

ISSN: 3031-7347 https://doi.org/10.61796/ejlhss.v1i8.828

AN ASSESSMENT OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS' EXAMINATIONS CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR DECISION MAKING

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Received: Jun 22, 2024; Accepted: Jul 29, 2024; Published: Aug 10, 2024;

Abstract: This paper assessed the challenges militating against conduct of examinations in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Relevant journals and conference papers were consulted and are sources of secondary data used in the paper. The paper identified funding problems, inadequate infrastructure facilities, corruption, examination mal-practices, technological facilities, strike actions and insecurity problems as challenges militating against effective conduct of examinations in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Based on these findings, the paper recommends an increment in the budgetary allocation of tertiary institutions. Provision of modern infrastructure facilities. Deployment and installation of CCTV cameras in all examination halls and theatres. Examination marking should be taken away from lecturers to a special centre where marking of exams scripts will be decentralized. Government should implement all agreement reached with different trade unions to curtain strike actions in the various institutions. Government should address all issues breeding insecurities in Nigeria

Keywords: Examination, Examination Malpractice, funding problems, infrastructure facilities, corruption.



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Introduction

Tertiary education is an educational system designed to solve local, national and international pressing problems (Ogunode & Musa, 2024). Tertiary education fosters individual development and growth as well as impacts positively on the society at large (Schrader-King, 2024). Tertiary education can be defined as the planned and organized system of learning designed for the total development of individuals and the total transformation of the society through the utilization of teaching, research and provision of community service (Ogunode, Edinoh & Okolie, 2023). Tertiary education, also known as higher education, refers to educational programs offered by universities, colleges, and other institutions beyond secondary education. It encompasses undergraduate and postgraduate studies, providing students with advanced knowledge, skills, and qualifications in their chosen field of study (Proctoredu, 2023).

Tertiary education is viewed by National Policy on Education (2013) as the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, in-stitutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of

Education, Monotechnics, Pol-ytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI).

The goals of tertiary education (tertiary institutions) according to the FGN National Policy on Education (2013), shall be to: contribute to national development through high-level manpower training; pro-vide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians; provide high-quality career counselling and lifelong learning programme that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work; reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labor market; promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service; forge and cement national unity; and promote national and international understanding and interaction. The other goals or objectives of tertiary institutions according to Ogunode, et al (2023) include; aiding the production of manpower; ensuring national unity; ensuring technological development; fostering national unity and international peace; increasing production through research; providing post-secondary school education; to prepare students with quality knowledge and reliable skills for independent living and the world of work. The cardinal programmes of tertiary institutions globally include; teaching programme, research and provision of community service. Tertiary institutions are established to solve the societal problems. From the above, tertiary education is an organized educational system with business of improving the analytical and problems solving skills of an individual and for general national development via the activities of teaching, research and provision of community services. Tertiary institutions can also be seen as problem-solving institutions, manpower development with focus on teaching, research and community service programme implementation.

The realization of tertiary education depends among other factors to delivery of quality education via examination. Examination is one of the programme of the tertiary institutions. Examination programme is designed to assess the students learning and the attainment they have attained. Examination programme is one of the most important programe of tertiary institutions because is one of the indicator for the measurement of quality in the system.

The conduct of examinations in the tertiary institutions seems to be facing a lot of challenges. These challenges made it impossible to have a perfect and effective examinations in most tertiary institutions across the country. It is based on this that this paper seeks to assess the various challenges militating against conduct of an effective examinations in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this paper is General System Theory that was developed by David Easton in 1953. The theory was adapted from the natural sciences, especially Biology in the works of Ludwig Von Bertallanty. The systems theory states that an organization is a single, unified system of interrelated parts or sub-systems. Each part of the overall system is dependent on the others and cannot function optimally without them. Therefore, if factors are present that adversely affect one sub-system within an organization, it's likely these factors may adversely affect other sub-systems, too. This can result in impacts on the entire system to a certain extent. This framework presents an organization as a natural ecosystem, where each element is interdependent. The systems approach is another term for this framework. Various components of a system also interact with each other regularly, which is true in a modern organi-zation like a tertiary institutions (Ahrorov и Sobirov 2021; Ogunode, Ngezack & Usi, 2024).

Tertiary institutions can be liken to a system that is made up of different units and sub-units

working together towards realizing the whole objectives of the tertiary institutions. The units and sub-units include academic staff, non-academic staff, funds, infrastructure facilities, policies, administration, students and examinations. These units and sub-units are expected to be sound and effective and be provided in right qualities and quantities because the malfunctioning or inadequacy of any of these units has adverse effects on the whole operations of the respective tertiary institutions which can lead to the production of half-baked graduate and poor quality of tertiary education and directly and indirectly affects national development because national development has linkages with quality of tertiary institutions (Ogunode, et al 2024).

The relevance and application of this theory to this study is that, tertiary institutions administrators and managers should know that tertiary institutions is like a system that operate with many units and sub-units and each unit must be sound and must be supervised or conducted like examinations programme because each unit is playing a crucial role in the attainment of tertiary institutions objectives (Ogunode, et al., 2024).

Concept of Examination

Examination is an organized assessment techniques which present individual with a series of questions or task geared toward ascertaining the individual acquired knowledge and skills (Oduwaiye 2014; Oko & Adie 2016). Examination is a crucial programme in the life of a school. It is seen as a mechanism by which a learner's achievement is determined in the three domains - psychomotor, affective and cognitive – through a set of instruments under the supervision of an examiner or examiners (Atanda and Lameed, 2006). Examination is defined as the process, which comes after a period of learning and as an organized assessment of individuals' performance on the basis of his/her institutional procedural exposure (Adelusi, 1998). In a related definition, Hornby (1995) defined an examination as a formal test of somebody's knowledge or ability in a particular subject especially by means of answering questions or practical exercises.

Examination has been used to assess and determine students' level of understanding after undertaking a course. Accordingly, examination remains one of the most acknowledged approaches in assessing how much one has learned and also in finding out the extent to which the objectives and goals of the course have been attained (John, Gilbert, & Suuk. 2020). The teaching-learning process aims at enhancing cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the students. The indicator that feeds the school system back on whether the essence of teaching-learning process has been achieved is examination results. Though, there are other approaches to determine students' level of achievement like homework or assignment, project and others, they are complementary. These are added to school-based examination to make hundred percent. The essence of examination at any level is to give genuine picture of academic strength of learners so as to help in counselling them and also for placement into subsequent classes. It implies that the process of administering any examination matters before considering the outcome (NOUN, 2012).

Examinations in tertiary institutions can take various forms, including first semester and second semester examinations. These assessments may be oral, written, or both, and can be conducted either physically or virtually. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, two major types of examinations are used to evaluate students' learning achievements: continuous assessment tests (CA Tests) and semester examinations (Oko & Adle, 2016). These examinations play a crucial role in enhancing manpower production, which in turn promotes societal growth. However, the alarming rate of examination misconduct poses a significant threat to this objective (Nurudeen, Ologun, & Nelson, 2022). According to the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN, 2012), several factors are necessary for the proper conduct of school examinations. These include:

- a. Deciding on the timing of the examinations.
- b. Ensuring the availability of accurate data on the number of students who will take the examinations.
- c. Making adequate arrangements for the necessary materials, such as examination questions, answer sheets, and attendance sheets.
- d. Collecting and moderating examination questions at least two weeks before the commencement of the examination.
 - e. Selecting appropriate venues with considerations for seating and ventilation.
 - f. Deciding on invigilators for examination supervision.
 - g. Drawing up an examination timetable.

Examinations are a special program designed to assess the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains of individual students based on the curriculum they have covered. Examinations are one of the most crucial programs in schools, aiming to evaluate the knowledge and skills that learners have acquired over a period of time. The purposes of school examinations include assessing the social and behavioral skills that learners have acquired, evaluating their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills, determining if learners are qualified to move to the next class, and certifying learners upon graduation from the schools.

Challenges Militating Against Effective Conduct of Examination in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

There are many challenges militating against effective conduct of examinations in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Some of these challenges includes; funding problems, inadequate infrastructure facilities, corruption, examination mal-practices, technological facilities, strike actions and insecurity problems.

Funding

Funding is crucial for the execution of examination programs in tertiary institutions. Adequate funds are required for procuring examination resources and providing services that support effective examination programs in higher education institutions. Unfortunately, the poor funding of tertiary institutions by stakeholders, coupled with the inadequate internally generated revenue of many tertiary institutions in Nigeria, significantly affects the conduct of examinations. Examinations, being a critical program within tertiary institutions, face similar funding challenges as other institutional programs. The lack of funds to procure necessary examination resources has led many institutions to postpone examinations until sufficient funds are available, causing delays in setting authentic examination dates (Aiyedun, Olatunde-Aiyedun, & Ogunode, 2021).

Ogunode, Olatunde-Aiyedun, and Mcbrown (2022) highlighted that insufficient funding leads to several operational challenges within tertiary institutions, including the low patronage of Nigerian public universities by international students. The perception of academic staff reflects concerns over the inadequacy of funds, which hampers the institutions' ability to maintain and improve academic standards and infrastructure. Additionally, Olamoyegun, Olatunde-Aiyedun, and Ogunode (2022) emphasized the importance of adequate funding for science programs in tertiary institutions. They argued that without sufficient financial support, it becomes challenging to provide the necessary facilities, such as laboratories, libraries, and ICT centers, which are essential for a comprehensive science education. This inadequate funding not only affects the quality of education but also impacts the overall development of the institutions. To ensure the effective execution of examination

programs and overall institutional development, it is imperative that funding issues are addressed. This requires increased budgetary allocation for education by the government and prioritizing funding for critical programs such as examinations and science education. By doing so, tertiary institutions can improve their operational efficiency, enhance academic quality, and meet their educational objectives.

Inadequate Facilities

Inadequate infrastructure facilities in tertiary institutions also affect the conduct of examinations in Nigeria. Many tertiary institutions lack adequate examination halls and theaters necessary for effectively conducting exams. Ogunode (2020) observed that the lack of modern infrastructure facilities hinders the implementation of various programs, including examination programs, in tertiary institutions. The issue of unstable power supply often prevents the timely start of examinations due to the inability to print examination papers. Consequently, unstable power supply can delay the entire examination process. The absence of CCTV cameras in examination halls, theaters, and classrooms exacerbates the issue of cheating and examination malpractice. The inability of tertiary institutions to install these surveillance facilities hampers the effective conduct of examinations across the country. Ebehikhalu and Dawam (2016) lamented that inadequate infrastructure facilities impede the development of tertiary institutions and slow down the implementation of programs such as examinations.

Ogunode, Okwelogu, and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2021) highlighted the challenges and problems associated with the deployment of ICT facilities by public higher institutions during COVID-19 in Nigeria. The lack of infrastructure significantly affected the ability of these institutions to adapt to remote learning and examinations during the pandemic. Furthermore, Ogunode, Jegede, Olamoyegun, Akinjobi, and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2022) discussed the effects of project abandonment, particularly infrastructure projects, in public tertiary education in Nigeria. They emphasized that incomplete or abandoned projects contribute to the inadequate infrastructure, thereby hampering the effective conduct of examinations. Adams, Zubair, and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2022) also examined the impact of project abandonment on public tertiary education in Nigeria. They pointed out that inadequate infrastructure due to abandoned projects affects not only the quality of education but also the examination processes. To address these challenges, it is crucial to prioritize the funding and completion of infrastructure projects in tertiary institutions. This will ensure that adequate facilities are available to support effective examination programs and enhance the overall quality of education.

Corruption

Corruption among staff of tertiary institutions significantly impedes the effective conduct of examinations. Corruption, defined as the absurd or deviant disposition of individuals in higher learning institutions violating ethical standards, undermines the core values of education at this level (Chinyere & Chukwuma, 2017). It is a widespread malady affecting the peace and well-being of societies globally, sparing no country, and involves the abuse of processes or systems (Ahmodu & Sofoluwe, 2018; Ogunode, Josiah, & Ajape, 2021). Corruption is the misuse or abuse of public office for private gains and encompasses a wide array of illicit behaviors, including bribery, extortion, fraud, nepotism, graft, theft, embezzlement, falsification of academic records, kickbacks, and influence peddling (Ahmodu & Sofoluwe, 2018).

In the context of examinations, corruption manifests as "sex for marks" and harassment.

Chinyere and Chukwuma (2017) identified various dimensions of corruption in Nigerian universities involving students, lecturers, non-academic staff, and administrators. Among students, corruption includes bribing lecturers for unmerited grades, cultism, examination malpractice, attacks on lecturers who prevent cheating, and fiscal extortion from innocent students by those forming groups known as "lecturers' boys."

For lecturers, forms of corruption include demanding large sums of money or sexual favors from female students for high grades. Non-teaching staff engage in corruption by extorting money from students to see their results, demanding money from unsuspecting parents with false promises of securing admissions for their children, and acting as agents for lecturers by receiving money from students for higher grades after examinations. Administrators engage in corruption by misappropriating and misapplying funds meant for capital projects, offering admissions to undeserving students for a fee while bypassing deserving candidates, among other malpractices. The presence of corruption at these multiple levels hampers effective university administration. In 2018, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project reported allegations of corruption in several federal universities, including the unfair allocation of grades, contract inflation, truncation of staff salaries on payrolls, employment of unqualified staff, certificate scandals, examination malpractice, sexual harassment, and the issuance of results to expelled students to facilitate their graduation (Ogunode, Ohunene & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022).

Examination Mal-Practices

Examination mal-practice in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria is a major problem militating against effective conduct of examination. Examination malpractice can be referred to as an act that goes contrary to rules and regulations guilding the conduct of any examination and designed to give a candidate an undue advantage. Examination malpractice also know as cheating is the illegal action that students take during their examinations to try to make good grades by cutting corners (Oko & Adire, 2016). Ogunode, and Odo (2023) noted that another trending social problem in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria is examination malpractices. The problem of examination malpractices started from the basic school habit (Musa, 2022). Onyike, (2019) lamented that in recent times, examination malpractice has gone from simple "giraffing" where students occasionally stretch their necks to catch glimpse of what they want to copy from other students' scripts to a variety of sophisticated methods which include; (a) Use of micro-chips'; writing very tiny summaries on pieces of paper, parts of the body, or on materials found within the venue, (b) Sorting'; in which students negotiate with corrupt lecturers for scores by rewarding' the lecturers in cash or kind (c) ECOMOG/ECOWA/OAU: which is an alliance among classmates, to communicate via coded 'language' (d) Hand-held smart devices such as modern cell phones (Anzene, 2013).

There are many factors responsible for examination malpractices in the tertiary institutions. Onyike, (2019) observed that one of the major causes of examination malpractice in the campuses can be attributed to moral decadence in Nigeria because of the deplorable value system. In this country, cheating, dishonesty including embezzlement and stealing of public funds and properties do not attract the condemnation and punishment they deserve. The emphasis on paper qualifications or certificates is another cause of examination malpractice. If admissions to schools and employment of graduates are based on actual performance of candidates during interviews or entrance examinations rather than on mere certificates, examination malpractice shall be discouraged or minimized. Another major cause of examination malpractice is inadequate teaching and learning

facilities such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories and even teachers compared to the population of students. Thus effective conduct of examination becomes difficult. Other students' vices such as cultism, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity and truancy are also encouraging examination malpractice on campuses as students devote more time to them than their studies. Since examination malpractice sows seed of fraud and criminal values in society, this vice cannot allow us to realize future greatness because it renders useless certificate and debases the foundation for assessing our skills and capacity. Examination malpractice, therefore not only promotes breakdown of moral and ethical standards in society but it also prevents achievement of meaningful and sustainable development for like the aspiration to become one of the top twenty economies in the world by the year 20:2020 (Onyike, 2019).

Technological Facilities

The deployment of technological devices by students of tertiary institutions for examination mal-practices in the Nigerian tertiary institutions is a very serious challenge to the conduct of examination in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The new emerging form of examination malpractice according to Duvie & Eluwa, (2016) in tertiary institutions in Nigeria involved the use of electronic devices like Global system of Mobile Telephone. Smuggling and the use of mobile phones and other electronic devices were common forms of examination malpractice according to Nnam and Inah (2015), and they are used by student of tertiary institutions in recent years. Oko and Adie, 2016) and Nurudeen, Ologun, and Nelson, (2022) observed that electronic cheating (e-cheating) which occurs through the use of mobile phone and other data or information storages devices for examination malpractices is a common thing in most tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This assume the form of electronic mails, SMS from syndicate, online browsing in examination hall as well as retrieval of stored data which could be typed data or snapped pages of text books or note books which are retrieved from the storage device like cell phones, BB, IPAD, IPHONE etc in the examination. Electronic device cheating is gaining more grounded as a form of examination malpractice in tertiary institutions in Nigeria in recent times. In Oko and Adie (2016) it was revealed that electronic cheating ranked third by 60% of the respondents in a field study conducted to examine the causes, effects and possible ways of curbing examination malpractices in Cross River University of Technology. The availability of smart phones and the accessibility of most students to this electronic gadget has made electronic cheating prevalent in Nigerian Tertiary institutions. The prevalence of electronic device cheating in Nigeria Tertiary institutions took a dangerous demission in July 2019, when the Management of the Polytechnic Ibadan, Oyo state burnt over 1000 mobile phone seized from students during the institution's semester examination. The Deputy Rector of the institution while addressing newsmen said the decision to burn the cell phones was aimed at discouraging students' from engaging in examination malpractice (Valentine, 2019; Nurudeen, Ologun, & Nelson, 2022).

Strike Actions

Strike actions by various trade unions in the tertiary institutions is a major problem militating against effective conduct of examinations. Okoli, Ogbondah, Land Ewor (2016) concluded that it has become a known fact that students across various universities in Nigeria are constantly faced with industrial actions embarked upon by the Academic and Non-Academic Staff Unions of various institutions. The disagreement or lack of understanding between government and unions arising from non-implementation of agreement reached, often results in deadlock that usually disrupts academic

calendar. As academic activities are suspended for a long period, the students reading abilities fell. Even the previous knowledge acquired is even forgotten by some students. This mostly turns some students into certificates seekers than knowledge seekers. Ogunode, Ugochukwu, and Jegede (2022) and Ifeyinwa and Okemute, (2023) noted that the strike actions militated against execution of examinations in tertiary institutions. Offem, Anashie, and Solomon, (2018) observed that strike actions has led to postponement of examinations in many tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Insecurities Problems

Insecurities challenges in Nigeria has affected conduct of examinations in many tertiary institutions across the country. Insecurities problems in North-east, North-west, North-central and South-east regions of Nigeria has affected the smooth conduct of examinations. Insecurities problems across Nigeria has led to death of lecturers, students and researchers (Ogunode, & Ukozor, 2022). Insecurities problems has led to school closure which has affected the academic programme and examination programme of many tertiary institutions located in the states with high insecurities programmes (Ogunode, Okwelogu, Enyinnaya, &Yahaya, 2021). Obi, (2015) observed that insecurity and terrorism has been a major challenge to the Nigerian government in recent times. The activities of the Islamic sect (Boko Haram) had led to loss of lives and properties in the country especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. Some of these activities include bombing, suicide bomb attacks, sporadic shooting of unarmed and innocent citizens, burning of police stations, churches, kidnapping of school girls and women, etc. Kidnapping, rape, armed robbery and political crises, murder, destruction of oil facilities by Niger Delta militants alongside the attacks carried out by Fulani Herdsmen on some communities in the North and South have been another major insecurity challenge facing the country. Nigeria has been included among one of the terrorist countries of the world. Many lives and properties have been lost and a large number of citizens rendered homeless. Families have lost their loved ones. Many women are now widows. Children become orphans with no hope of the future. This has implications for national development. Insecurities problems has affected implementation of examinations programme in the higher institutions.

Conclusion

This paper examined the challenges impeding the effective conduct of examinations in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It identified several key issues, including funding problems, inadequate infrastructure facilities, corruption, examination malpractices, insufficient technological facilities, strike actions, and insecurity problems.

Based on these findings, the paper recommends the following:

- i. Increase Budgetary Allocation: There should be a significant increase in the budgetary allocation for tertiary institutions to ensure adequate funding for examination programs.
- ii. Provision of Modern Infrastructure: Modern infrastructure facilities should be provided to support the effective conduct of examinations, including well-equipped examination halls and theatres.
- iii. Deployment of CCTV Cameras: CCTV cameras should be installed in all examination halls and theatres to monitor and reduce examination malpractices.
- iv. Decentralized Examination Marking: The marking of examination scripts should be taken away from lecturers and assigned to a special center where the process can be decentralized, ensuring fairness and reducing corruption.

- v. Address Strike Actions: The government should implement all agreements reached with various trade unions to prevent frequent strike actions that disrupt academic activities.
- vi. Enhance Security: The government should address all issues contributing to insecurity in Nigeria to create a safe environment for students and staff.

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