

# Value Orientation and Examination Malpractice in Higher Education in Nigeria: A Study of Anambra State

Ngozi G. Egbue &

Bentina Alawari Mathias

Department of Sociology/Anthropology

Faculty of Social Sciences

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

ngegbue@yahoo.com/bentinad1@yahoo.com

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## *Abstract*

*Examination serves as the major instrument for evaluating students' knowledge; it is the foremost means of assessing the quality and quantity of knowledge a student has accumulated at the end of a teaching process. Thus, most students who have lower intellectual endowment or have not made full use of their studying time and opportunities are often tempted to engage in all forms of inappropriate examination behaviour to achieve success. Such students often utilize all existing resources at their disposal; and modern technology has become a veritable tool to circumvent standard examination practices. A sample of the opinions of students from three tertiary institutions in Anambra State was taken in order to examine the background factors and consequences of examination malpractice in the State. Recommendations were made for necessary social change geared at effecting appropriate examination behaviour among students so as to arrive at a healthier educational and employment environment.*

**Keywords:** examination malpractice, penalty for malpractice, values, lecturers, Anambra

## **Introduction**

Values can be defined as preference concerning appropriate courses of action or outcomes. As such, values reflect a person's sense of right and wrong or what ought to be. For example, the ideal of: 'equal rights for all' or 'excellence deserves admiration' or 'people should be treated with respect and dignity', etc. represent social values. Values tend to influence attitudes and behaviour. For instance, if one who values 'equal rights for all' goes to work for an organization that treats its managers much better than it does its workers, one may form the attitude that the company is an unfair employer, and proceed to respond accordingly. Likewise, in an environment where emphasis is placed on certificate no matter how it was acquired, the attitude toward education would be so inclined (Hacker, 2011).

According to Shivam Sharma in Santrock (2007), values are formed during three significant periods: 1. Imprint period, from birth to 7 years. 2. Modeling period, from 8 –13 years. 3. Socialization period, from 13 –21 years. Personal values provide an internal reference for what is good, beneficial, important, useful, beautiful, desirable, constructive, etc. Values generate behaviour and

help solve common human problems for survival by comparative rankings of value, the results of which provide answers to questions of why people do what they do and in what order they choose to do them (Lamy, 2011). Values are obtained in many different ways. The most important place for building values is a person's family. The family is responsible for teaching children what is right and wrong long before there are other influences. As it is said, a child is a reflection of the parents.

Value orientation refers to the principle of right or wrong that are accepted by an individual or a social group. The value and functionality of any educational system lies in its ability to actualize its goals, and world over, examination process usually makes the difference. The goals of national educational systems, and indeed national development, become like a mirage if examination ethics are not encouraged and instituted (Nwadiani, 2005). This is because, till date, examination still remains the best tool for an objective assessment and evaluation of what learners have achieved after a period of schooling. Hence, any action that undermines examinations poses a great threat to the validity and reliability of the system for academic assessment and certification.

In Nigeria, the extreme fall of the educational standards is becoming problematic, as is evidenced by the number of non-functional graduates in the nation's workforce (Dioka, 2004) As observed by Nwadiani (2005) the pollution of the school system by both students, educational staff and others has reached an unprecedented level. A major part of this problem is the escalation of examination malpractice. All forms of misconduct and malpractices are introduced in order to obtain certificates at all levels; and parents, administrators, teachers and students are focused on certificates as the end result of education (Awanbor, 2005).

As observed by Adekate (1993), examination can simply be defined as a means of accessing the quality and quantity or performance that an individual has accumulated at the end of a teaching process which may spread over a period of time. Arifayan (2005), on the other hand, noted that examination is an instrument for judgment of knowledge or competence; an instrument for testing, accessing, evaluation and accreditation. Drawing upon these definitions, examination can be said to be an indispensable tool in the education system. Indeed, examinations serve several important functions. They are used mainly to determine students' grades consequent upon which certificates are awarded. Usually, certificates are awarded to only those candidates who passed the final examinations at the end of a course. They also serve as the means for selecting the best candidates for various purposes. Undoubtedly, as standards of performance at examination have declined considerably within the past decade, so also have every sector of societal development in the country (Alarape and Onakopa, 2003).

Of all educational problems in Nigeria, none poses a greater threat than the issue of examination malpractice and attendant poor student and graduate quality. As observed by Ajibola (2012), there is therefore urgent need for

change. Even more disturbing is the involvement of school administrators, parents/guardians and examination personnel, resulting in the wholesale tainting of national educational values. The increase of “private” and “special” centers for external examinations such as the Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) and West African Examination Council (WAEC), are evidence of at least school administrators and parents collusion. Olusegun Obasanjo, as President of Nigeria, had predicted that if educationalists and other stakeholders did not pay adequate attention to the re-orientation and rechanneling of youth at the post-primary schools towards drastic reduction in examination malpractices by 2010, the nation’s educational standard was bound to crash (Ozuma, 2005). How one acquires knowledge, what one actually learns and the need for such knowledge, are largely developed in schools. Since what is currently acquired during learning – in terms of both academic content and social values- seem to be faulty; as Mbanefo (1998) observed, Nigeria’s educational outcomes are bound to be very unhealthy for national growth.

Other authors such as Ikupa (1997), Usman (1994), Onfechere (1996), Dike (1996), and Shonekon in Ajibola (2012) have variously dealt with the nature and implications of examination malpractice. Their conclusions are in the direction that it constitutes an aberration of equitable assessment of students’ educational performance; and that it endangers job performance in various areas of enterprise. Hence, in the final analysis it impedes socio-economic and political development.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Examination malpractice in Nigeria has attained a frightening proportion. While in the past, students and others tended to hide the practice, currently it is advertised and celebrated (Edeh, 2005). The so-called ‘special examination centres’ have continued on the increase, being patronized by those who by paying special fees are availed opportunities for examination malpractice in order to obtain higher grades to which they would not otherwise be entitled (Adekate, 1993). To counter this situation, certificate verification has become a major system for certificate authentication in higher educational institutions. This involves large expenditure in terms of time, manpower and finance. Furthermore, second stage examinations, for example Post Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), are now instituted so as to circumvent the problems of massive examination malpractice (Arifayan, 2005). This constitutes great inconvenience and financial expenditure to the candidate and an increased workload to lecturers and officials.

The consequently, an overwhelming number of half-baked graduates turned out annually are unlikely to cope in situations where academic honesty, strict examination ethics and grading procedures are applied. The adverse effects of this situation on such students could be enormous, ranging from

frequent poor academic performance to outright failure and subsequent helplessness. The academic environment may consequently become too stressful for such students, often resulting in some anti-social behaviour. Furthermore, suspected offenders have their results withheld. Many have been suspended or expelled from educational institutions. Many families have been thrown into confusion because of this issue. Confusion and consternation are also apparent at the employment scene, as it becomes increasingly difficult for employers to determine who is qualified or not for a particular job. All these problems prompted this investigation into the background, patterns and consequences of examination malpractice.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to examine the value orientation that constitutes the background to increasing proportions and negative consequences of examination malpractice in higher education in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine university students' perception of examination malpractice in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State University, Igbariam and Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe.
2. To identify the causes of examination malpractice in these higher educational institutions.
3. To identify the different types of examination malpractice in these Institutions.
4. To examine the consequences of examination malpractice in these institutions.
5. To suggest ways to effect positive changes in students' examination behaviour in these institutions.

### **The Concept of Examination Malpractice**

Examination malpractice is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria or in any part of the world. Alarape and Onokoya (2003) noted that the first examination malpractice in Nigeria was reported in 1914, when there was question paper leakage in the Senior Cambridge local examination. They, however, observed that some other scholars traced the origin of examination malpractice to the wave of cancellation of Nigerian paper of the Senior Cambridge examination in 1948. The most pronounced malpractice in Nigeria was that of the 1964 West African School Certificate Examination, which was tagged 'EXPO.' This was subsequently followed by those of 1970, 1973, 1974, 1979, 1981, and 1991 (Oladope, 1997). From 1991 to date, examination malpractice has taken advanced and more sophisticated dimensions. Records emerge yearly indicating either high or low percentage in examination malpractice in the nation's core examinations such as West African Examination Council (WAEC) and Joint Admission Matriculations Board (JAMB) (Daily Times, 2005).

The West African Examination Council (WAEC) syllabus (2005) gave a list of types of examination malpractice as follows:

- Candidates bringing books or cribs into the examination hall.
- Insulting or assaulting a supervisor or invigilator.
- Replacing a legitimate answer script with another during or after an examination.
- Swapping of scripts in an examination hall.
- Impersonation.
- Taking part in mass or organized cheating in the hall or around it.

According to Onyechere (2006), the oldest and commonest method of examination malpractice is the entry into the examination hall with ‘cribs’ (what students now commonly refer to as ‘microchips.’) Others include: writing on handkerchief and tights, stretching of the neck like the giraffe to look at another candidate’s work known or unknown to the person. In the Eastern part of Nigeria, use of hooligans to gain forced entry into examination hall to seize and remove question papers and scripts were reported in some polytechnic and colleges of education in July 1990. Answers to the examinations were then thrown in to their candidates/clients in the examinations hall (WASC, 2004; Eze, 2011).

Dara-Ojo (1994) identified plagiarism as a form of examination malpractice that should be investigated and punished in the same way as cheating in the examination hall. Plagiarism is the use of another person’s work without appropriate acknowledgement both in the text and in the references at the end of the work. Forms of plagiarism include:

- Copying laboratory and field work papers or term papers or both.
- Colluding with a member of staff in order to submit a newly prepared answer script as a substitute for the original script after an examination.
- Writing of projects, laboratory or field report on behalf of a student by a member of staff.

Scholars have argued that because Nigerian orientation on education is certificate and high-grade intensive, there is a tendency to strive to obtain high grades by all means in order to secure employment. Unorthodox methods are also used to gain admission into educational institutions. Aliyu (1991), Denga (1993) and Ugwu (1997) identify three factors at the background of educational malpractice, namely: (a) Psychological (b) Environmental and (c) Intelligence. These scholars argued that the psychological factor of fear of failure or of scoring low grades promotes student involvement in examination malpractice. Environmental factors include the crowded nature of classrooms/halls, inadequate examination invigilation, teachers/lecturers inability to cover the stipulated syllabus, inadequate, obsolete and obscured instructional materials. These factors may force candidates to cheat in an examination.

Intelligence on the other hand involves cognition and reaction to stimulus. Some students are naturally academically gifted and so could pass examinations without much effort, while others may perceive a need for external help to pass examinations. This external help is associated with all forms of misconducts.

Adeloye (2004) stated that adequate focus must be given to individual differences with regard to academic competence, ability and comprehension. Failure of students or officials to recognize the fact that intelligence quotients (IQ) differ is another factor leading to examination fraud.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

This study adopted aspects of Robert Merton's views on social structure and Anomie (Merton, 1968). Merton argued that deviance result not from pathological personalities but from the nature and structure of society itself. He begins from the standard functionalist position of value consensus, positing that members of society occupy varying positions in the social structure. For example they differ in terms of class positions in the social structure and they do not have the same opportunity for realizing shared values. This situation generates deviance (Haralambos and Herald, 1980). Using the US as an example, Merton outlines his theory as follows: Members of the society share the major values of success for which they all strive and which is largely measured in terms of wealth and material possession. This may be linked to a tendency to reject the rules of the game and strive for success by any available means. The situation becomes like a game of cards in which winning becomes so important that the rules are abandoned by some players. When rules cease to operate, a situation of 'anomie' or normlessness occurs. In a situation of 'anything goes', norms no longer direct behaviour and deviance is encouraged (Haralambos and Herald, 1980).

Examination malpractice is a deviant behaviour because it is an action which does not follow the stated norms and expectations of Nigerians. According to Merton's theory it could be summarized that examination malpractice is caused by a disjoint in the shared values for academic excellence, emphasis on high grades and paper certificates as requirement for employment into the labour market. More emphasis then comes to be placed on certification of fake excellence than on the ability to defend the certificate. Hence society tends to focus less on 'how certificates are obtained' than on 'what the grade is' and 'who has it'. These shared disjointed values of academic excellence for very scarce economic rewards drive students and parents to deviate from accepted norms of rectitude and equity. Furthermore, academic achievement orientation within an environment laden with educational inadequacies, corruption amid extreme capitalist tendencies, has increasingly facilitated a state of normlessness in examination practices.

### **Methodology**

The study was carried out in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State University, Igbariam campus and Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka has a population of 24,706 students in the full-time programme and 12,476 students in the part-time programme, distributed into diverse range of causes during the 2011/2012 academic year ([http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title= Nnamdi Azikiwe University](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nnamdi_Azikiwe_University)). Anambra State University has a population of 32,700 students in the 2010/2011 academic session. It offers a diverse range of causes of study ([http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Anambra state University](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Anambra_state_University)). Nwafor Orizu College of Education runs two types of programmes, a three-year National Certificate of Education (NCE) and a four-year Degree programme (B. Ed) which is affiliated to University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Nwafor Orizu College of Education Academic Regulation Handbook 2005).

The major instrument for data collection is Focus Group Discussion (FGD). This is complemented by Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). Secondary data related to examinations in the educational institutions were also utilized. At Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Faculty of Social Sciences was purposively selected and samples were taken from the departments of Economics, Political Science and Sociology/Anthropology. Twenty students were selected from each Department, from those who indicated a willingness to participate. These comprise fourteen females and six male students from the first and final-year levels in each department. Altogether sixty respondents were selected from Nnamdi Azikiwe University. At the State University, Faculty of Science was selected, and samples were drawn from the departments of Chemistry, Computer Science and Microbiology. Also twenty students were selected from each Department comprising of fourteen females and six males. At Nwafor Orizu College of Education, the Department of Art Education (Fine and Applied Art option) was selected. A total of thirty-one participants were selected from the first year class and the final year classes of the NCE and degree programmes.

Four focus groups were created among total of 60 students comprising 42 females and 18 males in each of the two universities. One focus group comprised first year students; the second was for final year students; the third comprised male students only, while the fourth group was made up of males only. At the college of education, three groups of discussants were created out of 31 students. These groups were based on course levels: namely first year NCE programme, third year NCE programme and final year affiliated degree programme students. The gender based focus groups in the universities was for the purpose of identifying any gender related differences in students' views. The total number of willing discussants at the college of education did not permit for a separate gender based grouping there.

The key informant interview involved five staff of the three institutions, one lecturer and one administrative officer from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, two lecturers from Anambra State University, and one high-level administrative officer from the Nwafor Orizu College of Education. The secondary data gathered from the record files at Nnamdi Azikiwe University were presented using simple percentage and frequency tables, while data from the qualitative instruments were transcribed and illustrative quotes from FGD and KII were used to support and elucidate the quantitative data.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The demographic characteristics of the discussants are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Personal Data of Focus Group Discussants**

<b>Variables/categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Sex of respondent:</b>		
Male	45	29.80
Female	106	70.20
Total	151	100%
<b>Current Age:</b>		
15-25	83	54.97
26-35	35	23.18
36-45	26	17.29
46 and above	7	4.64
Total	151	100%
<b>Year of study:</b>		
First year (all programmes)	98	64.9
Third year (NCE)	10	6.6
Final year (degree)	43	28.5
Total	151	100%

Table 1 show that 29.80% of the discussants are male, while 70.20% are female. More of the discussants (54.97%) are within the age range of 15 – 25 years. About 64.9% of discussants are first year students while 35.1% are third year NCE and final year degree students.

### **Perception of Examination Malpractice**

Examination malpractice is generally perceived as a vice in the society. All the discussants were in agreement that examination malpractice has negative impact on education, the environment of educational institutions and the society at large. According to one key informant:

*If examination malpractice is allowed to continue unchecked, it will completely debase our education. It is worsening daily!*



Discussants also made comments such as 'It is a bad practice, and is eating up the society.' 'It has very severe negative consequences on society.' 'It is bad because it will affect the quality of manpower in the nation.' Discussants also generally showed awareness of this phenomenon as part of existing pattern of inappropriate behaviours that society tends to ignore. Final year students in particular tended to view examination malpractice as common to most people directly or indirectly. They made comments such 'everyone is guilty but only students are punished.' Some discussants jokingly observed that 'it is in our (the nation's) character.'

### **Causes of Examination Malpractice**

Many factors were identified as the causes of examination malpractice. All the first year students said that students and lectures are the cause of examination malpractice. According to one of them:

*Most lecturers do not teach. They only come to class when examination time table comes out. As such most students do not attend class. Furthermore, those who want to study do not have anything to read.*

Other causes include poor reading habit, examination tension, and inadequate number of invigilators during examination.

A third year student noted that very often students misuse their time so that examinations catch them unaware. Some key informants stated that parents often contribute to their wards' involvement in examination malpractice. Some parents offer gifts to lecturers as incentive to favour their wards with unmerited high grades, while some find ways to blackmail lecturers for this purpose. Some parents fail to provide for the necessary educational material and other needs of their wards.

Gender also plays a role in examination malpractice. According to a key informant, inability to concentrate on their studies is a common feature among female students. They see the tertiary institutions as mostly conducive for dating and obtaining spouses. Thus, they spend more time making effort to look attractive than concentrating on their studies. Married female students continue to compete with others in the beauty game.

### **Types and Consequences of Examination Malpractice**

Tables 2 and 3 show types of examination malpractice in two of the three institutions studied. Impersonation, possession of relevant materials, destruction of suspected or identified examination malpractice material, and possession of answer to one or more questions, all carry suspension penalties in both institutions. A few differences exist in the less serious offences. For

instance, while unauthorized changing of seat could attract a penalty of suspension for one academic session in Nnamdi Azikiwe University; at Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe, the same offence is punishable by automatic failure of the relevant paper. Expulsion which used to apply for the most serious malpractices is no longer employed in any of the institutions.

**Table 2: Types and Penalties for Examination Malpractice in Four Faculties in Nnamdi Azikiwe University from 2009–2011**

<b>Types of Malpractice</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Impersonation	Suspension for 3 years
Caught with Relevant materials inside the hall	Suspension For 1 year
Mutilation of Registration numbers.	Suspension For 3 year
Changing of seat and serial number	Suspension for 1 years
Using another person teller as evidence of payment of school fees	Suspension for 3 years
Destruction of the relevant examination material found on student	Suspension for 3 years
Peeping into another person's paper	Reprimanded and discharged
Use of electronic device	Suspension for 2 years
Presentation of false identity card	Suspension for 3 years
Exchange of examination materials in the hall	Suspension for 2 years
Collaborative coping	Suspension for 1 years
Mutilation of receipt for school fees	Suspension for 2 years

**Source:** N.A.U. Exams & Records Unit

According to the data obtained from the KII and students FGD, the pattern of examination malpractice indicated in Tables 2 and 3 above is in consonance with what obtains in many other tertiary institutions. The focus group discussants were especially detailed in their description of different types of examination malpractice including the following:

- Minute writings; termed 'microchips' or 'omokirikiri'
- 'E-method' (use of handsets)
- Writing on the desk before the examination
- Question paper leakage
- Soliciting or 'sorting' of lecturers for purposes of malpractice
- Use of Bluetooth especially by female students who cover the devices with their hairs.
- Mutilation of registration number or the names on the school fee receipts.
- Collaborative coping

**Table 3: Types and Penalties for Examination Malpractice in Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe**

Types of Malpractice	Penalties
Possession of material relevant to Examination	Suspension for one academic session
Possession of solution to a question or questions in the examination paper	Suspension for two academic sessions
Impersonation	Suspension for two academic sessions. If the impersonator is not a student of the school he/she will be handed over to law enforcement agents. But for pre-NCE students expulsion.
Engaging in unauthorized communication in examination hall	The relevant paper(s) will be cancelled.
Changing of sitting position	„
Consulting notes or books inside or outside an active examination hall	„
Smuggling question papers into or out of examination hall	„
Disobeying lawful instructions from examination officers	„
Leaving an examination hall without submitting answer script	Penalty to be determined by the Examination Malpractice Committee (EMC)

Source: Nwafor Orizu College of Education Examination Regulation Unit

The generality of the discussants agreed that examination malpractice robs society of intellectual and other forms of development in the long run. However, it was noted that the short term gains for the individual were quite attractive. These include:

- Passing exams with high scores
- Increase in CGPA
- Reducing the number of failed examinations -‘carry-over’
- Saving time and money by reducing the number of class repetition

Asked about the extent of students’ involvement in examination malpractice, most discussants noted that hardly is any examination system free from malpractice. They also observed that though more common among academically weak students, brighter students also engage in this activity due to peer pressure or in order to ensure that they maintain their superiority in

situations of massive fake grades. Furthermore, some bright students provide examination malpractice 'services' to others for economic gains.

Overall, no marked differences were found in the views of male and female students, nor between the course levels. Notable also is the fact that the first year student discussants had experienced almost a full year of examinations, and would also have some related experience during secondary education.

### **Suggestions on How to Reduce Examination Malpractice in Higher Educational Institutions**

Asked how to reduce the occurrence of examination malpractice in Nigeria, the following suggestions were proffered by focus group discussants:

1. Lecturers should make sure that they deliver their lectures effectively and timely, and not flood students with last minute study materials.
2. Students should start on time to prepare for examination.
3. Parents/guardians should ensure that they provide for the educational and related needs of their wards.
4. There should be an efficient system of assessment of the teaching process and student participation.
5. Institutions should de-emphasize final examination by focusing on other performance areas such as term papers, quizzes, practical work and projects, so that the weight of examination scores is reduced.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Examination malpractice has continued to erode not only the Nigerian educational system, but the entire socio-cultural, economic, and political life. This is due to problems attendant upon inordinate focus on educational certificates as the sole route to scarce employment opportunities, rather than as a measurement of authentic and applicable knowledge. Furthermore, this malaise is evidently firmly anchored in other entrenched aspects of 'malpractices' in other dimensions of national life.

Therefore based on the above findings this paper recommends the followings:

1. Parents should start early to let their children know that cheating in examination is not only morally wrong, but also a crime with negative consequences on perpetrators and society at large.
2. The current emphasis on academic certificates for employment should be discouraged. Rather emphasis should be focused on useable skills.
3. Adequate checks and supervision should be put in place at all examinations centres geared toward minimizing examination malpractice.
4. Penalties for examination malpractice must be painstakingly enforced.
5. In teaching and examinations, lecturers should de-emphasize rote learning and encourage meaningful learning.
6. Lecturers should make the teaching process student-centered.

7. Enlightenment programmes should be embarked upon, on and off campuses, on the damaging social implications of examination malpractice.
8. Educational institutions should employ all human and material resources necessary and conducive for effective teaching and learning.

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