

## Inclining Factors towards Examination Malpractice among Students in Takoradi Polytechnic, Ghana

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### Abstract

The study sought to examine thoroughly students' perception of the inclining factors towards examination malpractice among Polytechnic students in Takoradi. The study employed the descriptive survey design. A total of 200 students from the School of Applied Arts were surveyed. A customized questionnaire on the inclining factors towards examination malpractice (IFTEMQ) was developed by the researchers to collect data. Three research questions were raised to guide the study. The study discovered that students who are the key players, alongside lecturers were the major causal elements in the incidence of sharp practices during examination. Gender and age were found to have a correlation with cheating in exams.

**Keywords:** Inclining Factors, Examination Malpractice, Polytechnic Students, Perception

### 1.0 Introduction

Education is the inevitable key to the socio-economic development of every nation of which Ghana is not excluded. Badejo (2010) emphasises this has led to an unquenchable desire by most citizens to get themselves fully educated, and added will do everything under the sun either fair or foul means to achieve their aim. This desire seems to have some sort of backing as the institutions at the labour front have also put premium on qualification (certificates) before one can be offered a job in any reputable organisation. Miranda and Freire (2011) believe the major aim of every educational system is to create responsible and respectful citizens. The object of polytechnic education in Ghana is to train students and equip them with middle level man power skills to be able to support industry and commerce in the areas of resource development and information development (Act 745 of the Polytechnic Act 2007). For the training to be deemed effective and efficient, the educational system makes provision for periodic assessment and evaluation of its products in the name of examination to know their capabilities, competence and readiness for the job market. One must be quick to add that, examinations are, and will not be the solitary tool for assessing students' knowledge at the polytechnic level except, that it has always been at the forefront, establishing itself as the most effective and practical way of assessment for now. According to Olatunbosun and Omogerie (2010), till date it remains the best tool for objective assessment and evaluation of what learners have acquired after a period of schooling, thus any action or inaction poses a great danger to the validity, reliability and authenticity of examination results and certificate. This all important establishment has put pressure on students or learners alike to come out with all sort of diabolical schemes to scale this hurdle. Some of these schemes employed by the learners are; impersonation, exchange of answer scripts, using cheat sheets or pink sheets, fabrication of results, plagiarising, misrepresentation of identity, tampering with works of others, and unethical use of academic resources (Gross 2003; Owuamanam, 2005, Anan, 2005; Miranda & Freire, 2011). In defining the concept, the Examination Malpractice Act of Nigeria (1999), explains "as any act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of, before, during or after any examination fraudulently secures any unfair advantage for him or herself, or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulation to the extent of undermining the validity, reliability, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificates issued". Badejo and Gandonu (2012) citing Philemon (2007), sees it as 'a deliberate act of wrong doing, contrary to the official rules, and is designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage; it is careless, illegal or unacceptable behaviour by a candidate in a formal test of his knowledge or ability in a particular subject'. Badejo and Gandonu (2012) explain the concept as a counter-practice that is against the ethics of examination, it is an act of disrespect to all rules and regulations guiding the good conduct of any examination or evaluation process. This study defines examination malpractice as any deliberate act of wrong doing by academic authorities, learners and parents before, during and after an exam to give one an upper hand in the assessment or evaluation process. The prominence assumed by this disease so to speak, has been a matter of concern to educational stakeholders in Ghana, as it defeats the goals of national educational systems and development. Hence the purpose of this study is to investigate the inclining factors towards examination malpractice among graphic arts students in Takoradi polytechnic.

## 1.1 Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between gender difference and students' perception of inclining factors towards examination malpractice among students in Takoradi polytechnic
2. Is there a relation between age difference and students' perception towards the inclining factors of examination malpractice in Takoradi polytechnic
3. What is the perception of students as regards the inclining factors towards examination malpractice among Takoradi polytechnic students

## 1.2 Brief History of Examination Malpractices

Empirical evidence of factors influencing examination malpractice abounds a lot in literature. Olatunbosun and Omoregie (2012) citing the Vanguard (2005), Weekend Pointer (2005), Daily Independent (2004) there have been incidence of involvement of students, teachers and parents in cases of examination malpractice. Expatriating further, they asserted the incidence of the phenomenon is wide spread irrespective of the level at which the examination is being conducted or undertaken, and the most serious challenge is that it has extended beyond the formal school systems. A study on the subject as a matter of fact, identifies different forms of academic cheating (Coston and Juke, 1998; Carrauna, Ramesshan and Ewing, 2000). Four notable areas according to the research has become the bedrock for cheating or exhibiting academic integrity violation acts, thus using unauthorized materials, fabrication of information, plagiarism and extending help to compatriots in the act of cheating. The Nigerian Tribune (2009) on its part reported that there have been several instances where parents and teachers have collaborated to cheat. On the part of parents, they get involved by paying bribes to help their wards earn good grades while the teachers for good name, and praise create the conducive atmosphere for students to engage in such nefarious acts (Alutu and Aluede, 2006). The issue has assumed a proportional height due to the shameful involvement of parents, teachers and school authorities, and all and sundry who in one way or the other take part in the examination process. According to Olatunbosun and Omoregie (2012) the premium or stature assumed by the canker has placed the credibility of qualification and certificates issued by educational institutions in doubt. It is disheartening to see certificates from top class educational institutions suffer shame and no longer the true reflection of the competence and skills of products churned out. It is very sad and disgracing to have people point accusing fingers at teachers, parents, head teachers, examination officials and to larger extent security men, who have the mandate to ensure sanity prevails in the evaluation process, turn around to contribute to its decay and deterioration. With respect to factors affecting examination malpractice, it is always sarcastic and flabbergasting to have people point accusing fingers at students at the mention of cheating in academia. Empirical evidence shows that the contributing factors are many hence, the rejection of the earlier assertion. Iowi (1997) reporting on the subject discovered lack of confidence, inadequate preparation on the side of the stakeholders, peer influence, societal influence, parental influence and poor facilities in school among others are well notable contributing factors to the phenomenon. This validates the assertion that cheating in academia is a three phase system. School programmes, teaching and learning environment, the teacher, student, overvalue of certificates and moral decadence in society have also been well noted in literatures by (Awanabor 2005; Nwadian 2005; Badamus 2006; Okafor 2006; Agua2006; Azare2006 & Aminu 2006), unanimously added as some of the factors also responsible for examination malpractice.

### 1.2.1 Cultural Implication - Anomie

According to Merton (1986), anomie is a serious breakdown in the cultural structure as a result of the confusion between cultural norms and goals and the capacities of members to act in accordance with them. Expatriating further Merton (1986) argues that cultural values of a society at a point in time produce an attitude that is in tandem with the values of society themselves. Anomie he said gives birth to aberrant behaviour and non-conformity which is a symptom of dissociation between culturally prescribed goals and socially prescribed means of achieving these goals. A society that places exceptionally strong emphasis on goal achievement without a corresponding emphasis on institutionalized means of achieving these goals irrespective of whether the means employed is legitimate or not. He noted that the process whereby exaltation of the end de-institutionalization of the means to the end occurs in many societies where two components of the social structure are not highly integrated. Contemporary societies, seems to emphasize on success goals without a means of achieving success. The response is the general decadence that pervades society today. Social vices bedeviling the society today seem to have permeated the entire segments of our educational system. The resultant effect is the moral decadence, loss of family values, cultism, indecent dressing and cheating in exams. It appears the emphasis laid by society on success irrespective of the means employed, have drawn some people in the industry to strain toward anomie.

### 1.2.2 School Programme

Awanabor (2005) writing on the theme believes are the building blocks of education employed by both the instructor and the learner to bring about the desired or needed input in the life of the learner. A good school program he said must be relevant for the present or the future life of the individual and as well be dynamic to meet demanding trends of the global market. These deficiencies create lean ways for students to indulge in sharp

practices during exams in order to get undeserved grades and promotion.

### **1.2.3 Teaching or Learning Environment**

On the issue of teaching and learning environment factor, he mentioned one of the greatest challenges faced by the school system is to train students to fit into a wide array of learning and work communities. The teaching and learning process according to them is characterized by curriculum design, pedagogical design implementation, quality, outcomes assessment and resource provision. These they claim constitute the what, how and why of the educational system. Again they noted that these five factors also doubles as the characteristics of the very environment in which teaching is done, which comprise class size, infrastructure, general structure, objectives of the syllables and others. Studies by Badamus(1993) and Okobia (2006) in support of this point seem to suggest that available instructional materials and facilities, teachers knowledge of the curriculum, area of specialisation and qualification, commitment and determinants for performance of teachers as measured by the degree to which the appropriate methods/techniques are used by the teacher. Uwadiae (1997) in a related study discovered among other things that 66% of the variance examination malpractice is characterised by examination facilities, school performance, class population and school location. This had been established previously by (Roy & Ballew, 1994; Genereux & McLeod 1995; Crown and Spiller, 1998; Whitley, 1998) who sought to say that the environment or atmosphere created by the instructor or tutor within the classroom or examination setting could have a significant relationship with cheating.

### **1.2.4 Teacher factor**

Badamus (2006) writing on the causes of examination malpractice discovered the teacher as a principal factor. He sees the teacher as a vital figure in the business of schooling on whom the quality of instruction given is highly dependent. The quality of instruction he professed is affected by the caliber of people in the teaching job and the extent to which they desire to upgrade themselves and the working environment. Touching on the background and the ability of instructor asserted the two key factors play an integral part in the learning process and almost account for 40%. He was also quick to add that instructors do not possess the capacity to offer learners the experience and a formidable guide with respect to progress and development as they themselves lack the cutting edge, rendering them ineffective to act in that capacity and challenge their students enough to build them up. Erakhumen (2006) cited in Badamus (2006) confirmed this by arguing that basic and second cycle instructors do not have adequate know how in the disciplines they themselves profess to teach as their trainers at the time lacked the knowledge and were not properly empowered. Aside instructors lacking the quality of teaching, other external factors also hinder their performance in executing the job with perfection. Olatunbosun and Omoregie (2012) identified working conditions, societal pressure and poor remuneration. Abayeh (1996) sharing in the opinion believes those militating factors are very key and to a larger extent influence their involvement in perpetuating examination malpractice. Adding to his earlier point Abayeh (1996) found out that poverty level of supporting staff was at its worst stage and in a bid to improve their lot will employ nefarious tactics to get additional income to augment their meager salaries. Supporting this assertion with facts and figures declared 90% of staff as a matter of fact will ignore laid down regulations and indulge in sharp practices at an agreed fee, 10% he discovered will not be interested in naming a price, but rather trade with students for sex. Alutu and Aluede (2006) looking at the issue from a different angle suggested that most schools do not have the capacity to churn out students with excellent results, in the same vain these instructors have their upgrading and promotion linked to the performance of their students. Expatiating further, the writers gave several instances where institutional heads have been blamed for the poor performance of their students. In the bid to redeem their image and save their face resort to giving students the necessary push to secure their future. On the part of lazy teachers they believe will chart the same course as performance is linked to results. Badejo and Gandonu (2010) closing the chapter on the teachers as contributory factor to cheating in exams discovered that 83.3% agreed that poor attendance of lecturers in class encourage learners to cheat in examination, 62.5% in support of their colleagues, also agreed that the high-handedness of lecturers in marking script also breeds sharp practices in examinations.

### **1.2.5 Student factor**

Satel (2005) with respect to student factor in cheating suggested that the experience of blatant disregard for rules and regulations in academia is only a mirror of the bigger situation in society. On the part of parents, findings revealed that they are motivated and highly prepared to pay whatever it takes to cushion their wards and children to achieve results. Parental indiscipline and blatant flout of regulations, abuse of wealth and unrealistic expectations and excessive demands have been identified as an integral component of parental involvement in academic integrity violation acts. Studies have discovered some parents overburdened their children giving them no breathing space for studies after school, others are so much money inclined that they offer little or no supervision to their wards. Others are of the firm believe, with money all things are possible, and can achieve any feat by so doing resort to paying their way through the admission process, buying questions greasing the palms of invigilators and institutional authorities to pave way for their wards to have it smooth sailing in the evaluation process. Others in the name of perpetuating family tradition and sustaining success impose courses or

programmes on their wards when their capacity cannot sustain them. Children being so vulnerable and in the bid to please their parents indulge in academic integrity violation acts. It has also been noted that guardians enjoy seeing their wards perform better than their mates and will do whatever it takes to get them there without considering their actions (Nichols and Goode 2004; Bake and Le Tendre, 2005). The last point and obviously the order of the day is the great premium or emphasis on certificate or paper qualification to be able to fit into any system. Ihejirika (2005) insist the height or position assumed by paper qualification is superfluous that learners or examinees are deceived to think that indulging in sharp practices is the best choice to achieve results, coupled with incessant demand by companies and labour institutions. Badejo and Gandonu (2010) on the issue of cheating in the evaluation process declared it has assumed an uncontrollable height and believe it should be the worry of all key players in the education sector and makes a clarion call on all and sundry to make stringent efforts in curbing the situation. In his study predisposing factors towards examination malpractice among students in Lagos universities, and its implication for counseling, discovered 83.3% of the respondents were of the opinion that teamwork between staff and students causes examination malpractice. An equal percentage of 83.3% also claimed lackadaisical attitude towards lectures by instructors motivate learners to resort to cheating in the bid to pass exams, on the issue of high-handedness on the part of instructors, respondents were quick to point out tempts students to indulge in sharp practices during exams. A cursory look at the trend of figures, one can confidently conclude that instructors when it comes to cheating in academia are an integral part of the causal factors. On the part of students Badejo and Gandonu (2010) reported 79.2% of respondents surveyed confessed thus the students themselves are partly responsible for indulging in cheating as their attitude towards attending lectures is nothing to write home about. A 9% increase of this figure which give us a rounded figure of 88% were in total support of the fact that emphasis and irate push for certificates influences learners to cheat in exams. The statistics gives a clear indication and a confirmation that the issue of cheating in academia has always involved students, the key players, ably assisted by their lieutenants' academic staff and authorities and lecturers. In a related study Adeyemi (2010) figured out the key factors of cheating in examination can be linked to general indiscipline among learners, this was shared by 97.3% of his respondents in the survey. Closely on its heels and equally a vital contributory factor learnt was the non-implementation of honor codes and malpractice decrees of institutions. Others with an equal high response rate was ineffective supervision (95%), inadequate preparation (90%), the desire to pass notwithstanding the cost involved had (82.4%). Factors like leakage of exam questions (64%) and leakage by school authorities (55.4%) attracted a fair response. Pratt (1981) contributing to theme revealed inadequate preparation on the part of students serves as a fertile ground for cheating. Ruwa (1997) reporting the views of instructors on the matter, attributed the prevalence of cheating to poor delivery, inadequate facilities, poor conditions of service, fear of failure, and admission of unqualified candidates. Fayombo (2004) summing up identified psychological and sociological causes, but believes over reliance on qualification or paper certificate remains the top most causal factor.

In Ghana recently, the Daily Graphic, Monday April 21, 2014, a national daily carried on its front page a revelation "75 Takoradi Polytechnic Students sacked for Falsifying Grades". The affected students claimed they either had sex with some lecturers or paid money to them before being offered admission, others on the other hand, said they were introduced to middlemen by friends and senior colleagues buttressing earlier assertions made. The said students falsified D7, E8, and F9 grades to A1 to C6 to be admitted.

## **2.0 Methodology**

### **2.1 Research design**

The descriptive survey was employed for this study based on its suitability in previous studies on the subject matter to discover the realities of the phenomenon at the time of the study.

### **2.2 Population and Sample**

The survey was carried out among the students of School Applied Arts in Takoradi polytechnic. Only second and third year students were selected as the sample. First year students were not considered for the mere fact that they were new in the school, and as a matter of fact were yet to write their First Polytechnic Examination (FPE). Learners from the school of applied arts were sampled because they believe; there is no correlation between art and cheating. Approximately, 200 students from both 200-level and 300-level were randomly selected and surveyed.

### **2.3 Research Instruments**

The researcher developed an instrument customised Inclining Factors towards Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (IFTEMQ) for the study. The instrument comprised four sections. The first section sought personal data of the respondents while the other three sections comprised items on the study variables. The last three sections contain items centering on the challenges posed by Polytechnic Authorities, Lecturers and Learners respectively that constitute or ignite cheating. The instrument was designed based on previous issues in literature. The response format of IFTEMQ is a four point Likert scale: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD).

### 3.0 Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using SPSS to generate percentage and presented on tables for easy comprehension. As earlier indicated a total of 200 questionnaires were sent out or administered, out of which a total of 195 were returned and in very good shape for analysis. A response rate of 98% was realised. This was a result of the fact that, the target population were the researchers own students who turned out in their numbers to participate in the study.

#### 3.2 Demographic Statistics

The data results from the survey conducted in terms of the demographics of the respondents, out of a total of 195 respondents 142(73%) are male and 53(27%) are female. In terms of age, a heavy majority of the respondents were found in the age group of 21-25, 157(81%), only one student was found to be above 30. With respect to level of academic pursuit majority of the students were in the level 200 thus 126(65%), while 69(35%) were in level 300. The last item for the demographics was religion which produced an interesting result, with as 174(89%) belonging to the Christian fraternity while 5(3%) were from the traditional sect.

**Table 1: Frequencies of Problems Posed by Polytechnic Authorities**

SR#	ITEM	SA		A		D		SD	
		N	%age	N	%age	N	%age	N	%age
1	Unstable school calendar can lead to examination malpractice	60	31	75	38	43	22	17	9
2	Inadequate notice of issues can lead to exam malpractice	57	29	84	43	42	22	12	6
3	Improper structure of exam timetable can encourage cheating in exams	76	39	76	39	32	16	11	6
4	Inadequate facilities for exams can encourage students to cheat in exams	76	39	61	31	46	24	12	6
5	Collaboration between staff and students cause exam malpractice	53	27	52	27	63	32	27	14
6	Focus on cognitive(memory) assessment brings about exam malpractice	32	16	51	26	89	46	23	12
7	Inadequate monitoring of lecturer activities can cause exam malpractice	51	26	82	42	39	20	23	12
8	Inadequate concerns to students welfare promote cheating	61	31	80	41	40	21	4	7

Source: Field Survey April 2014

Table 1, touching on students perception of inclining factors towards examination malpractice in terms of the contribution of polytechnic authorities to the phenomenon shows that, focus on cognitive (memory) assessments induce students to cheat in the evaluation process attracting 89(46%) disagreeing to the assertion, closely on its heels was inadequate notice of issues prior to exams, and inadequate monitoring of lecturer activities who polled 84(43%) and 82(42%) respectively agree to the fact that, these things contributory factors to cheating in exams. Inadequate concerns to students' welfare also had 80(41%), also agreeing to the assertion.



**Table 2: Frequencies of Problems Posed by Lecturers**

SR#	ITEM	SA		A		D		SD	
		N	%age	N	%age	N	%age	N	%age
1	Poor attendance of lecturers in class encourages students to cheat in exams	92	47	72	37	20	10	11	6
2	Use of poor lecture techniques /methods facilitates exam malpractice	76	39	99	51	16	8	4	2
3	Frequent strike actions encourage exam malpractice	80	41	61	31	40	21	14	7
4	Inadequate teacher pupil interaction in class encourage malpractices	43	22	80	41	54	28	18	9
5	Sexual harassment from lecturers can encourage cheating in exams	80	41	42	22	47	24	26	13
6	Using students to mark examination scripts encourages exam malpractice	94	48	45	23	43	22	13	7
7	Extortion of students by lecturers promotes exam malpractice	46	24	78	40	57	29	14	7
8	High handedness of some lecturers influences students' involvement in exam malpractices	44	23	88	45	43	22	20	10

Source: Field Survey April 2014

In table 2, this time around on the problems posed by lecturer that ignite cheating in exams, the students had the following reservations; a heavy majority of 99(51%) agreed the use of poor lecture techniques by lecturers makes it difficult for them to understand what is taught in class hence resorting to cheating to pass exams. Quite a close number of the respondents thus 94(48%) and 90(47%) strongly agreed that poor attendance to lectures on the part of lecturers and the use of colleagues students to mark exams scripts also induce cheating. interestingly 88(45%) agreed that high handedness in the marking of scripts on the part of lecturers also make them cheats as it is the only to please them.

**Table 3: Frequencies of Problems Posed by Students**

SR#	ITEM	SA		A		D		SD	
		N	%age	N	%age	N	%age	N	%age
1	Poor attendance at lectures by students encourages exam malpractice	110	56	68	35	13	7	4	2
2	Inadequate preparation for exams makes students cheat in exams	115	59	69	35	10	5	1	1
3	Inability to get reading materials facilitates exam malpractice	88	45	82	42	24	12	1	1
4	Lack of confidence promotes exam malpractice	73	37	85	44	31	16	6	3
5	Laziness promotes exam malpractice	108	55	70	36	8	4	9	5
6	Mad rush for certificates encourages students to cheat in exams	62	32	69	35	55	28	9	5
7	Negative peer influence brings about exam malpractice	73	37	91	47	20	10	11	6
8	Too much involvement in social activities promotes exam malpractices	55	28	56	29	50	26	34	17

Source: Field Survey April, 2014

Table 3, presented us with very interesting trend as a greater majority of the respondents in showing how these factors contribute to cheating strongly agreed to all the issues with high frequencies; 115(59%), 110(56%) and 108(55%) were of the opinion that poor attendance at lectures, inadequate preparation towards exams coupled with the laziness syndrome on the part of colleagues makes indulge in sharp practices during exams. Funnily, quite a close number of 91(45%) only agreed to blame on negative peer influence.

#### 4.0 Discussion

The results show that there is a significant relationship between gender and students attitude towards the inclining factors of examination malpractice in Takoradi polytechnic. This shows that male students have the higher tendency to cheat to indulge in sharp practices during examination. This particular finding corroborate that of Al-Qaisy (2008) which sought to suggest that cheating is in the welfare of males

On the issue of age, as regards the inclining factors towards examination malpractice, among students of Takoradi polytechnic, there was no significant relationship, an indication that cheating defies age

From the results presented on the tables and its analysis, 46% of the respondents disagreed that, much focus on cognitive assessment brings about exam malpractice. This finding was contradictory to that of Badejo and Gandonu (2010) which revealed that collaboration between staff and students lead to examination malpractice

On the other hand 51% agreed that the use of poor lecture techniques in class can encourage students to cheat in exams while. With respect to this finding Badejo and Gandonu (2010), rather had poor attendance of lecturers in class in that sector encouraging students to cheat in examination

On the part of the students 59% strongly agreed that poor or inadequate preparation of students towards exam encourages them to cheat in exams. In their study Badejo and Gandonu (2010) had poor attendance students at lectures and mad rush for certificate being the contributory factors.

#### 5.0 Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis two major conclusions can be drawn; thus polytechnic authorities and supporting staff hardly contribute to malpractices during examination, on the contrary lecturers and students per the study have been found to be contributory factors in the issue of sharp practices during examination.

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