

Predisposing Institutional Dynamics: Assessing Examination Malpractice in Public Universities

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Abstract: Examination malpractice or academic dishonesty has become a concern to education stakeholders the issue of examination malpractice is a national emergency. This study sought to examine institutional dynamics that contributes to examination malpractice in public universities. Kenya. Descriptive research design was used. Simple random sampling techniques were used in choosing the sample size. The target population for the study was the student counselors and third year students from the school of Education. The research instruments used to collect data were questionnaires and interview schedules. The analysis of data was done using both qualitative and quantitative. It was found out that that lack of accommodation facilities contribute significantly to examination malpractices as most students travel long distances to and from the university campus instead of revising or studying in the library leading to little time left for studies. It was therefore recommended that there is need for the institution to provide accommodation facilities, the findings and recommendations from this study will go a long way in helping the university senates to review university examination policy in Kenya and come up with appropriate strategies to fight institutional factors that contribute to examination malpractices in universities in Kenya

Keywords: Examination Malpractice Institutional, Dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

Examination is one of the major means of assessing and evaluating students or learners' skills, knowledge and attitude in both general and specific areas of studies. It is a crucial mode of assessment of the learner's mastery of certain required quantum or corpus of knowledge, be it school tests, university examinations, professional certifications, cheating seem to be the watch word across the globe. Examination malpractice is counter-practice that is against ethics of examination, it is an act of disrespect to all rules and regulations guiding the good conduct of any examination or any evaluation process.

Examination malpractice seems to have crept into public University Examinations in Kenya. The problem has been the subject of discussion in both formal and informal meetings. In the education watch [1] in the feature 'cheating in exams goes hi-tech at varsities' A Kenyatta University student, pointed out that while University authorities are doing all they can do to curb the vice, students are cleverly crafting new methods of 'stealing' the tests using modern technology and other crude methods. However, he adds that even lecturers are becoming culprits in this game. This is a clear indication that cheating in examinations has

infiltrated into our public Universities and it is necessary to find out why this practice is on-going and find ways of curbing the vice. Research has shown that there is a strong correlation between forms of academic integrity system and levels of malpractices at a school, found students who attend schools with honor codes are less likely to cheat than students at schools with traditional integrity codes [2]. Another study found only 28% of schools with honor codes have high levels of malpractices where as 81% of schools with mixed judicial boards have high rates of malpractices [3].

Whereas faculty or administration run codes of conduct tend to rely on policing and punishment to deter students from malpractices honor codes tend to rely on and cultivate student senses of honor and group peer pressure to deter academic misconduct. As mentioned above in the section on cause of malpractices increased enforcement or punishment is rarely effective at discouraging malpractices whereas there is high correlation between peer pressure and academic honesty. The modified honor code attempts to cultivate peer disapproval of malpractices while maintaining the traditional proctor system although critics argue that the proctor system undermines the creation an atmosphere of student self-policing reducing the effectiveness of

honor code and possibly explaining why modified honor codes have not been as effective as the original version.

There are limitations to relying on the faculty to policy academic malpractices. One study found out that up to 21% of professors have ignored at least one clear cut case of malpractices [4]. Another study revealed that 40% of professors "never" reporting malpractices 54% "seldom" report malpractices and that a mere 6% act on all cases of academic misconduct that confront them. A Third survey of professors found that while 79% had observed malpractices only 9% had penalized the student (McCabe *et al.*, 1999). According to a manual for professors on malpractices the reasons for this lack of action include unwillingness to devote time and energy to the issue reluctance to undergo an emotional confrontation and fear of retaliation by the students of being sued for this offenses and/or defamation of character [4].

There are other reasons as well some Professors are reluctant to report violations to the appropriate authorities because they believe the punishment to be too harsh [5]. Some professors may have little incentive to reduce malpractices in their classes below a point that would otherwise be obvious to outside observers as they are rated by how many research papers they have published and research grant they win for the college and not by how well they teach.

Badelo [6] concerning academic staff, counselors explained that they should go through periodic seminars and workshops to motivate the academic staff to engage in research and meaningful community service as no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Hence, good quality and meaningful teaching is expected of them. Furthermore, members of academic staff are expected to attend lectures punctually and be well-prepared, be accessible to students, give and grade tests and assignments objectively, provide prompt feedback to students on their performance and avoid taking undue advantage of students.

With the advancement of the internet there are now several tools available to aid in the detection of plagiarism and multiple publications within biomedical literature one tool developed in 2006 by researchers in Harold Garner's laboratory at university of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas is Dejavu, an open-access database containing several thousand instances of duplication [6]. The education system of any society aims at inculcating values, skills, attitudes for proper adjustment into the life of the community. The last decade has seen rapid growth of the higher education sector in Kenya, enabling a good number of students who have completed their secondary education access universities. With many public and private universities, most of which have sprout up in the last

decade, Kenya's higher education sector has significantly widened. The country is now among nations in East Africa with the most vibrant higher education institutions despite its foremost higher learning institute (Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) 2005 [7].

Education is the key to development in any nation and Kenya is no exception. This has led to a quest to acquire education by all means as employers of labour place emphasis on certificates especially that of the university before one can be given any reasonable position in any organization. The main objective of university education is to train students to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills to enable them to contribute effectively to national development [8]. This training requires periodic assessment and evaluation in form of examinations to ascertain the level of competence of students.

Although examinations are not the only instruments for assessing students' knowledge in the university, they have emerged as the major established yardstick and the most practical way of assessment. This has led to students devising different types of methods to pass examinations at all cost; thereby resulting in examination malpractice. Some of these methods are impersonation, exchange of answer scripts by students in an attempt to copy perceived correct answers, writing relevant information on parts of the body and pieces of paper [9]. Some candidates may find dishonest excuses to go to the toilet with the intention of perusing through hidden written materials carrying answers to specific questions or may hide notes in their jackets or bras so as to access them when they are out of the shots of an invigilator. Some students may easily use Short Message Service to send correct response to their fellow colleagues using mobile phones.

Statement of the Problem

It is evident that Scholars have discussed trends of Examination malpractices, types of academic malpractices such as plagiarism, fabrication and cheating. Research has also been done on causes of academic Malpractices and strategies to curb academic malpractices. The literature also highlighted examination malpractices in primary and secondary schools, little has been written about examination malpractices in universities. This study therefore seeks to address the institution dynamics that contribute to examination Malpractices in public University.

Objective of the Study

To examine institutional dynamics that contributes to examination malpractice in public universities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted. It constitutes the

blue print for the collection, measurement and analysis of data [1]. Descriptive research design was used in this study. Descriptive study can provide information about the naturally occurring health status, behavior, attitudes or other characteristics of a particular group. Descriptive studies are also conducted to demonstrate associations or relationships between things in the world around you. Descriptive studies, is the one in which the researcher interacts with the participant, may involve surveys or interviews to collect the necessary information. Descriptive studies can answer questions such as “what is” or “what was” [1]. In this study the descriptive research design was opted since the researcher sought to find out the perceived social factors that contribute to examination malpractice,

which involves health status, behavior, attitudes among others.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Institutional Factors that contribute to Examination malpractices

The objective of this study was to examine institutional dynamics that contribute to examination malpractice in public universities. To achieve this objective, the participants were requested to indicate in a five point likert scale on the questions in the questionnaire. Their frequencies and percentage responses were tabulated and the results are presented in table-1.

Table-1: Institutional dynamics that contribute to Examination malpractices

Variable	SA		A		UD		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Lack of accommodation facilities	61	40.7	37	24.7	8	5.3	20	13.3	24	16.0
Limited provision of guidance and counseling services	56	37.3	64	42.7	7	4.7	17	11.3	6	4.0
Poor orientation into the university system	45	30.0	52	34.7	14	9.3	25	16.7	14	9.3
Limited provision of catering services	30	20.0	30	20.0	26	17.3	33	22.0	31	20.7
Allowing students to operate business in the university premises	31	20.7	34	22.7	22	14.7	32	21.3	31	20.7
Work study programmes	35	23.3	44	29.3	20	13.3	25	16.7	26	17.3

From the table-1, it was found out that 61 (40.7%) students strongly agreed with the statement that lack of accommodation facilities in the institution may contribute to examination malpractices in the institution, 37 (24.7%) students agreed with the statement, 24 (16.0%) students strongly disagreed with the statement, 20 (13.3%) students disagreed with the statement while 8 (5.3%) students were undecided on the statement. This shows that majority of the students (65.4%) agreed with the statement implying that majority of the students believe that lack of accommodation facilities contribute to examination malpractices as most students travel long distances looking for accommodation facilities instead of revising or studying in the library leading to little time left for studies. In addition, the students who rent houses do so in twos, threes, fours or fives. This is mostly inconvenient for studying since the space in the room is too small for studying. Also the students have different study patterns some study during the day, others at night and still others early morning. This translates to disturbed life patterns especially sleep which is vital for individual's health. Poor health thus leads to missing of classes or half concentration during the same time thus it would indirectly lead to examination malpractice since the student will not have had enough quality time for study. a Student Counselor lamented that;

“Some of the students who come to me asking for campus hostels mainly complain of some of their roommates having girl friends and boyfriends who visit

them anytime and this disturbs my study schedule in the rooms. Sometimes forcing them to leave the room for days or weeks”

This response when coupled with peer pressure, greatly affect the study negatively. This is not directly what happens in university accommodation since visiting hours is restricted, and also the number of individuals living in the rooms is restricted, this is in agreement with Olatoye's [10] observation that the major root cause of examination malpractice is poor preparation and low quality of teaching and learning in schools.

The respondents view on limited provision of guidance and counseling services contribute to examination malpractices, 64 (42.7%) students agreed with the statement, 56 (37.3%) students strongly agreed with the statement, 17 (11.3%) students disagreed with the statement, 7 (4.7%) students were undecided on the statement while 6 (4.0%) students strongly agreed with the statement. The study findings show that majority of the students (80.0%) and those interviewed believed that limited provision of guidance and counseling services by the institution to the students contribute to examination malpractices. For instance a Student's Counselor explained that;

“Those students who come for guidance and counseling and do follow ups significantly improve and sometimes they recover completely and end up helping others”

This can be attributed to few members of staff who serve thousands of students. When the period nears exams the lines to see these members of staff is humbling. The students wait for long in the queue yet the counseling staff takes just a few seconds to listen to their cases. It is said that to listen to an individual lament is therapeutic, even if the listener does not contribute anything [11]. Thus lack of an individual who can listen to students' frustrations and fears can lead to examination malpractice.

Similarly, 52 (34.7%) students agreed with the statement that poor orientation into the university system contributes to examination malpractices, 45 (30.0%) students strongly agreed with the statement, 25 (16.7%) students disagreed with the statement, and 14 (9.3%) students strongly disagreed with the statement while on the other hand 14 (9.3%) students were undecided. The findings indicated that majority of the students (64.7%) and also those interviewed believed that poor orientation of the students into the university system contributes to examination malpractices. For instance the examinations Officer lamented that;

"Students need to be taken thorough and elaborate orientation in order to drive the point home and for the students to feel cared for, and if possible be given student mentors"

When students are oriented into the university, very little attention is focused on minor details like students well being but rules and regulations governing student are emphasized. During orientation of first years, issues of examination malpractices are not emphasized. The first year students are yet to grasp serious exam matters at this stage. They are still fascinated by the admission into the university. The students are motivated to be part of the motivational team, but they do not have the means. It has been observed that the message at an individual level reaches home compared with the crowd [11]. Thus, the first year students while with continuing students share a lot and the students who practice examination malpractice drives home the point to the first year students that examination malpractice is normal and with time after one, two, three attempts the guilty is gone and the individual becomes an expert. This implies that examination malpractices in the university are contributed largely by lack of proper orientation of students while they are joining their first year in college

Furthermore, 33 (22.0%) students disagreed with the statement that limited provision of catering services contributes to examination malpractices, 31 (20.7%) students strongly disagreed with the statement, 30 (20.0%) students strongly agreed with the statement, 30 (20.0%) students agreed with the statement while 26 (17.3%) students were undecided on the statement. This shows that majority of the students (42.7%) and interviewees did not believe that limited provision of

catering services by the institution contributes to examination malpractices. This could have been an indirect factor. If the queues are long in the catering places the student takes time that could have otherwise be used for studying. But on the other hand, the students could have learned to adapt to this by carrying packed food, going to nearby cafes among others.

On the statement that allowing students to operate business in the university premises, 34 (22.7%) students agreed with the statement, 32 (21.3%) students disagreed with the statement, 31 (20.7%) students strongly agreed with the statement, 31 (20.7%) students strongly disagreed with the statement while on the other hand 22 (14.7%) students were undecided on the statement. The response shows that majority of the students (43.4%) believe that allowing students to operate business in the university premises encourages students to engage in examination malpractices as most of the time the students are engaged in business activities leaving little time for studies and therefore in order to pass in examinations, they need to engage themselves in unscrupulous means of obtaining higher grades. This is in agreement with the statement by Bolin [12] who states that Performance and time pressures affect significantly examination malpractice especially when good grades are critical and competition is high some students bow to the pressure to achieve. This especially happens when the student has not employed a non student to run the business. Furthermore, when the business requires close supervision of the workers, especially hotels. The examinations officer acknowledged that;

"Businesses translate to the student missing classes in order to attend to the urgent matters of the business leading to examination malpractice especially when the student realizes that he/she cannot catch up with class work"

Notwithstanding, 44 (29.3%) students agreed with the statement that work study programmes contribute to examination malpractices, 35 (23.3%) students strongly agreed with the statement, 26 (17.3%) students strongly disagreed with the statement, 25 (16.7%) students disagreed with the statement while on one hand 20 (13.3%) students were undecided on the statement. The findings indicate that majority of the students (52.6%) believe that work study programmes provided by the University encourages examination malpractices since most of the times students devote their study times for work programmes reducing on the student study hours. The interviewees were undecided about this. This especially happens where the student is needed to work long hours or in busy places like catering centre or the library where the place is all the time busy. This was in agreement with the findings by Kerkvliet and Sigmund [13] when they blamed examination malpractice on lack of time management.

To test on the significance of each of the variables, chi-square analysis was performed at 95%

confidence level. The results are presented in Table-2.

Table-2: Level of Significance of Variables on Institutional dynamics that contribute to examination malpractices

	Lack of accommodation facilities	Limited provision of guidance and counseling services	Poor orientation into the university system	Limited provision of catering services	Allowing students to operate business in the university premises	Work study programmes
Chi-Square	54.333 ^a	103.533 ^a	41.533 ^a	.867 ^a	2.867 ^a	12.067 ^a
Df	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.929	.580	.017

From the table-2 it indicates 95% confidence which implies that that lack of accommodation facilities, limited provision of guidance and counseling services, poor orientation into the university system and work study programmes were significant ($p \leq .05$) indicating that these variables contribute to examination malpractices while Limited provision of catering services and allowing students to operate business in the university premises were not significant implying that they do not contribute to examination malpractices in the institution. This concurs with the findings of Bowers [3] and Whitley and Spiegel [14], who both argued that counseling services in an institution limits on the number of students who are engaged in some vices in school including examination malpractices in form of cheating in an exam.

CONCLUSION

The study findings conclude that students lack of accommodation facilities contribute significantly to examination malpractices as most students travel long distances to and from the campus instead of revising or studying in the library leading to little time left for studies. Similarly, students believed that limited provision of guidance and counseling services by the institution to the students contribute to examination malpractices. Further, the study findings revealed that the students believed that poor orientation of the students into the university system contributes to examination malpractices, students believing that work study programmes provided by the University encourages examination malpractices since most of the times students devote their study times for work programmes reducing on the student study hours.

Policy Implication

The Universities management and policy makers would find this study useful in provision of guidance and counseling services, student orientation into the university system, provision of catering services in the university premises will minimize examination malpractices in the institution. There is also need for the institution to provide accommodation facilities even if it means leasing from private investors

with an aim of curbing examination malpractices since students travel for long distances to and from campus wasting the students' study time thus negatively affecting the academic standards of the students.

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