prospects are ideas or projections or planning of what might or will happen in the future, which are guarded by the chances of being successful.

## **Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the challenges caused by examination malpractice in achieving Polytechnic prospects by looking at the level of involvement of Management, Academic staff, Students and Non-academic staff, and also ways of managing the practice because many reasons have been given on why examination malpractice is becoming rampant for which none is justifiable for such negative action.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

Content analysis was used as a secondary source of data which was derived from educational literatures such as journals, report and research papers.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:**

### **Management:**

From the period of admission, where some candidates are favoured by management even when they did not do well during pre-admission examination (Dusu et'al, 2015; Dusu, 2019 & Jega,

2006) because the candidates' name was given by some people in government or highly placed or influential individuals in the society and merit is thrown to the wind. In doing so according to Ademola-Olateju (2013), Bala (2013), Ivowi (1996) & Jen (2002) merit is partially seen as a viable tool for giving the right candidates what is rightfully theirs and as such, this is the first point of contact where malpractice starts in the Polytechnic system. Also of notice is the case were students that bought entrance form but did not sit for the examination are given admission due to favouritism by management even when those students did not do the needful with regard to seeking for admission, this is the second point of contact where malpractice starts in the polytechnic system. Finally, the worst case scenario is when students that did not even buy entrance form are given admission by management. For those who have been admitted to cope with the challenges ahead, they will then have to go for alternative means of passing their semester examination whether by hook or by crook to become graduates of such polytechnics. Dusu et'al (2015), Dusu (2019) and Solomon (2014) opined that to achieve those negative ways such students' will try to collaborate with academic or non-academic staff, but when it fails they will depend on their own dubious efforts to achieve success.

#### **Lecturers:**

Moral decadence on the part of some lecturers is a major factor that has been encouraging examination malpractice in polytechnics, as those lecturers cash in on students to enrich themselves at the expense of academic prosperity. For this ignoble act, the educational system in its entirety becomes less reliable and injurious to the same society for which it was established in the first place. These actions by those lecturers could be in the form of:

1. *Leaking of Examination questions and Altering of Scores:* Some lecturers do leak their examination questions to students or staff for monetary or other reasons best known to them, which negates the true meaning of any educational system. Some other lecturers even go to the extent of altering students' examination or continuous assessment (CA) scores (Abdulwahab, 2011; Bala, 2013; Dusu et'al, 2015; Dusu, 2019; Jega, 2011 and Solomon, 2014).
2. *Lack of Seriousness in invigilating Students during examination:* When a lecturer, due to familiarity or other reasons refuses to take invigilation seriously he/she does create an encouraging environment for students to copy from each other, bring foreign relevant material(s) into the examination hall, take examination for other students (impersonation) and also taking examination outside the hall, just to mention a few. (Dusu, et'al 2015; Dusu, 2019; EL-Rufai, 2006; Ivowi, 1996).
3. *Allowing Students to write on fresh booklets after the papers have been written:* Scrupulous lecturers do allow students to take examinations at their connivance on fresh booklets outside the hall after the papers were earlier taken by all students offering his/her course. All examinations are expected to be written inside the hall at the same time, except for any special or concrete reason for which the Polytechnic authority has full knowledge of. (Bala, 2013; Jega, 2006).
4. *Covering for Students caught in examination malpractices:* Over the years, lecturers who do not encourage examination malpractice in Colleges have been trying to see that this menace is minimized or eradicated and have always been seen as the wicked and heartless ones, but with corrupt lecturers who do not see their actions as right for unknown reasons, they do make their colleagues face all sorts of discouragement and frustration because they always cover for students caught in examination malpractice, which tends to encourage students to engage in examination malpractice (Adegboye, 1998; Bala; 2013; Dusu, et'al 2015 and Dusu, 2019).
5. *Soliciting for students to pass examination and those caught in examination malpractice:* When covering for students caught in examination malpractices fails, pleading on behalf of those students is usually the next action by the indiscipline lecturers. This is so because soliciting for students caught in examination malpractice in the present times is seen as a normal thing among lecturers that have low moral discipline when it comes to serious academic issues. This act of soliciting could be in form of personal favours from colleagues or even giving out bribes so that evidence against students caught should be lost or misplaced by Examination Malpractice Committee members, but since there is usually no physical prove when reported, those corrupt colleagues always deny ever interfering or asking for such favours. Another form of soliciting could be when colleagues (lecturers) come with name(s) or matriculation number(s) of student(s) and request that they be passed by the course lecturer (Bala, 2013 and Dusu, 2019).
6. *Allowing students to involve in Plagiarism:* Plagiarism is an academic issue that is being handled with kid gloves in some of the Polytechnics, since most research work are not usually applied to real live situations. Some lecturers do give students projects already written by other students who have graduated to recopy and then reproduce them as their own project work. This ill-action affects the research-oriented aspect and potential of the graduating student as he/she will be unable to carry out successful research work when the need arises for his/her society or place of work. Plagiarism affects the research-oriented education needed of students in an academic system, for which they are left with no proper knowledge of how to carry out good research work in future (Bala, 2013 and Solomon, 2014).

#### **Non-academic Staff:**

Non-academic staff are sometimes not left behind when it comes to the issue of examination malpractice, because there have been cases of other staff of the institution being involved. When students notice the existence of this kind of staff, they offer bribes to them, so as to involve in all sort of examination malpractice such as;

1. Breaking into lecturer's office or departmental offices in order to obtain question papers or to replace answered script with another fresh booklet (Bala, 2013; Jega, 2006).
2. Colluding with corrupt staff to submit a new prepared answer script as a substitute for the original script after an examination or obtain set of questions and answers beforehand (EL-Rufai, 2006 and Solomon, 2014).
3. Colluding with staff to obtain fake clearance to sit for examination and manipulating of registration forms to do examination for other students (Bala, 2013).

4. Soliciting for help after an examination is another form of malpractice that is seen between students and other staff of a college as a normal thing. Other staff could come with name(s) of student(s) and then ask for favour for those students to be passed by the course lecturer, and when the course lecturer refuses he/she is seen as being wicked and does not want to help students. The pleading habit is becoming so common to the extent that people in the society are also involved (Bala, 2013; Dusu, 2019; EL-Rufai, 2006 and Solomon, 2014).
5. *Handing Students previous students projects (Plagiarism)*: Non-academic staff that have access to Polytechnic Project in the library section do hand to students projects already written by other students to recopy and then reproduce them as their own project work. Actions like this affect the research-oriented aspect of the graduating student as he/she will be unable to carry out a successful research work when the need arises and the students are left with no proper knowledge of how to carry out good research work in future (Bala, 2013; EL-Rufai, 2006 and Solomon, 2014).

#### **Students:**

The educational future of every society lays in the hands of their students, but when the students are not ready to take up that responsibility, there are always going to be problems (Dubey, 1979). Moral decay is a factor which to an extent has encouraged students to engage in examination malpractices whenever there are no corrupt staff to collaborate with in the Polytechnic. The expulsion of students from different Polytechnics for involving in one form of examination malpractice or another over the years is becoming alarming; nevertheless, the problem still persists as students have devised other ways of engaging in such practice. Which could be in form of but not limited to;

1. Copying from one another, exchanging of question paper or answer sheets/booklet (Abdulwahab, 2011; Adegboye, 1998; Ademola-Olateju, 2013; Bala, 2013).
2. Bringing in prepared answers written outside the examination hall, copying from textbooks or notebooks and also use of handset for browsing in the examination hall. (Abdulwahab, 2011; Bala, 2013; Dusu, 2019; Jega, 2006).
3. Bringing another student to take an examination for the student (impersonation) (Abdulwahab, 2011; Adegboye, 1998; Bala, 2013; Dusu, 2019; Ivowi, 1996).
4. Refusal to submit answer booklet at the end of the paper and illegal removal of answer script from the examination hall after signing the attendance sheet (Ademola-Olateju, 2013; Bala, 2013).

#### **Effects of Examination Malpractices on the Polytechnic System:**

The negative effects of examination malpractices cannot be overemphasized as they are numerous, starting from the Polytechnic graduates to the society at large. Ademola-Olateju (2013) asked that “*Do we wonder why Nigerian Schools churn out unemployable graduates that are dissatisfied in themselves?*” This question is to help us analyse the emphases on the possession of certificates by graduates as a means of earning a decent meal ticket in the society, which has threatened the very foundation of our educational system. Some students graduate from the Polytechnic through cheating, this implies that the right certificates are being awarded to the wrong student’. Some of the effects of examination malpractice as outlined below are:

1. Examination malpractice leads to low self-esteem, expulsion and cancellation of students’ result, as well as the dismissal or suspension of staff.
2. Examination malpractice has reduced the level of discipline and therefore enhanced indiscipline and academic immorality in Polytechnics.
3. Employees that were involved in examination malpractice are engaged in jobs they are not suited for, since the certificates they claim to possess are not merited.
4. Examination malpractice is responsible for the perpetual moral decadence which is entrenched in the minds of some members of the society who now feel that it is the fastest and easiest way of passing examination.
5. Examination malpractice makes the cherished image of the society to become irredeemably smeared in the eyes of international community.
6. Graduates will be liabilities to the society because everything in the student is fake, for which when given jobs that suits his/her certificates, he/she will be ill-preened, insufficient and ineffective.

#### **Ways of Managing Examination Malpractice in Polytechnics:**

Whenever there are abuses or abnormalities in the way of acquiring the prospects, the foundation will be faulty and the society will surely suffer the consequences of such action, therefore the ways of achieving the earlier mentioned prospects as agreed by [Abdulwahab, 2011; Adegboye, 1998; Ademola-Olateju, 2013; Bala, 2013; Dusu et’al (2015); Dusu (2019); EL-Rufai, 2006] are that we must ensure that:

1. Management of Polytechnics must show some level of sincerity when new students are admitted by focusing mainly on merit.
2. Examination monitoring team to monitor examinations should be put in place to always check proctors, supervisors and students’ activities during examination to minimize unholy alliance between students and staff. This will also eliminate covering for Students caught cheating during examination.
3. Stringent disciplinary action should always be taken by management of Polytechnics on persons caught involved in examination malpractice, no matter who, which will always serve as a deterrent to others that are yet to be caught in such heinous act or are thinking of involving in examination malpractice.

4. During orientation for newly admitted students, issues such as the negative effects of examination malpractice must be emphasized by management, so that any student that had gained admission with results obtained through examination malpractice from secondary school or through favouritism by management or any staff, should face the reality of success in life through hard work.
5. Workshops and seminars for management, staff and students on the implication of examination malpractice should be organized by management, Government and relevant agencies to discourage the Polytechnic community from involving in such practice.
6. Polytechnic Management should formulate policies and put measures in place which are aimed at curbing this cancer, so that decisions taken on guilty persons are adhered to at all cost.
7. Orientation and enlightenment programmes on inculcating values and morality, such as integrity, hard work and honesty should be organized for members of the society by stakeholders and relevant educational agencies to discourage such attitude.

### **Conclusion:**

Education is an investment and a key tool for national development but Examination Malpractice is a serious challenge that is affecting the prospects of our Polytechnic educational system, that requires drastic actions for its resolution, so that no matter how insignificant the number of examination malpractice cases are in any polytechnic, all hands must be on deck by all staff and management to eradicate this menace in our institutions of learning.

### **Recommendations:**

As Polytechnic educational system continue to face all sort of challenges that affect the prospects for which it was established. The following recommendations are therefore made with regards to the findings and discussion;

#### **Management**

1. Management must see merit as the only means of gaining admission for all candidates.
2. Emphases on stiff measures must be put in place by management to monitor all admission processes.
3. Examination monitoring team to monitor examinations must be in place to always check proctors and students during examination to improve supervision in examination hall and also minimize alliance between candidates/students and staff.
4. Renewed awareness drive for ethical re-orientation through workshops, seminars and enlightenment programs on moral values must be organized on a regular bases by management for everybody in the Polytechnic system.
5. The Examination Malpractice Committee put in place by management must be of individuals that are of high moral status.

#### **Academic and Non-academic Staff**

1. Enforcement of stiff penalties on offenders must be emphases on lectures with moral decadence, while reward and recommendation should be awarded to lectures that do not support malpractice.
2. Proctors that do not take examination seriously must not be involved in examination supervision.
3. A system must be put in place that will allow sincere lectures report those lectures covering for students caught or participating in malpractice.
4. Any staff that is caught involving in malpractice must be shown the exit down. This will serve as deterrent to others involved in malpractice.

#### **Students**

1. Penalties must be enforced on offenders while reward or commendation for students that expose malpractice must be adhered to by Polytechnic authorities.
2. Any student that is caught involving in malpractice must be shown the exit down. This will serve as deterrent to others involved in malpractice.
3. A system must be put in place that will allow sincere students report those proctors or students covering for students caught or participating in malpractice.

All the aforementioned ways should be sincerely adhered to by everyone that is in the Polytechnic system to achieve the prospects it was established for and all staff should be seen to be doing their work as a way of contributing to the success of Polytechnic education and the society as a whole. Students on the other hand must understand and appreciate hard work, dedication and commitment to studies, so that the number of graduates that are gradually becoming liability to the society are minimized if not eliminated.

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