

Policy Brief: Strategies to Curb Examination Malpractice in Public Universities

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Abstract: This study sought to investigate the students' perceived social factors that contribute to examination malpractices in Eldoret West Campus of Moi University, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The objectives of the study were; to analyze strategies to curb examination malpractices in public universities. Descriptive research design was used. Simple random, stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used in choosing the sample size. The target population for the study was the student counselors, Dean School of education, Chief Examination officer and third year students from the school of Education. The sample size for the study was third year education students. The research instruments used to collect data were questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis. The analysis of data was done using both qualitative and quantitative. It was found out that lack of accommodation facilities, limited provision of guidance and counseling services, poor orientation into the university system and work study programmes contribute to examination malpractices while limited provision of catering services and allowing students to operate business in the university premises do not contribute to examination malpractices in the institution. It was therefore recommended that there is need for the institution to put in place active student counseling services to deter students from engaging themselves in examination malpractices since most students believed that there is lack of guidance and counseling in the institution. The findings are expected to benefit in formulating university examination policy. Similarly, there is need for ISO standards to be adhered to during lecture hours and examination hours to curb examination malpractices in the institution

Keywords: Policy, Strategies, Examination Malpractice.

INTRODUCTION

The use of crib notes during an examination is typically viewed as malpractices. Malpractices can take the form of crib notes, looking over someone's shoulder during an exam, or any forbidden sharing of information between students regarding an exam or exercise. Many elaborate methods of malpractices have been developed over the years. For instance, students have been documented hiding notes in the brims of their baseball caps, or up their sleeves. Also, the storing of information in graphing calculators, papers, cell phones, and other electronic devices has cropped up since the information revolution began. While students have long surreptitiously scanned the tests of those seated near them, some students actively try to aid those who are trying to cheat. Methods of secretly signaling the right answer to friends are quite varied, ranging from coded sneezes or pencil tapping to high-pitched noises beyond the hearing range of most teachers. Some students have been known to use more elaborate means, such as using a system of repetitive body signals like hand movements or foot jerking to distribute answers i.e.

where a tap of the foot could correspond to answer 'A', two taps for answer 'B', and so on.

Cheating differs from most other forms of academic malpractices, in that people can engage in it without benefiting themselves academically at all. For example, a student who illicitly telegraphed answers to a friend during a test would be cheating, even though the student's own work is in no way affected. Another example of academic cheating is a dialogue between students in the same class but in the two different time periods, both of which a test is scheduled for that day. If the student in the earlier time period, informs the other student in the later period about the test: that is considered academic malpractices, even though the first student has not benefited himself. This form of malpractices though deprecated could conceivably be called altruistic [1].

Plagiarism is the adoption or reproduction of the ideas or words or statements of another person without due acknowledgement. This can range from borrowing without attribution a particularly apt phrase,

to paraphrasing someone else's original ideas without citation, to wholesale contract malpractices. When plagiarized students will often turn to the internet, due the ease of copying and pasting from websites. Other more old fashioned form of plagiarized such as paper mills and passing off obscure articles or chapters of books of others as original work also still occur. Plagiarized papers are often riddled with gross inconsistencies such as referencing non-existent sections of the essay, changes in spelling and grammar customs, or the argument changing in mid-paragraph [2].

Fabrication includes making up citation to back up arguments or inviting quotations. Fabrication predominates in the natural sciences, where students sometime forge numbers to make experiments "work". It includes data falsification, in which false claims are inconvenient data to generating bogus data [3]. Bibliographical references are often fabricated, especially when a certain minimum number of references is required or considered sufficient for particular kind of paper. The is type of fabrication can range from referring to works whose titles look relevant but which the student did not read, to making up bogus titles and authors.

There is also the practice of dry dabbing which can occur in chemistry or other courses, in which the teacher clearly expects the experiment to yield certain results which confirm established laws, so the student starts from the results and works backward, calculating what the experimental data should be, often adding variation to the data. In some cases, the laboratory report is written before actual experiment is carried out [3]. In either case, the results are what the instructor expects.

Deception include taking more time on take-home test than it is allowed, giving a dishonest excuse when asking for a deadline extension, or falsely claiming to have submitted work. This type of academic misconduct is often considered softer than the more obvious forms of malpractices, and otherwise-honest students sometimes engage in this type of malpractices without considering themselves cheaters. It is also sometimes done by students who have failed to complete an assignment, to avoid responsibility for doing so [3].

Sabotage is when a student prevents others from completing their work. This includes cutting pages out of library books or willfully disrupting the experiments of others. Sabotage is usually only found in highly competitive, cutthroat environments such as at extremely elite schools where class ranking are highly prized. Some medical-school librarians have noted that important articles required reading for key courses are frequently missing from bound journals sliced out with

razor blades, scalpels or other sharp blades. Other journals were marked up in crayon [3].

There are many examples of proselytism throughout history of documented professorial misconduct other type of professor misconduct include improper grading of student's papers and exams, deliberate negligence towards malpractices or assistance in malpractices. This can be done for reasons of personal bias towards student, for a bribe, or to improve the teacher's own performance by increasing the passing rate [4].

Statement of the Problem

Academic malpractices are a concern among university students because it has implications on their future career. There have been many investigations into academic malpractices, with findings indicating that up to 90% of undergraduate students cheat [5]. Malpractice in examinations are evident in developed and developing countries but the security regulations and means of implementing them are not universally provided and often ineffective [6]. Despite a number of measures put up by Moi University Senate to curb examination malpractices, there are still cases of examination malpractices. A study by Keter [7] on the types of examination malpractices among undergraduate students in Moi University found that 51% of school of Business and Economics students admitted cheating, along with 44% of students in School of Engineering, 58% in education, and 45% in Law. Examination Malpractice has assumed a frightening proportion in the entire university; this therefore should be a concern to stakeholders in education. Hence, this study seeks to unravel the strategies to curb examination malpractice in Kenyan public universities so a case study of Moi University.

Objective of the Study

To investigate strategies to curb examination malpractice in public universities in Kenya

Research Questions

- What are the strategies that can be put in place to curb 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 [8]. 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” [8]. 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.

Ethical Considerations

The information gathered from respondents was kept in confidence and was only to be used for the purpose of the study. This information will not be revealed to anybody without the participant’s consent. The researcher preserved the anonymity of the informant by not writing the names of all those involved in the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The third objective of this study was to evaluate strategies to curb examination malpractice in public universities. To achieve this objective, a research question was formulated and it stated: What are the strategies that can be put in place to curb examination malpractice? To answer this question the participants were requested to indicate in the questionnaire their opinions on strategies to be put in place to curb examination malpractices. To achieve this objective, the participants were requested to indicate in a five point Likert scale (strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), undecided (UD), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) questions in the questionnaire. Their frequencies and percentage responses were tabulated and the results are presented in table-1.

Table-1: Strategies to curb examination Malpractices

Variable	SA		A		UD		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Severe penalties	77	51.3	42	28.0	3	2.0	10	6.7	18	12.0
Strict use of class attendance registers	71	47.3	42	28.0	11	7.3	15	10.0	11	7.3
Provision of accommodation and catering services within the campus	62	41.3	39	26.0	17	11.3	13	8.7	19	12.7
Strict orientation of new students	79	52.7	43	28.7	11	7.3	7	4.7	10	6.7
Regular provision of guidance and counseling services i.e. workshops and seminars	91	60.7	44	29.3	3	2.0	5	3.3	7	4.7

From the table 4.5, 77 (51.3%) students strongly agreed with the statement that there is need for severe penalties on those found engaging themselves in examination malpractices, 42 (28.0%) students agreed with the statement, 18 (12.0%) students strongly disagreed with the statement, 10 (6.7%) students disagreed with the statement while 3 (2.0%) students were undecided on the statement. The findings indicate that majority of the students (78.3%) and those interviewed believed that there is need for severe penalties on students who are found engaging themselves in examination malpractices. This was not in agreement with observations by [9] when they stated that increased punishment for academic misconduct has little correlation with malpractices behavior. They also found out that student with markedly different perceptions of what the severity of the punishment of malpractices were all equally likely to cheat, probably indicating that they thought that increased penalties were immaterial since their malpractices would never be discovered. However, Kerkvliet and Sigmund [10] attested that when a professor makes clear that he disapproves malpractices, either in the syllabus, in the first class, or at the beginning of a test, academic malpractices can drop by 12%. This implies that for tough penalties to bear a seed other stake holders need to give their support for example the lecturers, fellow students, counselors, administration among others such that every effort is directed towards eliminating the vice.

On strict use of class attendance registers, 71 (47.3%) students strongly agreed with the statement, 42 (28.0%) students agreed with the statement, 15 (10.0%) students disagreed with the statement, 11 (7.3%) students strongly disagreed with the statement while 11 (7.3%) students were undecided. The findings indicate that majority of the respondents (75.3%) were in agreement that there is need for strict use of class attendance registers to check on students who do not attend classes on regular basis but at the end of the year they score good grades due to their engagement in examination malpractices. If this is emphasized the students will be forced to attend classes and indirectly participate actively in class activities among them being assignments, practical activities etc. When the examinations and continuous assessment tests are announced the students prepare in advance which could considerably reduce the vice. This should also be coupled with strict counting of students in class since the students wittingly could sign for their friends. The lecturers could also support this by allowing individual students to report in advance of their absentia, this will restrict students from often asking for permission. This concurs with the findings by McCade and Trevino [11] when they stated that often social engagements are to blame for examination malpractice. They also observed that malpractices rises significantly the more time student spend on playing cards, watching television or having drinks with friends. Thus, to withdraw the

students from practicing these at an expense of class time, the class register will do well.

Further, 62 (41.3%) students strongly agreed that provision of accommodation and catering services within the campus can discourage students from engaging themselves in examination malpractices, 39 (26.0%) students agreed with the statement, 19 (12.7%) students strongly disagreed with the statement, 17 (11.3%) students were undecided on the statement while 13 (8.7%) students disagreed with the statement. The responses indicate that majority of the students (67.3%) were in agreement with the statement an implication that provision of accommodation and catering services within the campus may deter students from engaging in examination malpractices since they will have enough time for studies within the University. This is in agreement with the observation by Bowers [12] when he reiterated that students cheat by putting blame on other things or finding excuses for their actions in order to overcome their conscience. Thus, provision of accommodation removes the blame on it as an excuse to engage in examination malpractice.

Similarly, 79 (52.7%) students strongly agreed with the statement that there is need for thorough orientation of new students into the university system, 43 (28.7%) students agreed with the statement, 11 (7.3%) students were undecided on the statement, 10 (6.75) students strongly disagreed with the statement while 7 (4.7%) students disagreed with the statement. The findings indicate that majority of the students (81.4%) were in agreement with the statement that there is need for thorough orientation of new students into the university system to deter them from engaging themselves in examination malpractices. This will reduce the dependence on peers for advice and substitute for professionals who will give true and accurate information [13]. Since peers will always have strong influence this will be avoided and substituted with knowledge.

Notwithstanding, 91 (60.7%) students strongly agreed that there is need for regular provision of guidance and counseling services i.e. workshops and seminars for students to deter them from engaging in examination malpractices, 44 (29.3%) students agreed with the statement, 7 (4.7%) students strongly disagreed with the statement, 5 (3.3%) students disagreed with the statement while on one hand 3 (2.0%) students were undecided on the statement while, on the contrary those interviewed agreed that the factor contribute to examination malpractices. The findings of the study show that majority of the students were in agreement with the regular provision of guidance and counseling services for students to discourage them from engaging themselves in examination malpractices and this concurs with McCabe and Trevino [11] who noted that often social engagements are to blame for examination malpractice. Thus, if the social challenges of the

students are addressed properly and advised accordingly the vice will be reduced. Moreover, Badelo [14] agreed with these findings when he explained that counseling centres in universities should be involved in the students' admission process. At the point of entry, it is expected that the university counseling centre endeavors to let incoming students understand their obligations to respect and obey constituted authority.

Further it was found out that 26.7% students suggested the use of spacious rooms during exams and proper coordination of examination time-tables between main campus and Eldoret west campus, 64.7% students indicated that there was need to discourage relationships between students and lecturers, while 96% of the students and also interviewees suggested that there was need for ISO certification standard rules to be adhered fully to deter students from engaging in examination malpractices in the institution. For example an administrator in the School of Education Dean's office attested that;

"Some of the students come to apply for special exams during the very day they are supposed to be doing the exam. The main reason they give is that they are sick, but when they open up they admit to have planned to cheat and when they hear from colleagues that there will be no room for that since there will be more invigilators and that they are going to be spaced, they resort to apply for special exam"

This disagreed with the findings by Kerkvliet and Sigmund [10] who found out that increasing the distance between students taking an exam has little effect on academic misconduct, and that threatening students before an exam with expulsion if they cheat actually promotes malpractices behavior. This could be due to the students having set their minds to cheat and are determined to do so, coupled with the belief that they are smart enough not to be caught. On the other extreme, Levitt and Jacob [15] states that the teachers may inflate the results of the tests given in their classroom. They further stated that teachers and librarians can have a significant proactive impact on doing honest work which agrees with the findings of this study that student/staff relationship should be discouraged, which may help the staff not to be lenient on their part. Whitley [16] further explains that there are limitations to relying on the faculty to set policy on academic malpractices. His study found out that up to 21% of professors have ignored at least one clear cut case of malpractices and that 40% of professors "never" report malpractices 54% "seldom" report malpractices and that a mere 6% act on all cases of academic misconduct that confront them. Another survey also revealed that 79% of professors had observed malpractices while only 9% had penalized the student [17]. 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 [16]. Thus the findings from this study propose the strict adherence of ISO standards where each individual partakes in the task. In addition Badelo [14] exhaustively elaborated on academic staff, counselors that they should go through periodic seminars and workshops which should 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.

To test on the significance of each variable, Chi-square was used at 95% confidence level. The results are presented in Table-2.

Table-2: Significance of Variables on Strategies to Curb Examination Malpractices

	Severe penalties	Strict use of class attendance registers	Provision of accommodation and catering services within the campus	Thorough orientation of new students	Regular provision of guidance and counseling services i.e. workshops
Chi-Square	120.867 ^a	92.400 ^a	56.133 ^a	128.667 ^a	193.333 ^a
Df	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

The table 4.6 shows that at 95% level all the suggested strategies were significant ($p \leq .05$). This implies that in order to deter students from engaging themselves in examination malpractices, there is need for severe penalties, strict use of attendance registers, Provision of accommodation and catering services within the campus, thorough orientation of new students and regular provision of guidance and counseling services i.e. workshops. This was found to concur with Bowers [12], McCabe and Trevino [17] who argued that examination malpractices can be deterred by implementing code of ethics and following strict examination codes by both the lecturers and the students.

CONCLUSION

The study findings indicated that majority of the students (78.3%) believed that there is need for severe penalties on students who are found engaging themselves on examination malpractices with majority of the students (75.3%) being in agreement that there is need for strict use of class attendance registers to check on students who do not attend classes on regular basis. On one hand 67.3% of the students indicated that provision of accommodation and catering services within the campus may deter students from engaging in examination malpractices since they will have enough time for studies within the University. Similarly, majority of the students (81.4%) were in agreement with the statement that there is need for thorough orientation of new students into the university system to deter them from engaging themselves in examination malpractices. In order to deter students from engaging themselves in examination malpractices, there is need for severe penalties, strict use of attendance registers, provision of accommodation and catering services

within the campus, thorough orientation of new students and regular provision of guidance and counseling services to the students.

Policy Implication

Strict use of class attendance registers and strict class attendance by the lecturers will force the students to attend classes hence limiting time spend on drugs especially alcoholism and build their confidence. Students should be given workshops and seminars on how to manage the business/work study programmes, deal with their employers while studying, in order not to compromise their studies. For example, the advantage of employing non student to run the business for them or in the case of employed students the advantage of taking study leave.

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