

Integrity and Transparency in Managing Examination in Public Universities in Nigeria: The Role of School Administrators

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ABSTRACT: *Exams are essential feature of every educational system because it is the structure for teaching, learning, and the educational system's overall successes are evaluated based on the examination system's aims and efficacy. The import of tests in a university system cannot be flashy, as they are used to evaluate student performance and decide if they attain the obligatory scholastic learning and knowledge standards. Exams stimulate kids to compete with one another in order to meet up with the expectations of their blood relations, teachers and the society at large. If examination is not conducted correctly and the outcomes are not shared precisely, the projected feedback may not yield the desired consequences. No matter how ambitious, admirable, laudable, or expansive the educational goals are or how well the school curriculum is designed, if no provision is made for accurate evaluation and reporting of learning achievement, these efforts will be in vain. Considering the dynamics of examination delinquency in Nigeria universities, advance the need to enthrone integrity and transparency in the system. This piece generally scrutinized examination in universities, integrity and transparency in university examination, examination malpractice in Nigeria universities, causes of examination malpractice in Nigeria universities, measures taken to curb examination malpractice in Nigerian universities, roles of administrators in the university settings, administrators and examination in Nigerian universities system. The piece concluded that administrators in Nigeria university system can be regard as prime-mover for sustaining most wanted height of integrity and transparency in the university system of the country. The piece in addition made some hints that formation of examination misconduct team should be echoed prior to the commencement of the examination so that students will know they will be put on trial if caught up in any misconduct before, during or after the conduct of the examination. Also, when administrators are habituated and motivated to unconditionally discharge their roles effectively and efficiently, it will resolve among other things to enhanced level of integrity and transparency in the assessment practices in Nigeria University system.*

KEYWORDS: Integrity, transparency, examination, administrator, university

INTRODUCTION

In order to support the socio-economic, political, and cultural growth of a country, university education is a system of formal tertiary education that aims to educate students in a variety of subject areas. The university system is designed to educate and develop the capacities of the citizenry in addition to promoting development in all areas of human endeavour (Odekunle, 2001). This is done in order to meet the demand for workers who can accelerate economic productivity and guarantee the desired rate of growth and development in society. According to the National Policy on Education, higher education contributes to national development through high-level relevant manpower training, development and inculcation of proper values for the survival of the individual and society, intellectual development of people's capacity to understand and appreciate their local and external environments, and acquisition of physical and intellectual skills that will enable people to be self-reliant and independent (2013). Additionally, the university system fosters and strengthens national unity, fosters international understanding and cooperation, and stimulates research and community service (Adeboye, 2003).

Examination in universities

Exams are a vital component of every educational system. A cursory examination of educational institutions suggests that they were established to prepare pupils for examinations. As a result, the framework for teaching, learning, and the educational system's overall success are evaluated based on the examination system's aims and efficacy. The significance of tests in a university system cannot be overstated, as they are used to evaluate student performance and decide if they achieve the required academic learning and knowledge standards. Exams motivate children to compete with one another in order to achieve the expectations of their parents and teachers (Akaranga & Ongong, 2013).

Educational institutions are expected to administer regular tests of achievement to establish the proper level of performance for their examinees. Testing is one of the most important factors by which society judges the results of the educational system. The objective of testing is to reveal an examinee's latent skills. Ability refers to the traits of test-takers that are intended to be evaluated. It comprises of both more general and more specialised information and skills. According to Emaikwu (2006), examination is a component of evaluation that tries to determine the level of skill acquisition or intellectual competency and comprehension a learner possesses after getting certain training. Since evaluation is commonly seen as feedback, it typically aids the educator in preparing for further instruction.

However, the anticipated feedback may not yield the desired consequence if the examination is not conducted appropriately and the results are not shared accurately. No matter how ambitious, admirable, laudable, or expansive the educational goals are or how well the school curriculum is

designed, if no provision is made for accurate evaluation and reporting of learning achievement, these efforts will be in vain (Duze, 2011). At the same time, exploring the dynamics of examination delinquency in Nigeria universities advance the need to enthrone integrity and transparency (Basil, Atuluku, Mbamalu, & Barnabas, 2021); this is because, exams can be administered for selection, classification, placement, advancement, and certification. In order for exams to be valid and credible, they must be administered in pleasant, standardised environments where applicants are forced to adhere to specified norms and standards. Principal roles of university lecturers include conducting research, conveying knowledge, and testing students to determine their levels of intellectual proficiency.

Integrity and transparency in university examination

Dishonesty spans transversely all facets of humanity by this means hampering efficiency and the cultivation of integrity and transparency in the university while conducting examinations (Millie, Jocelyn, Manuel, Divina, Evangeline and Ameil, 2022). The consequence lying on the nation's educational structures, the hub in the region of which nation develops, has been calamitous. In this context, Nigeria's educational system is in disarray, and educators are routinely observed acting suspiciously and refusing to execute their responsibilities these days (Oguntimehin, 2006). The idea of lecturers functioning as role models is no longer widely used, classes are regularly ignored and when they do occur, they are abrupt. Formative and summative evaluations are routinely handled carelessly. Unfortunately, horrible deeds organised by students who do not take their studies seriously and by teachers who break their integrity for momentary pleasure and financial gain continue to plague the Nigerian university system (Adams & Esther, 2013). Despite inaction, the present instances of "sex for marks," "missing answer scripts," and "paying bribes to enhance a high mark" on our campuses have persisted (Ajayi, 2007). Corroborating this submission, sexual exploitation of female students by male lecturers is a staid quandary in most of our universities (Kirya, 2019) where sextortation is seen as appearance of misconduct such that sex is the coins of the bribe for marks or writing exams outside the exams hall.

To this end, it indicates that a sizeable fraction of university professors indulge in this sickness of sex for grades, bribes, missing response scripts, and scores, either directly or indirectly. It has been observed that some of these teachers brazenly routinely inform themselves previously of the grades that their students have gotten in order to create prior awareness and advertisements for those who did poorly to beg for grades in cash or kind. Despite the fact that their students might read other similar textbooks at the library, Emaikwu (2012) claims that the purchase of a few lecturer handouts or textbooks plays a significant role in choosing who would pass the lecturer's course. One is deemed to have failed the lecturer's course if they fail it or, at the very least, obtains an incomplete grade as a result of missing scripts and grades.

One of the main difficulties in the university examination process that has regularly pricked and irritated the minds of many individuals in society appears to be the frequency of missing exam

scripts and scores in many departments and faculties at our universities. There is a tone of material available on how students who have taken exams and signed in and out before and after the exam start have later learned that they frequently do not receive a grade for the courses they took. It has been observed that many students in Nigerian universities read attentively and meticulously before and during tests, but that their names and registration numbers are not associated with any scores or grades because their exam scripts were not turned in. Students who are impacted by this horrifying incident typically experience severe psychological stress, feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness, as well as other associated spiral consequences on their study habits for subsequent exams. Because of the frequent occurrence of missing scripts and scores or incorrect grading, it appears that many bright students have had their academic aspirations crushed because they were denied good grades and better class of degrees, which had a detrimental effect on their capacity to succeed academically. Numerous Nigerian campuses experience this, and the trend has recently gotten worse (Orji, 2012 & Okara, 2012).

The observation also shows that there are a variety of hypotheses that may be used to explain why missing scripts and scores occasionally occur in the university system. Missing scripts may develop when a male professor feels a strong, unreasonable desire to exploit a female student who would not give in to his impetuous, unmotivated notion or behaviour. No matter how smart a female student may be, according to Okocha (2011), as soon as a professor advances her for sex and she declines, her problems start, like missing scripts or results. Okocha said that by rejecting the advances of a sexually enthusiastic lecturer in her field, she actually became the victim. Due to flimsy excuses like her script not being seen, she was required to attend two additional sessions. However, the truth of this issue is that the secretary who collects the results may frequently mistakenly exclude some results, scores, grades, and names of some students if there is any laxity on the part of such individuals participating in the processing of examination results. Unknowingly, the examiners occasionally tuck certain scripts into unused answer booklet bundles during and after the exam. The course organiser and professors who grade them may also lose certain scripts, especially when recording. There is a chance that the individual who types the result sheets will leave out critical information about some students. Most students usually refuse to turn in their answer scripts when it becomes clear to them that they have not written what is necessary for them to pass the course. This frequently occurs in general studies courses where there are many students participating in the teaching and examination processes. In universities where students offer related course combinations like mathematics/statistics education, mathematics/computer, physics/mathematics, computer/economics, science/education, etc., missing scripts and scores are also frequently an issue. In these circumstances, mistakes of commission and transposition may occur. When students' scripts are "farmed out" to unauthorized individuals to help them mark and record grades, negligence on the part of lecturers may result in an incidence of missing scripts. Scripts can get lost if they are marked in hostile locations like bars and beer gardens due to past blunders.

It is imperative that this issue be addressed from the outset and minimised by university officials, professors, and examiners. Students should not be punished if it happens again since that would be unjust. To avoid damaging their CGPA and academic achievement, which may damage their university success, the students should be rewarded by retaking the courses and substituting the results for the missing ones (Orji, 2012). The Legislative Council Panel on Education (2004) encouraged colleges to rapidly supply markers with backup scripts so they can begin grading them. In order to safeguard scripts, Mettle (2010) recommended avoiding public marking of scripts and ensuring strict script movement between markers during double marking. In order to save time and prevent mark entry problems, he also proposes consolidating marking and recording marks into a single procedure. He also suggests properly storing test scripts and allowing candidates to access them whenever they want. How practical are these fixes for the missing scripts at Nigerian universities? Given the foregoing, the researcher will concentrate on the real causes, effects, and solutions to problems with integrity and transparency of examination, such as missing scripts and scores in the university system, using the opinions of students and lecturers, the key stakeholders in this alarming scenario that currently describes the examination process in Nigerian universities.

Examination malpractice in Nigerian universities

Examination cheating has become a major issue in the education systems around the world. Examinations are one of the most prevalent places where students lie, cheat, or engage in other forms of dishonesty (Petters & Okon, 2014). Anderman and Midgley (2000) reported that roughly 80% of high-achieving high school students and 75% of college students have admitted to cheating on an exam. Nyamwange, Ondima, and Onderi (2013) also reported that exam cheating is a worldwide phenomenon. Isangedighi (2007) agrees with others that the rising flood of exam cheating among today's students poses a serious threat to society. It's sad, according to Adams and Esther (2013), that examination malpractice or malfeasance is commonplace in most countries. Exams, as stated by Shahid (2007), are used to evaluate students' mastery of material and to ascertain whether or not they have progressed to the next level. Students' performance on exams is valued as a predictor of their potential in school and the workplace, as well as a means of advancing them to more advanced levels. Examinations in schools, as described by Nyamwange et al. (2013), serve as a global standard for gauging both students' and teachers' grasp of subject matter at different junctures in the educational process.

Causes of examination malpractice in Nigerian universities

The entire stage of schooling have been abridged to pitiable learning hubs, and this has caused extra mischief than good (Millie, Jocelyn, Manuel, Divina, Evangeline & Ameil, 2022), The theory of planned behaviour according to Zhanel, Daraja, Lyazzat, Ulzharkyn, Botakoz, and Zhanylsyn, (2022) states that cheating in assessment transpires when the students has equally the intent to cheat in addition to opportunity which dovetailed into the widespread acuity by students of various examination scams as the error committed by the school administrators and the university in

particular, which do not improve classroom culture, e-library, advanced teaching methods and so on to promote academic integrity and transparency as well as enhancing proper examination conducts. There are various justifications offered for why students cheat on tests. The motivations for cheating on exams have been categorised differently by various persons. Exam cheating, according to Eckstein (2003), can result from both subjective and objective variables. Exam cheating can have subjective factors, such as a person's mindset or a lack of knowledge of the laws and norms that define what is right and wrong, problematic, or even criminal. The need for trained and educated employees and professionals, as well as pressures from society, families, and other external sources, are all objective reasons.

The causes of this transformation, according to Achio, Ameko, Kutsanedzie, Alhassan, and Ganaa (2012), were psychological, environmental, and IQ issues. Some candidates can feel pressured or concerned about having to meet standards for certain subjects, or they might be fearful of failing or obtaining low grades, which could make them feel motivated to cheat. Not covering enough of the course material and having applicants sit close to one another in tests are two environmental factors that could encourage exam cheating. Academic prowess or IQ level are some examples of intelligence factors, which can lead less gifted pupils to compare themselves to people who are naturally smarter. Exam cheating is more common among those who perform poorly in school because they do not want to put in the extra efforts necessary to catch up.

Measures taken to curb examination malpractice in Nigerian universities

Integrity and transparency are essentials to the operation of universities in Nigeria especially in the area of managing examination conduct. Being the last phase preceding doorway into the labour force, it provides a first-class occasion to fuse integrity, transparency and ethics education (Carissa & Monica, 2020); with the intention that institutions which traditionally saddled with the responsibility to coach potential leaders uphold the necessary values in the conduct of examination is thus primary to building a decent public servants in the society. Globally speaking according to Millie, et al. (2022), integrity and transparency if well defined and strengthened are tools to prevent malpractice in the conduct of examination within the university community; such that its import will force both government and university administrators to offer legally recognized basis for its adherence equally in terms of assumption and practice. Exam misbehaviour has been reduced by several measures. Groups in many countries are working harder than ever to stop academic dishonesty in the conduct of examination. They submit misbehaviour incidents and protocols to raise awareness and involve professionals in debate.

In schools and civilizations, they promote ethics. They also protect whistleblowers and alleged malfeasants against unfair punishment by coworkers and the authorities (Decoo, 2002). In the submission of Irene, Tomas, Dita, Jana, Veronika, Anna, Stella, and Pavel, (2021), claims of grave appearance of exams misconducts should be well thought-out by a veteran and skilled team, instead of a single personality in the academia. In addition, the authors recommended that all

tertiary institutions need to build up, implement and maintain transparent, fair, robust and consistent strategies policies and sanctions for academic integrity. Similarly, Esraa-Fwzi and Mohammed-Amin, (2020) added that, in order for universities to stand out as well as surmount enormous challenges being faced, they ought to in turn have astute leaders of integrity and transparency at the helm of affairs; who as a matter fact, must be fair-haired and demonstrate a lofty height of integrity and transparency. Going forward, the authors suggested that school administrators and academic staff at universities should tackle issues associated with moral values (i. e, integrity); in addition, serve as a role model for others within and outside the university for all round sanity to enhanced productivity as well as promotion of partnership connecting institutions along with people in the society.

Eckstein (2003) suggests controlling misconduct by kind. Copying, slipping information into the exam room and impersonation are countered through teacher vigilance, security, identity checks, and so on. He added that punishments for breaches include cancellation of results, repetition or exclusion from exams, and, in the worst circumstances, fines and jail. In exam rooms, educators want to ban all technological gadgets, including portable calculators (Noah & Eckstein, 2003). Gaining a better understanding on these concepts, practical measures applied on event of breach of examination conduct serve to correct and figure out suitable approach towards intellectual integrity and transparency (Zhanel, et al. 2022). The authors stated further that, academic integrity is central to learning progression and scholastic life of our various universities. Hence, lecturers and learners should profile the university learning community as culture of learning footed on ethical values such as openness, reliance, equality, admiration and conscientiousness. Also, the knowledge of academic staff and students regarding particular set of laws according to Zhanel, et al. (2022) that are relevant at the university in relation to breach of the standards of integrity and transparency in schoolwork should be at the highest level.

Roles of administrators in the university settings

Although some members of staff may share responsibilities with faculty or academics, academic administration is a division of personnel at a university or college that is responsible with the maintenance and supervision of the institution. On the other hand, virtually every educational establishment possesses a one-of-a-kind administrative hierarchy of some form. Fewer institutions are managed by employees who are also actively involved in academic or scholarly activity. A significant share of top administrative positions is filled by former academics who have higher degrees but do not currently teach or do research. The following is a list of some of the duties that university administrators are responsible for (Graham, 2013; Szekeres, 2011).

- Admissions
- Supervision of academic affairs such as hiring, promotion, tenure, and evaluation (with faculty input where appropriate);
- Maintenance of official records (typically supervised by a registrar);

- Maintenance and audit of financial flows and records;
- Maintenance and construction of campus buildings (the *physical plant*);
- Maintenance of the campus grounds;
- Safety and security of people and property on the campus (often organized as an office of public safety or campus police);
- Maintenance and construction
- Supervision and support of campus computers and network (information technology).
- Fundraising from private individuals and foundations ("development" or "advancement")
- Research administration (including grants and contract administration, and institutional compliance with federal and state regulations)
- Public affairs (including relations with the media, the community, and local, state, and federal governments)
- Student services such as disability services, career counseling and library staff.

Administrators and examination in Nigerian university system

Exams are essential in every educational setting because they evaluate students' psychomotor, emotional, and cognitive abilities using a variety of tools under the guidance of an examiner or examiners (Atanda & Lameed, 2006). The process of teaching and learning helps pupils develop their cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor abilities. In conclusion, this is how educational institutions assess whether the teaching-learning process has been successful throughout time (Emunemu, Ejie, Ogundiran, & Awe, 2017). The following responsibilities, duties, and obligations are objectively carried out by university administrators in order to synchronize the system and circumstances for successful exam administration:

- (i) Decision on when examinations will come up
- (ii) Availability of accurate data on the number of students intended to write the examinations.
- (iii) Adequate arrangement for the materials needed, that is, examination questions, answer sheets, attendance sheets, and so on.
- (iv) Collection and moderation of examination questions at least two weeks before the commencement of examination
- (v) Decision on the venue with consideration for seats, ventilation and so on
- (vi) Decision on invigilators for examination supervision.
- (vii) Drawing up examination time-table.
- (viii) Constitution of examination misconduct committee earlier before the commencement of the examination so that students will know they will be tried if involved in any misconduct.

All these must be put in place to ensure integrity and transparency in the conduct of examination in the University system in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The role played by administrators in Nigeria Universities especially in the discourse of ensuring integrity and transparency in the examination process cannot be overemphasized. It is obvious that when administrators are conditioned and motivated to discharge their roles effectively and efficiently, it will culminate among other things to improved level of integrity and transparency in the examination practices in Nigeria University system. In a nutshell administrator in Nigeria university system can be consider as a prime-mover for sustaining desired level of integrity and transparency in the university system of the country.

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