

Perception of Academic Integrity Violation and Examination Issues by Selected Members of the University Community

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Abstract: This research was carried out to investigate into the perception of academic integrity violation among selected member of the university community. One hundred and fifty respondents participate in the study. This was made up of 50 under graduates, 50 young graduates and older graduates (senior lecturers and professors). Descriptive research design of the survey type was employed in this study. A self-constructed questionnaire was administered to the respondents. The data obtained was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. A statistically is significant difference was observed in the incidence and prevalence of extermination malpractice and miscellaneous offences as perceived by the 3 categories of respondents (undergraduate, young graduate and old graduate), a statistically significant difference was observed in the mean perception of the nature of examinees and factors that affect them by the 3 categories of respondents (undergraduate, young graduate and old graduate). Based on these findings, it was recommended that the younger ones should embrace the ideals and the values, which were embraced by the older generation. Geometric increase of learners' enrolment should be by the correspondent increase in infrastructure and adequate academic planning. Less emphasis should be placed on paper qualification. We should all embraced that great values called dignity of labour. This study suggests a bringing back into our community, high integrity in all facet of our endeavor.

Key words: Academic integrity, violation, selected members, community

INTRODUCTION

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activities in an open, honest and responsible manner. In any learned society devoted to the promotion of knowledge and research there is the need to adhere strictly to some moral values and principles. A university's intellectual reputation depends on maintaining the highest standards of intellectual honesty. Academic integrity is a fundamental cornerstone of any academic community. People's perception about the quality of institution and the value of its degree are based on the belief that graduates earned their honestly and that faculties certified that graduates have knowledge and skills, learnt through rigorous work guided by high standard of excellence. Also an academic, having got the aptitude for intellectual pursuits can become fulfilled only if such an individual is upright and wholesome.

Integrity is more than just an integral part of academic career. It is an attribute that is applicable to all aspects of life. Being an individual of integrity requires personal awareness of the type of person you want to be. In the advanced countries of the world, university education is basic and provides citizens with foundation to succeed in the work force. It therefore provides citizens with opportunity to develop basic skills in critical

thinking, technical and business writing, research developing ideas, innovation, organization and time management. All these go a long way to determine suitability. For this reason the issue of integrity is regarded as an essential component of students' academic experience.

One important activity of the academic community is examinations. It falls within the scope of the concept of curriculum. There comes a stage in the teaching and learning exercise that learners will be required to face a set of tasks which are designed to test knowledge or ability either in written or oral form and/or laboratory practicals. Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all academic activities. Every institution is expected to have a code of conduct. All members of he community should act in accordance with certain principle. For instance, almost all instruction of higher learning develop and entrench academic integrity into their senate policy, thereby making it an important aspect of university regulation. For effective monitoring, it is expected that the faculty, departments while collaborating with the student affairs unit. All members of the academic community, staff and students should be involved in ensuring that integrity is established. We as educationist, instructors are uniquely positioned to teach, model and ensure integrity in students.

When writing an assignment for instance, academic:

- Expressing and developing ones own perspective throughout.
- Supporting ones arguments with research and acknowledging all source of information.
- Not distorting other people's research to support ones own hypothesis.
- Doing ones assignment independently or acknowledging any collaboration (group work).
- Reporting ones results accurately when conducting original research or when doing a laboratory work
- Remaining honest during an examination (University of British Columbia legal and Privacy Notices, 2005).

Academic dishonest: This is an issue that has to do with cheating, obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by use of dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent or unauthorized means; or helping some one commit an act of academic dishonesty (UPS 300.021, 1988). Examples of acts of academic dishonesty are:

Unaccepted examination behaviors: Communicating with fellow students, copying materials from other students' examination papers or allowing another students to copy in an examination; possession or using unauthorized materials; or any behaviors that defeat the integrity of an examination.

Plagiarism: This involves taking the work of another and offering it as ones own without giving credit to that sources. The material may be paraphrased or copied or near verbatim.

Unauthorized collaboration: This occurs most commonly among students at all levels.

Academic dishonesty may be categorized under 6 subheadings.

Acquiring information: Working on assignment with others when not authorized to do so by the instructor.

Providing information: Revealing content of an examination to other students prior to the examination.

Conspiracy: Agreeing with other students to commit academic dishonesty.

Fabrication of information: Falsification of result from research or from laboratory experiments, written or oral presentation of result from research, which was never performed.

Violation of departmental or institution rules: This refers to the violation of academic integrity rules.

To be academically honest, one must take time to prepare well for examinations and completion of assignment and not wait until the last minute for help from class members.

Preventing other students from seeing ones paper during examination and avoid giving homework to others to copy; avoid looking at another students' scripts and make a report of any who copies from others during an examination is a mark of integrity.

One must clarify from instructors whenever there is doubt about any issue relating to dishonesty. It is good to use appropriate citation procedures, make consultation about the acceptable citation style. In most universities in Nigeria, sanctions are implemented by committees, which have been delegated to handle issues of indiscipline and as the case are in the foreign institutions not by Deans, as the case are in the foreign institutions (NVC, 2005). Academic integrity simply means honesty, trust, respect and fairness. These values facilitate intellectual inquiries, open exchange of ideas and collaboration, thereby enhancing individual learning and social progress.

Strategies for promoting academic integrity: In order to promote a culture of academic integrity for all members of the academic community, the faculty needs to acknowledge their professional responsibility in living up to the norms of academic integrity as outlined in the code of academic ethic. Specifically, attention must be paid to the way courses are being prepared. Syllabus must be updated to reflect the latest scholarship and the latest available texts. The course outline should indicate clearly the nature of work that will be expected of students including the criteria for grading at the beginning of every semester. Academic integrity can be promoted by providing the students with a syllabus/course outline that clearly spells out course requirements, teachers' expectation and the grading system. Reasons why students should be committed to academic integrity and why integrity is more important for the Discipline and Professional Practice should be indicated. Lecturers need to be fully prepared for every lesson and do things necessary to make classes a worthwhile educational experience for the students. A way of doing this is to be up to date on recent scholarship and trends in the discipline as well as current issues. While preparing for a class an instructor needs to read assigned texts, work problems a head of time, recognizing that some subjects may be uncomfortable for some students and find ways of dealing with the issues in a direct and constructive manner. It is important to create opportunities for

intellectual growth rather devoting class time to recitation of facts or restating what the students can learn for themselves by reading the texts. In the class, treating students with respect can foster academic integrity. This will reflect in the way we show up for classes, punctuality, fulfilling the objectives of the course, expecting mutual respect among students, creating a safe classroom environment and answering students' questions. Institutions should also respect the views of students, treat all students the same way, give students equal opportunity to participate in class decisions, carry out self evaluation of effectiveness of teaching methods, disallow students from ridiculing themselves, identify and help students who appear not to possess good study skills, or study habits that make them succeed in examination without cheating. NVC (2005) viewed academic integrity as essential to learning and students are expected to create and foster an environment that encourages and rewards academic integrity at all levels. The following principles have been identified through which values such as honesty, trust, respect and responsibilities for actions, assignments and communications can be achieved.

These principles are:

- Affirm the importance of academic integrity.
- Foster a love of learning.
- Treat students as ends in themselves.
- Promote an environment of trust in the classroom.
- Encourage student responsibility for academic integrity.
- Clarify expectation for students.
- Develop fair and relevant forms of assessment.
- Reduce opportunities to engaged in academic dishonesty.
- Challenge academic dishonesty when it occurs (develop and use incidence report forms).
- Help define and support campus-wide academic integrity standards.

Cheating in academic institution: This is a form of academic dishonesty and should not be tolerated. Some examples of cheating includes buying a paper either on-line or from another persons and submitting it for grading, looking at notes during examination, hiding cheat sheets in the examination venue or inside examinees body, text massaging some one during an examination, bringing disallowed materials into the hall, arranging for another to take an examination in ones places, submitting others works as ones own including (e.g. paper, section of papers laboratory work projects, making and using false identity cards and so on (STAN, 2001). These are

academic integrity vocation and are rated as very serous and attract penalties ranging from cancellation of results to suspension; depending on the decision of the institution. Cheating is prevalent and keeps on the rising. Some form of cheating has increased dramatically in the last thirty years (McCabe *et al.*, 2001). The researchers suggest that both individual and contextual factors influence cheating. They found out that contextual factors such as students' perception of peer's behavior are the most powerful influence on student's behavior. They also found out that an institution's academic integrity programme and policy can have a significant influence on students' behavior. McCabe and Trevino (1997) in their research work found out that cheating tends to be more prevalent on larger campuses. Obe (1985) as cited by Oluwatelure (2004) associated student tendency to cheat with difficulty of examinations. He also mentioned that combing continuous assessment scores with examination reduces cheating.

Adebayo (2002) in his research found out that students cheat because every body does it, to help others pass and because fear of failure. Hassan (1980) in an empirical study found that seating arrangement in an examination hall is among the factors that encourage cheating.

Strategies for preventing cheating in examinations:

- If spaces are enough assign alternate seats.
- Check picture in identity cards before examination commences.
- Give different versions of the same examination.
- Change examination questions periodically.

In addition to the above, members of the faculty can promote academic integrity by doing there best during class time and by giving appropriate and meaningful out-of-class assignments to prepare students for examinations. Examination questions should be designed to reveal not only knowledge of course content, but also the students' ability to express and defend intelligent judgment about that content. We should make clear what constitutes a violation of academic integrity with regard to examination.

Examination should be carefully monitored to ensure fairness and ensuring also that honest students do not fail when grading examination. We need to be aware of fatigue factor and be consistent about policy regarding make up examinations. The faculty must adhere to a clear process and set criteria for grading. The students should also know this. Students should be informed regularly about their performances through pasting of results.

Statement of the problem: In spite of the steps being taken to discourage academic dishonesty at various levels of education and the inclusion of what constitutes violation of academic integrity in syllabuses and examination brochures; examination malpractices is on the increase. This study focuses on the issues of academic integrity with regards to examinations and compares the views of 3 categories of graduates on what constitutes examination malpractice and other matters relating to cheating.

This research work provides therefore answers to the following questions:

- Will incidence and prevalence of examination and miscellaneous offences be the same during the school days of current undergraduates, young graduates and old graduates?
- Will all the categories of subjects see examination practice as common in their school day?
- Will the 2 categories of respondents perceive the nature of examinees and factors that affect them in same way? (undergraduates and young graduates).

To guide this research, 3 hypotheses were raised:

- There will be no significant difference in the ratings of the incidence and prevalence of examination malpractice and miscellaneous offences by 3 categories of respondents.
- There will be no significant difference in the way each of the 3 categories of respondents will perceive the nature of examinees and factors that affect them.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design employed in this study, was a simple survey. A self-constructed questionnaire was used to gather data in this study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select graduates of different categories from the university community. A total of hundred and fifty respondents participated in the study. The data obtained was analyzed using percentages, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test analysis.

The results are presented in Table 1-3.

Table 1: One way ANOVA: Indicating the incidence/prevalence ratings of examination malpractice and miscellaneous offences pitched against 3 the categories of respondents

Examination malpractice	Sum of squares	Df	Means square	F-cal	F-tab
Between groups	32.653	2	16.327	3.041	3.00
Within groups	796.420	147	5.418	-	-
Total	829.073	149	-	-	-

3.041 > 3.00 table value at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected

Table 2: One-way ANOVA on the nature of examinees pitched against the 3 Categories of respondents (Undergraduates, Young Graduates and Old Graduates)

Nature of examinees	Sum of squares	Df	Means square	F-cal	F-tab
Between Groups	508.013	2	254.007	54.696	3.00
Within groups	682.660	147	4.644		
Total	1190.673	149			

54.696 > 3.00 table value at 0.05 level of significance. The nul-hypothesis is rejected

Table 3: t-test on the nature of examinees pitched against 2 categories of respondents (Undergraduates, Young Graduates)

Nature of examinees	N	Mean	Std	Df	t-cal	t-tab
1 = undergraduates	50	7.7800	2.09265	98	4.12	1.980
2 = young graduates	50	9.8000	2.76273			

4.12 > 1.98 table value at 0.05 level of significance. The nul-hypothesis is rejected

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Table 1, it was observed that F-calculated (3.014) was greater than the table value (3.00). This lead to the rejection of the nul-hypothesis that states that there will be no significant difference in the incidence and prevalence of examination malpractice and miscellaneous offences among the 3 categories of respondents. The responses elicited by the different categories of respondents showed that they rated the level of occurrence of academic integrity violations during their days differently. Many of the old graduates, who presently have risen to the position of senior lectures and professors, found it easy to take responsibility for their integrity and saw any act of violation as odd. The younger generation of graduates did not see anything particularly wrong with giraffing, impersonation and going into examination hall with illegal materials. Some youths even make a living with writing examination for others and some adults enrich themselves by issuing fake certificates. This view is supported by Oluwatelure (2004) who saw poverty among those trusted with examination materials as a major reason why they found it difficult to be honest. The fact that the younger generation of students are more prone to academic integrity violation agrees with Adebayo (2002) whose study showed that younger students tend to cheat more than older students.

In the Table 2 and 3 it was observed that the calculated value (54.696) and (4.12) were greater value 3.00 and 1.980, respectively. This reveals a significant difference the perception of undergraduates, young graduates and old graduates on the nature of examinees and the factors that influence them. The professors and senior lecturers perceived the examinees of the 1960's to early 1970's as full of sacrifice, ingenuity and scholarship. They saw evil in the proliferation of home entertainment, video clubs and stressed their negative effects on the

study habits of the present day youths. They also felt that radio and television corporation have not placed equal emphasis on entertainment and education/enlightenment programmes. They agreed to the fact that factors such as geometric increase of examinees which was not accompanied by corresponding increase in infrastructures; inadequacy in educational planning and too much emphasis on paper qualification are responsible for the ever increasing incidence of examination malpractice. The findings based on descriptive analysis of the responses revealed that 95% the respondents are of the opinion that youth get involved in cheating just for the fun of it. The entire respondents i.e. (100%) see the school libraries as not good enough. All the respondents (100%) described the West African School Certificate/ National Examination Council examination questions and Joint Admission Matriculation Board examination questions as not difficult. What is then the reason for indulging in academic dishonesty? Many students irrespective of their level believe that without examination malpractice, they cannot do well. It is common to hear students christen acts of academic dishonesty by giving them names, which masks the evil character. The general view is that there is a downward turn in the moral values of youths. The home is the starting point. Some parent aid/abet their wards. Onyechere (2008) and Ojerinde (2008) in support of this findings called on all stakeholders in the education sectors across the country to wage a war against examination malpractices. Ojerinde (2008) added that combating examination malpractice is a battle that must be fought and won in public examinations.

In Table 3, it can be observed that the young graduates with a higher mean score of 9.800 indicated more positive examination behaviour and a better assessment of the nature of examinee than their counterparts who had a mean score of 7.7800.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that all member of the academic community should shun all acts of academic integrity

violations. Academic integrity is institution wide and has implication for school life and employment.

RECOMMENDATION

It was recommended that every one must avoid academic dishonesty and get involved in original work.

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