
EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: TYPES, CAUSES, AND CONSEQUENCES

BY

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ABSTRACT

Examination malpractice in Nigerian tertiary institutions: types, causes, and consequences is an interesting topic designed to study the state of examination malpractice. The main objective of the study is to identify the types and major causes of examination malpractice as well as provide workable solutions to them. The methodology will consider the collection of data from four academic institutions, two from the north, one from the east, and another one from the western part of Nigeria. These four institutions make up the population of the study. A primary method was used for data collection. The data, therefore, were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). This will be done to ensure accuracy and reliability and also allow for generalization of the findings. In the end, the study will provide workable solutions to the devastating problems crippling Nigerian tertiary institutions. It will provide answers to many questions on examination malpractice. The result will be of great significance to academic institutions. This will upgrade the integrity of the institutions and provide more value to the certificates.

Keywords: Causes, consequences, examination malpractice, tertiary institutions

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Education is the major foundation of development. At individual level, is a necessary ingredient for personal progress. At societal level, education is basic for national development. Akaranga & Ongong (2013) says that education is a necessary process through which young adults are equipped to lead productive lives according to their talents interests. To some people, education is seen as a means of overcoming handicap, hardship, achieving greater fortunes and acquiring wealth and status. In short, education is the basic tools that make the life of individuals and their society great.

According to Encarta, 2007 Examination or Exam for a short may have so many meanings; it may mean medical inspection of patient by a doctor but in this context, it refers to a test of knowledge or ability. It is simply a test designed to assess somebody's ability or knowledge in a particular subject or field. The act of conducting examination by institutions of learning is similar to that of medical practitioner; simply to issue a prescription of papers (carry-over) to be rewritten or certificate of fitness ensuring a sound individual capable of performing the required task of life. Malpractice on the hand means illegal, unethical, negligence or immoral behavior by a person in his professional or official capacity, resulting in a failure to fulfill the duties or responsibilities associated with him.

So is the question posed by the psychologist Diaz (1984). Is it appropriate to employ people once caught in examination malpractice? Or marry a woman or man once caught in the same act because to him woman is the cause of moral behavior of our children. Should you then entrust the responsibility of upbringing your children in the hands of such woman? So many of these questions go unanswered. Another example, are the cases of dubious manipulations that led to loss of office; example of the defunct World Bank Chief Executive Paul Waulforwith, speaker House of Representatives, National Assembly Mrs. Patricia Olubunmi Eteh and so many others that go even unnoticed. What can we do to halt this practice or malpractice that hinders the development of the entire system of the world?

Unfortunately, our tertiary institutions today are seriously hampered with examination malpractice which arose from so many factors ranging from socio-economic and psychological behaviors and attitudes.

Despite the fact that tertiary institutions in Nigeria have made so many efforts in the past and are still taking majors to salvage the situation, yet, the condition is getting worst every year due to some persisting factors that overweighed all the remedies provided. The implication of this is that tertiary institutions will be producing low quality graduates that are highly incapable of manning the sensitive positions in both public and private sectors. To this end, a fresh study is desired to find an effective remedy to the situations.

1.2 Statement of Problem

One of the most persisting problems faced by our institutions today is the issue of examination malpractice. Despite all the efforts made by these institutions to curtail this notable problem, the issue is still very much alive and even getting worst in some institutions and this problem has a destructive (viral) impact on both the institutions and the larger society. It is therefore necessary to conduct a fresh study that will provide workable solutions for preventing examination malpractice to salvage our institutions and the larger society. More recently, researches indicated that there is significant increase in the rate of examination malpractice in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. There is also a considerable rise in the types and causes of cheating due to the increase in social vices such as drug abuse and the

development in technology that produces portable digital appliances which are usually abused by students to aid malpractice

1.3 Research Questions

This study is aimed to address the following research questions;

- i. What are the major causes of examination malpractice in Nigerian tertiary institutions?
- ii. What are the consequences of examination malpractice on both the students, institutions and the larger society?
- iii. What are the workable solutions to examination malpractice in Nigerian tertiary institutions?
- iv. What are the most effective mechanism for preventing all types of examination malpractice in Nigerian tertiary institutions?

1.4 Objective of the Study

The research is aimed at defining examination malpractice in the lights of its causes, consequences and measures of preventing this phenomenon that ransack our precious of knowledge. In respect of these therefore, this research work will concentrate on identifying and tackling the following;

- i. To identify the major causes of examination malpractice in Nigerian tertiary institutions.
- ii. To examine the consequences of examination malpractice on both the students, institutions and the larger society
- iii. To identify the workable solutions to examination malpractice in Nigerian tertiary institutions.
- iv. To find out the most effective mechanism for preventing all types of examination malpractice in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

H₀₁ Teaching quality has no significant effect on examination malpractice in tertiary institutions

H₀₂ Examination invigilation does not significantly moderate the relationship between low-quality teaching and examination malpractice in tertiary institutions

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study will explore various forms of examination malpractice prevalent in Nigerian tertiary institutions, including but not limited to cheating, impersonation, leakage of questions, swapping of scripts, smuggling of answer scripts into the examination venue and the use of electronic gadgets. The study will delve into the short-term and long-term consequences of examination malpractice on individuals, institutions, and the broader education system. This may include academic penalties, damage to the integrity of educational credentials, and societal implications. The study will cover periods from 2010 to date. This is due to the fact that these are periods with the highest occurrence of examination malpractices in Nigeria's tertiary institutions as a result of multifaceted issues like inadequate preparations for exams, fear of failure and stigmatization, lack of ethical values, ineffective examination security, advent of technology, and societal attitudes that place a high premium on academic success, among other things.

2.0 Literature Review

According to Salim (1998), examinations are aimed at testing certain variables in individuals to ascertain their current forms against the background of what has being imparted to them. Thus to him, examination is the systematic form of determining how much of the contents of

the subject pupils or students have acquired after given period of time. Examination malpractice is defined to depict a deliberate and gross misconduct perpetrated by students in an attempt to illegally excel in examination (Harrison & Roberts, 2002).

Anderson (2000), opines that examination malpractice is any illegal act done in order to pass the examination without following the designed norms that serves as guides to the successful conduct of the examination. Solomon (2000), posits that malpractice involve deliberate action of wrongdoing that is contrary to examination official values and is designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage.

Examination malpractice therefore, is any act that is against the laid down rules and regulations of the examining authority. It is an act of cheating perpetrated by students and sometimes in collaboration with their lecturers or other related school authority for the satisfaction of selfish interest (Harrison & Roberts, 2002). Fasasi (2006) posited that examination malpractice may be understood as “a misconduct or improper practice, before, during or after any examination by examinees or others with a view to obtaining good results by fraudulent means”. From these definitions, it can be concluded that examination malpractice is an unethical act because it encourages mediocrity in that students who succeed through such unorthodox methods may be rated equal to those who struggle on their own to excel. In schools, students who engage in examination malpractice manifest the possession of certain knowledge by illicit means (Cizek, 1999). Pavela (1997) argues that examination malpractice includes the unauthorized use of materials and/or information by a student. It is important, therefore, to discuss examination malpractice in order to create awareness among both students and authorities concerned, and, to suggest proper measures for controlling such deviant activities of examinees during examination period.

Examination is the adequacy of these properties possessed by candidates, by evaluation. This is the pivot around which the whole system of education evolves (Ammani, 2011; Wilayat, 2009). Examinations should be valid in the performance of its function; reliable in terms of consistency of measurement; and it should be able to evaluate the performance or judge the scholastic attainment of pupils or students. In some cases candidates are assessed on the content of a subject they have acquired after a given period of time, by their teacher or by an examining body. Examination could be a one time or a continued form of assessment. Any wrong doing or illegal action taken for one’s own benefit is a malpractice. Examination malpractice involves some form of cheating committed by examination candidates single handed or in collaboration with others; before, during, after the examination, to take undue advantage over others. Technically, it is an act that contravenes the rules and regulations of a particular examination body, set at a particular period of time. Not only is it immoral and illegal but also undermines the credibility of the education system (The Ghanaian Times, 2011). Some recent researches have shown that the majority of students who gained admissions in tertiary institutions in Nigeria are products of examination malpractice (Emaikwu & Eba, 2007). Maduemezia (1998) reported that the first examination malpractice in Nigeria occurred in 1914 during the Senior Cambridge Local Examination papers which were leaked before the scheduled date of examination.

3.0 Methodology

The study administered questionnaires with 5 point Likert scale to the target sample of respondents using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The dataset was analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with the help of Smart PLS 4.0.

3.1 Methods of Data Collection

This research utilized primary source of data collection in order to generate reliable and recent information directly from the respondents. To achieve this, the research considered the use of constructive questionnaires and oral interviews across all the four areas under the study.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study is wide, having involved three (3) educational institutions namely Kano State Polytechnic, University of Lagos (UNILAG) and University of Port Harcourt. The selection of the case study areas is done in order to give the research a wide range of coverage so as to arrive at the dependable result. The population of the study therefore involved the entire population of the above-mentioned institutions.

3.3 Sample size and Sampling Techniques

This research is intended to distribute questionnaires to the institutions following the propionate sampling procedure and oral interviews were conducted with the examination officer's of each institution. The sample size of the study was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of determining sample size. The selection of the respondents in both the questionnaires and interviews was done using a propionate sampling technique. This is because the population of the institutions varies. A 5 points Likert-type rating scale questionnaire was prepared so as to simplify the exercise for the respondents and make the result authentic.

Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis in this research was done using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of Smart PLS 4.0. This will make the results more accurate and simpler for the beneficiaries to comprehend and make further inquiries or analysis.

4.0 Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.1 Descriptives

	Questions	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
EM4	Students are prone to engaging in impersonation during examinations.	4.031	0.772	Agreed
EM5	Students are prone to sitting next to each other for collaborative cheating	4.011	0.827	Agreed
EM6	Students are usually caught engaging in one form of examination malpractice or another	4.131	0.841	Agreed
LT10	The overall teaching quality in this institution is quite high	2.256	1.006	Disagreed
LT6	Teachers encourage students to discuss and ask questions	2.539	1.082	Disagreed
LT7	Students usually have a good command of key points after the course	2.586	1.182	Disagreed
LT8	Students' ability to observe, operate, analyze and solve problems can be improved after class	2.417	1.087	Disagreed
PI1	Invigilation is taken seriously at all times in this institution	2.35	1.046	Disagreed
PI2	The school's system scares me from involving in examination malpractices	2.556	0.944	Disagreed

Source: Field Work, 2023

Table 4.1 showed mean responses of 4.031, 4.011 and 4.131 on the questions on examination malpractices in higher institution with standard deviations less than 1.0, which implies that there is a great degree of consensus over the presence of examination malpractices in the institutions under study. This implies that there is statistically significant relationship between teaching quality and examination malpractice in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

The questions on teaching quality pull mean responses of 2.256, 2.539 and 2.586, with standard deviations greater than 1.0, indicating the majority of the respondents disagree to the assertions raised in the questions. This implies the existence of low quality teaching in the institutions under the study.

The questions on invigilation also pull mean responses of 2.35 and 2.556, respectively, meaning that majority of the responses disagree to the assertions raised about the quality of invigilation in the institution under study. This implies that the quality of invigilation of examinations is quite low.

4.1 Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Results

The measurement model of the reflective indicators and the loading of each indicator are presented including composite reliability (CR) for internal consistency and Average Variance extracted (AVE) for construct validity. The process involved a series of iterations until the loadings of items measuring individual constructs stood within the threshold as recommended by in Hair *et al* (2013) which states that reflective indicators with loadings greater than 0.7 should be retained, while those between 0.4 and 0.7 will be retained depending on the average variance extracted, which threshold is 0.5. Quite a number of indicators were expunged from the models leaving the model with the indicators as depicted in the Fig 4.1

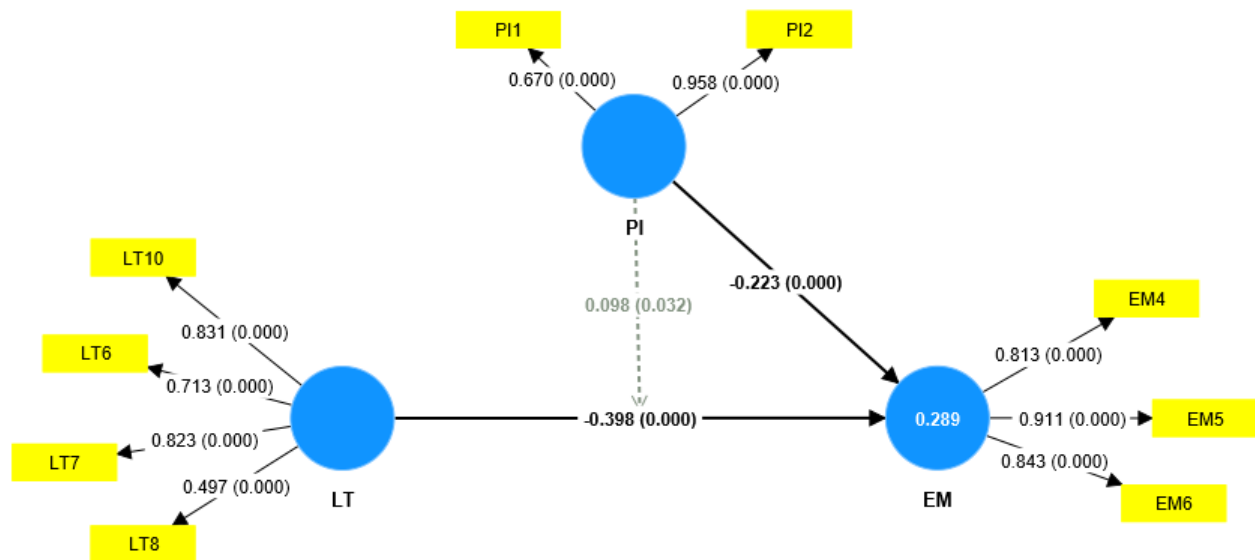


Fig 4.1. Research Model

4.2 Construct Reliability & Validity

Upon the last iteration that gave rise to the selected indicators the constructs and their measurements are considered valid as they fall within the threshold.

Table 4.2. Construct Reliability & Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EM	0.820	0.847	0.892	0.734
LT	0.715	0.793	0.814	0.531
PI	0.602	0.997	0.807	0.684

Source: Smart PLS4 Output, 2023

The composite reliability (CR) for internal consistency and Average Variance extracted (AVE) for construct validity are shown in table 4.2 and meet the threshold.

Table 4.3 Discriminant Validity

	EM	LT	PI
EM			
LT	0.570		
PI	0.501	0.838	
PI x LT	0.023	0.287	0.107

Source: Smart PLS4 Output, 2023

Furthermore, to test the discriminant validity, the study utilized Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) which gives values as shown in Table 4.3. The values show that the criterion is satisfied.

4.3 Test of Hypotheses

To ascertain the effect of teaching quality on examination malpractice, Bootstrapping was done by using 500 cases and 5000 subsamples. Tables 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 show the summary the entire model

Table 4.4 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

	R-square	R-square adjusted
EM	0.289	0.283

Source: Smart PLS4 Output, 2023

The R^2 stood at 0.289, which indicates that 28.9 percent of variations in examination malpractice in the institutions under study is accounted for by teaching quality as captured in this study; while the remaining 71.1 percent are explained by other factors not captured in this model.

Table 4.5 Overview of Structural Model Analysis

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
LT → EM	-0.398	-0.402	0.050	7.947	0.000
PI → EM	-0.223	-0.225	0.054	4.165	0.000
PI x LT → EM	0.098	0.094	0.046	2.144	0.032

Source: Smart PLS4 Output, 2023

Table 4.6 Effect Size (f^2)

	EM
EM	
LT	0.156
PI	0.052
PI x LT	0.011

Source: Smart PLS4 Output, 2023

Hypothesis I

H₀₁ Teaching quality has no significant effect on examination malpractice in tertiary institutions

Teaching quality has a negative effect on Examination malpractice ($\beta = -0.398$, t-stat = 7.947, p-value < 0.05). The negative beta coefficient implies that an increase in the teaching quality will lead to reduction in examination malpractice. From the descriptive, the teaching quality in the institutions were deemed to be low by the respondents. The effect size of teaching quality on examination malpractice stood at 0.156 which indicates that it has a large effect on the endogenous variable following Cohen's (1988) criterion that effect sizes of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are small, medium and large, respectively.

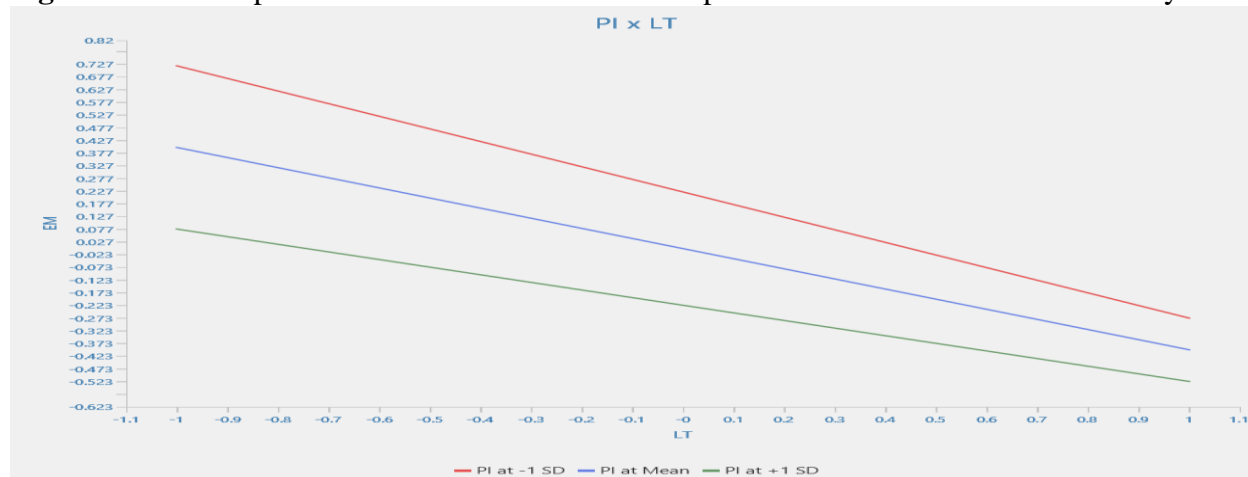
The p-value being less than 0.05 indicates that this negative effect is significant at 95 percent confidence level which gives the study enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis, H₀₁, which states that teaching quality has no significant effect on employees' examination malpractices in the institutions under study; and accept its alternate, H₁₁, which states that teaching quality has a significant effect on examination malpractices.

4.3 Hypothesis II: Moderator Effect

H₀₂ Examination invigilation does not significantly moderate the relationship between low-quality teaching and examination malpractice in tertiary institutions

The moderating result shows that examination invigilation significantly moderates the relationship between teaching quality and examination malpractice in the institutions under study ($\beta = 0.098$, t-stat = 2.144, p-value < 0.05). The positive beta coefficient implies that examination invigilation positively affects the relationship between teaching quality and examination malpractice. The effect size of examination invigilation on the relationship between teaching quality and examination malpractice stood at 0.011 which indicates that it has a small effect on the endogenous variable following Cohen's (1988) criterion that effect sizes of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are small, medium and large, respectively.

Fig 4.2 Simple Slope Analysis



Source: Smart PLS4 Output, 2023

From the simple slope analysis in Fig 4.2, the red line (P1 at -1 SD) is steeper, indicating that at low invigilation, lower quality teaching has a stronger impact on exam malpractice, supporting the moderating effect of examination invigilation has on examination malpractice.

The p-value being less than 0.05 indicates that this positive moderating effect is significant at 95 percent confidence level which gives the study enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis, H_{02} , which states that examination invigilation does not significantly moderate the relationship between teaching quality and examination malpractice in the institutions under study; and accept its alternate, H_{12} , which states that examination invigilation significantly moderates the relationship between teaching quality and examination malpractice in the institutions under study.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The study investigates the moderating role of examination invigilation in the relationship between teaching quality and examination malpractices in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. A number of findings were arrived at which are stated as follows:

- i. It was revealed that teaching quality has a negative and significant effect on examination malpractice in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. This implies that increased teaching quality will significantly decrease examination malpractice in Nigeria's tertiary institutions.
- ii. It was also discovered that examination invigilation positively and significantly moderates the relationship between teaching quality and examination malpractice. This implies that examination invigilation increases the negative effect of teaching quality on malpractices. In other words, where examination invigilation is high, high quality teaching should reduce examination malpractice.
- iii. It was found out that examination malpractice is caused by some external factors to individuals rather than personality traits, hence, causing serious damage to individuals, academic institutions and the impact has cut across all institutions throughout the society
- iv. It was however, discovered that the effort made by some institutions to tackle examination malpractice was in vein, and the recommendations of the previous research on the subject matter have not made significant impact on the problem. Therefore, the problem is still persisting.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The effect of a persisting examination malpractice in tertiary institutions is very critical. Examination malpractice is capable of jeopardizing all kind of societal progress. The socio-economic political sector will become very weak. The larger society will continue to decline and eventually collapsed. The consequences of examination malpractice extend beyond individual actions, affecting the overall academic integrity and the quality of education. Instances of malpractice compromise the credibility of academic qualifications and erode the trustworthiness of the educational system. The study concludes that examination malpractice has broader societal implications, as it may contribute to a workforce with compromised competencies and ethical standards.

Moreover, it is pertinent to note that examination of malpractice in Nigerian tertiary institutions reveals a pressing issue that requires concerted efforts from educational institutions, regulatory bodies, and policymakers. Solutions should encompass preventive measures, technological interventions, and a cultural shift towards promoting academic integrity. By addressing the root causes and implementing effective deterrents, the education system can work towards fostering an environment conducive to genuine learning, academic excellence, and the overall development of individuals and society.

Based on the above findings, the study offered the following recommendations;

- i. To address the identified negative impact of teaching quality on examination malpractice in Nigeria's tertiary institutions, it is crucial to prioritize comprehensive improvements in pedagogical approaches. Educational authorities should invest in ongoing professional development programs to enhance teaching skills, foster innovative teaching methodologies, and encourage the integration of technology in the educational process. Promoting transparency in evaluation procedures, and incorporating ethical education into the curriculum can further contribute to creating a positive and supportive learning environment. Additionally, institutions should enforce stringent anti-malpractice policies consistently and communicate the severe consequences of engaging in such unethical behavior. By collectively implementing these measures, a higher teaching quality can be achieved, thereby significantly reducing the occurrence of examination malpractice in Nigeria's tertiary institutions.
- ii. The study underscores the need for proactive measures by institutions and regulatory bodies to address examination malpractice. Effective prevention strategies, that comprises robust invigilation (monitoring) mechanisms, and stringent consequences for perpetrators are crucial components of a comprehensive response.
- iii. Addressing the identified external factors contributing to examination malpractice requires a multifaceted approach involving collaboration among educational institutions, policymakers, and society at large. Implementing awareness campaigns to educate students, educators, and parents about the detrimental consequences of malpractice can foster a sense of responsibility and discourage engagement in unethical behavior. Additionally, institutions should establish support systems to address the external challenges faced by individuals, such as financial pressures or societal expectations, which may lead to malpractice. Collaborative efforts between educational institutions, communities, and relevant authorities are essential to create an environment that promotes academic integrity, thereby mitigating the pervasive damage caused by examination malpractice across various societal domains.
- iv. The study recommends the need for implementing comprehensive teacher training programs, emphasize professional development, integrate technology in teaching, promote student centered-learning, establish mentorship programs, strengthen academic support services to enhance the pedagogical skills of educators. Focus on equipping teachers with innovative and effective teaching methods that engage students and promote a deeper understanding of course content. This will strengthen the efforts of

various institutions in to tackling examination malpractice thereby providing lasting solution to the existing problem.

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