Assessment of Mitigation Strategies Used in the Management of Examination Malpractices by Universities in Mount Kenya Region

Meshack Ambani Mulongo[1] & Maurice Kibet Kimosop[2] & Johannes Njagi Njoka[3]

[1,2&3] Karatina University, Education Department, Kenya

Correspondence: Meshack Ambani Mulongo, Karatina University, Kenya.

Email: mulongomesh@gmail.com

Abstract: The proliferation of examination malpractices among university students is of great concern to educationists in Kenya. This standpoint prompted the current study. The specific objective was to assess the mitigation strategies used in management of examination malpractices in Mount Kenya Region universities. Descriptive research design was applied. Kathuri and Pal's sampling table aided to sample 380 students. A questionnaire was used to collect data. Results revealed that examinations were not strictly invigilated, frisking was not effectively done on students during examinations, invigilators had integrity, culprits of cheating were punished and students were prepared well for examinations. It was inferred that the mean difference in effectiveness of the examinations mitigation strategies was not different in public and private universities. The study concluded that there should be an improvement in invigilation and enhanced frisking of students and that the findings inform education policy makers on effective strategies of to mitigate examination malpractices.

Keywords: Assessment, Strategies, Examination, Mitigation, Malpractice, Management, Universities

1. Introduction

Examination malpractice is a form of irregular habit revealed by an examinee or other person put in charge of examination, which contravenes provided guidelines (Alutu & Aluede 2006). Universities have various strategies which they use in order to mitigate examination malpractices. There are established examination rules and regulations which are expected to be complied with by students. According to Boakye (2015), examination malpractices became normal among citizens in China, Africa and globally. He observed that examination malpractice had become a familiar subject of discussion across various institutions of learning. Ngosa (2013) pointed out that the problem of examination malpractice was on the rise. Despite the many strategies put in place to guide examinations, the education fraternity faces challenges in Zambia (Phiri & Nakamba, 2015). This implies that the challenge of examination malpractice affects a number of educational institutions both locally and at global levels. In order to address how institutions can mitigate examination malpractices, the study established the root causes of examination cheating.

Lambert et al. (2013) reported that a large number of students who were caught in cases of examination malpractice indicated that they got involved because they viewed some subjects to be difficult, hence they got motivated to cheat so as to please their parents and guardians. Nyamwange (2013) observed that teachers had attached promotions on students' performances. According to Omemu (2015), examinees were lazy and they cheated to compensate for their laziness. Such learners fear that if they do not cheat, they would fail and be compelled to retake those examinations, which would lead to time and money

wastage. According to Ajibola (2011), students engaged in examination malpractices because they needed high quality certificates that would help them get well-paying jobs. In another research, Udoh (2008) reported that students cheated in examinations because intellectually weak students had failed to recognize that they were gifted differently; hence they cheated in order to be like those who were more gifted intelligently. According to Ammani (2011), pressure from parents for students to pass examinations provoked them to cheat in order to satisfy their parents' wishes. Having demystified causes of examination malpractices, the study uncovered consequences of examination malpractices.

Examination malpractices have adverse effects; first, it leads to increased corruption; whereby those people who graduate tend to extent the vice to the work place, because they had learnt to get undeserved benefits. Such people become dishonest at the work place. Sunday (2014) observed that examination malpractices have negative effects on both undergraduate students and the society; because the vice discourages learners from working hard in their academic endeavors. In addition, graduates did not deliver as expected at the job market. Examination malpractices prevented students from getting admission to advanced institutions of learning. Nwaba and Nwaba (2005) reported that examination malpractices produced people who were not likely to maximize capabilities in acquisition of skills; and such persons became experts in bribery and corruption. The trends eventually lead challenges in formation of human capital. Incidences of examination malpractices are not unique to regions or institution.

According to Anzene (2014), Kato (2015), and Patrick (2014), examination malpractices prevailed in Tanzania and Uganda. Cheating in examinations greatly underrate the integrity and accountability of any country's educational productivity. Examination malpractices can be categorized into three; pre-examination malpractices, during examination malpractices and post-examination malpractices. Anzene (2014), Abudiga (2010); Aworanti (2012) affirmed that pre-examination malpractices include sale of question papers, impersonation, and multiple registration among others, like collusion and leakages. Malpractices that take place during examinations include; exchange of examination papers, giraffing, exchange of hard squeezed papers with answers, and assistance rendered by invigilators and supervisors (Omemu 2015, Oredein 2014; Nwanko 2012). Utilization of electronic gadgets like mobile phones, transfer of unauthorized materials into and out of examination rooms were other reported cases of malpractices during (Wiliyat, 2009, Olatunbosun, 2009; Ayademi, 2010). Post-examination malpractices include substitution of answer scripts with those outside the examination rooms, alteration of scores by examiners, computer specialists, office clerks and other interested parties (Aworanti, 2012). The main objective of the study was to assess the effectiveness of examination malpractices mitigation strategies in universities in Mount Kenya region. The study, in particular, had different concerns from other scholars. The researcher went ahead to fill the gap by categorizing examination malpractice mitigation strategies on the basis of pre-examination malpractices, during examinations malpractices and post-examination malpractices. Categorization of mitigation strategies was meant to ascertain at which stage of examination process universities would apply mitigation strategies to curb the problem of cheating in examinations.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

There have been concerns about the standard of students graduating from universities globally and Kenya in particular. Volumes of research reports on examination malpractices exist in Kenyan libraries. Universities have formulated strategies to mitigate examination malpractices but the strategies have not

been successful. Despite the existence of mitigation strategies, the problem has escalated in various institutions. The persistence is likely to lead to deterioration of morals of graduates and their intellectual growth. There is urgent need to intervene and reverse the situation in order to restore integrity in university examinations. Escalating cases of examination malpractices necessitated a study on the assessment of mitigation strategies used in the management of examination malpractices by universities in Mount Kenya region. Even though there have been similar studies in primary and secondary schools in Kenya, similar research has not been done in Mount Kenya East region; hence a need for the current study to fill the gap. The study was undertaken in order to provide information and enhance informed policy making procedures.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives;
1. To assess the types of examination malpractices used in public and private universities in Mount Kenya region.
2. To assess the examination malpractices mitigation strategies used in public and private universities in Mount Kenya region.

1.3 Hypothesis of the Study

There are no significant mean differences in the effectiveness of examination malpractice mitigation strategies in public and private university in Mount Kenya region.

2. Literature Review

Students should be well equipped with practical skills to enhance their confidence in examinations. The equipment of students would make them become more knowledgeable and acquire desired practical skills (Labor, 1992). Preparation of students has an effect on the extent to which they comprehend information which they need in examinations. According to Omemu (2015), teachers are expected to play roles which parents and guardians play in all aspects of students' development. Consequently, teachers are expected to involve leaners in active and quality activities that are based on sound values and establish a firm academic foundation for learners. Eweniyi (2002) reported that moral counselling needs to be initiated as a measure that can significantly mitigate examination malpractice in universities. Workshops, seminars and other latitudes should be organized and negative effects of examination malpractices communicated to education stakeholders. In a nutshell, policies regarding examination malpractices and consequences to culprits should be communicated to all concerned members in learning institution.

Frisking of students as they enter examination halls could be another strategy which can mitigate examination malpractices. Male and female students should be frisked by male and female supervisors respectively. Students should be alerted about the frisking regulations beforehand in order to prevent disagreements. According to Mucheke (2017), examination supervisors are expected to carry out proper search of students as they enter examination rooms. The process of frisking should be done with an objective of identifying students who carry electronic gadgets into examination rooms, which they use to cheat in examinations. O'Malley (2016) contents that electronic cheating in examinations has been a major concern in the United Kingdom as supported by McNeilage & Visentin (2014) and Smith (2015). In

addition, Hayman et.al (2015) content that learners make use of cell phones to get answers to examination questions in examination halls. The trends have culminated in the ban of the use of electronic gadgets during examinations. Complementing the ongoing discussion, Read (2004) affirmed that learners take photos of their notes, store them in their cell phones and secretly retrieve them for use in examination rooms. Walker (2004) observed that it was easier for students to take photos of an examination or notes to examination room as a conventional method of examination malpractice. In order to compact examination malpractices in universities, universities need to scrutinize manifestation of examination cheating, and come up with effective mitigation strategies. The prevention of the entry of electronic devices into examination rooms and to fair administration of examinations was to be ensured by use of CCTV cameras in examination rooms. Curran (2011) observed that the use of CCTV cameras in examination rooms was an ideal strategy in the mitigation of examination malpractices. With such innovations, any form of examination malpractices was recorded to serve as future evidences against the culprits in case of denial. When students were aware that they were monitored by CCTV cameras, they tended to desist the practice of examination malpractice.

According to Ahmed (2018), technology played a major role in global escalating cases of examination malpractices in universities. He insisted that students in the contemporary society were more brilliant in constructs of technology as opposed to their lecturers. Cognizant of the fact that examination malpractices had digitally enhanced, Curtis and Vardanega (2016) suggested that examination malpractices were to be counteracted through technologically initiated methods, innovations and technology. However, traditional methods of cheating were not being under estimated. Institutions of learning need to investigate and understand examination malpractice mitigation strategies in order to apply them in their unique environments. Chinuka and Nduzo (2014) reported one mitigation strategy was the immediate adherence to examination regulatory framework. Further, the study indicated that the governments needed to view examination malpractices as crimes. Examination malpractices did not occur due to ignorance, but due to the extent to which universities adhered to examination regulations. Joktham (2013) conceited that electronic identification of students at the entrance of examination rooms was crucial if there was to be sanity and maturity in the process of administering examination. He proposed proper security and confirmation that candidates were free from any form of dishonesty in examination halls. Paton (2010) observed that 1000 students (0.06% of the total examination population) were found to have taken mobile phones into examination rooms. University leaderships need to come up with effective measures and innovations to check students as they enter into examination rooms. There should be security checks at the entrance of examination rooms with metal detectors. Once a student is noted to be having any unwanted electronic gadget, they should be prevented from entering the said room and be punished in accordance with examination policies.

According to Adhora (2009), when culprits of examination malpractices are noted by invigilators, their examination scripts should be withheld. On the other hand, students who are found to be dishonest in examinations should receive warning letters or their overall scores should be deducted. Since examination malpractice is likened to academic illness, those caught cheating should be taken for guiding and counselling services at the university's facilities. Bitrus (2013) reported that any person and group of people found guilty of engaging in examination malpractice should be subjected to the full force of the rules and regulations that govern examination administration in respective institution. Another important

measure taken by universities to mitigate examination malpractice was the cancellation of examination results for culprits. Zachariah (2009), as quoted by Nyamwange (2013), in a study conducted in the United Kingdom, China and Tanzania, the leading method of curbing examination malpractice was cancellation of examination outcomes. The cancellation implies that the examinee has to retake the cancelled examination next time the unit was to be on offer. Apart from results cancellation, culprits were removed from their career course. The removal from course list may be communicated to the sponsor. Other punishments included expulsion of culprits from the universities. Giving logical punishments to the culprits could mitigate examination cheating in universities.

Ukpabi (2015) asserted that an increase in the number of invigilators during exams helped in curbing examination malpractices in universities. In addition, he reiterated that the assignment of invigilators to examination rooms should be proportional to the sizes of examination rooms. When there was an adequate number of these officers in examination venues, examinations tended to be managed better because examinees were observed better as they did examinations. Corroborating with the view, Joktham (2013) reiterated that adequate number of invigilators and spacious rooms were instrumental in management of examination malpractices in universities. In support, Orji et al. (2016) posited that there should be tight security at the entrance of examination halls to ensure only right persons sit for examinations. During examinations, there should be increased number of supervisors and invigilators in order control students.

Sensitivity to candidates' population and spacing in examination halls makes observation of students in examination rooms effective. Supervisors are able to observe what goes on vigilantly. According to Wasanga and Muiruri (2002), competition is one of the main issues that leads to examination dishonesty. Students who engage in examination malpractice do so in order to appear at top positions in class. Being at the top is usually associated with prestige and recognition by university administration on graduation days. In support of this method of mitigation of examination malpractice, Alhassan (2017), exclusively shows that university authorities need to avail sufficient number of invigilators depending on the number of students in an examination room. University authorities should ensure availability of adequate numbers of invigilators. In order to determine the number of invigilators to be allocated to a room, factors such as size of the room, the total number of students to be in the room and the distances between their chairs should be considered. It is alarming that a number of institutions consider it expensive to allocate adequate tutors to monitor examinations without realizing that they are likely to lose production of quality and competent graduates. According to Jacob and Lar (2001), when there is no adequate number of invigilators in an examination room, impersonation tends to take place. This is whereby strange persons sit for examinations on behalf of the other persons.

Cheating is so common both in both private and public university examinations as well as the higher institutions of learning. Alabi, (2014) argued that only the invigilators who can determine the quality of results in an examination and thus effective invigilation would automatically lead to fair results and totally eradicate problem. Strictness in invigilation ensures emphasis on virtues, therefore invigilation ensures orderliness in examination rooms. Aulo (2004) revealed that most lecturers in tertiary institutions and universities do not consider invigilation of examinations to be an issue that should be taken with utmost care and consideration. Unfortunately, Aulo admits, that invigilators tend to assume that they are dealing with adults who are expected to be self-directed in examination rooms; not knowing that examination

malpractice is not dependent on age nor status. Lecturers seem to care less about the behaviors of students in examination rooms, instead of doing their assigned duties diligently. Examination malpractices can be mitigated by engagement of people of high morals, trustworthy and of high integrity to supervise and invigilate examinations (Onyibe et al., 2015). If such people are engaged in examination processes, there tends to be limited or no room for bribery and compromise during examinations, hence reduction of examination malpractices in universities. Another strategy used to curb examination malpractice is the proper management of time. When time is not well used, students are not given an opportunity to utilize their allocated time well (Adeyemi 2010). Examination invigilators need keep to allocated examination time. Time management helps students proceed as guided and they respond to questions effectively without fear. Time keeping makes students less anxious, especially towards the end of a given examination. Time management helps students not to underutilize the allocated time or extend allocated examination time. Oladipo et al. (2010) observe that preciseness in time management helps invigilators not to get into chaotic situations where the examination atmosphere encourage dishonesty. Invigilators need to remind students the time left before the end of a given examination. In addition, allocated time should be well displayed visibly in the examination room. Candidates should use wall clock for effective time management.

According to Jokthan (2013), examination invigilators and supervisors assigned to supervise examinations should be people of unquestionable integrity. Lecturers are expected to be a caliber of employees who are entrusted with students and should mentor learners by being role models in all aspects, including academic integrity. It is therefore unquestionable that these people should be morally upright men and women of high integrity at all times. Similar views were held by Onyibe, Uma and Ibina (2015) who insisted that examination invigilators should be of high integrity and honest individuals. Integrity is crucial if there is to be sanity in the management of examinations. Qualifications and competency of invigilators play an important role in the management of examination malpractice. Examination invigilators should be keen and vigilant as they execute their assigned roles. Wasanga and Muiruri (2002) emphasized that teachers need to be involved in examination invigilation so as to reduce the tendency of examination cheating. They argued that different people who are usually recruited to invigilate and supervise examinations lack proper knowledge of the methods that are used by students to cheat during examinations. Njeru (2008) argues that teachers have not performed their invigilation roles to expected levels. When invigilators mark examination scripts in examination rooms or read newspapers, they deviate from their important responsibility of supervising examinations, which in turn culminates to cheating. In this regard, it would be prudent for invigilators to turn off their mobile phones or other electronic gadgets which tend to destruct them from assigned supervision duties. Lectures should mark papers in examination rooms, instead, they should concentrate in invigilation. In addition, invigilation timetables should provide breaks for invigilators to be free during some sessions, to allow them do other important activities.

3. Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive research design. Five (5) universities were purposively picked from the 71 universities in Kenya. The research applied the Ethical Theory as postulated by Mackinnon. The target population was 40023 students, and 5 examination officers from the 5 selected universities, which totaled to 40033 respondents. The students were stratified into public and private universities. The sample size was 380 students. The 380 students were distributed into the five universities which were purposively

selected and proportionate sampling procedure was used to determine the number of respondents per university due to variation in populations unique to each university. Examination officers were purposively sampled because they were the only officers who would provide relevant information concerning examination malpractices. Table 1 shows the students' target population and sample size obtained for the study.

Table 1: Sample Size

Institution	Total number of students	Sample size	Percentage
Chuka University	16603	179	47
Karatina University	9105	87	23
University of Embu	6603	61	16
Kenya Methodist University	4107	30	8
Mount Kenya University	3605	23	6
Total	40023	380	100

Data was collected using the Students' Questionnaire. Questionnaires were suitable for collecting information from literate respondents who were easily reached and were willing to participate. The questionnaire had ten items which were rated using a likert scale with 5 points. The researcher conducted a pilot study on 38 students randomly selected from one university which was not earmarked for the study and a reliability coefficient of the research instrument was 0.772 which was greater than the 0.7, which was within acceptable limits. Collected data was analyzed by use of descriptive and inferential statistics with aid of Statistical Package for Social Science.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Objective 1

First, the study sought to assess the types of examination malpractices used in public and private universities in Mount Kenya region. Results were given in form of frequencies, percentage, means and standard deviations. Table 2 provides a summary of students' responses their perceptions about the types of strategies which universities use to control examination malpractices.

Table 2: Types of strategies used to control examination malpractices

Statement	SD		D		UD		A		SA		$\bar{X}$	σ
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Examinations are strictly Invigilated	130	38.8	104	31.0	6	1.8	54	16.1	41	12.2	2.32	1.43
Students who engage in malpractices are punished	23	6.9	18	5.4	32	9.6	113	33.7	149	44.5	4.04	1.73
Students can request for remarking in case not satisfied	34	10.1	41	12.2	43	12.8	130	38.8	87	26.0	3.58	1.27
Students are properly prepared for exams during teaching	12	3.6	27	8.1	25	7.5	149	44.5	122	36.4	4.04	1.04
Examinations test application of knowledge	155	46.3	105	31.3	17	5.1	37	11.0	21	6.3	1.98	1.23
Invigilators exercise high levels of integrity	84	25.1	56	16.7	56	16.7	77	23.0	62	18.5	2.93	1.46
Students are frisked as they enter examination rooms	64	19.1	152	45.4	50	14.9	45	13.4	24	7.2	2.44	1.53
Invigilators stick to time provided during examinations	51	15.2	62	18.5	33	9.9	123	36.7	66	19.7	3.71	1.37
Students are inducted on examination rules	27	8.1	33	9.9	30	9.0	140	41.9	105	31.3	3.79	1.22
Students do not carry electronic devices to exam rooms	37	11.0	64	19.1	29	8.7	132	39.4	73	21.8	3.42	1.31
Average											3.24	1.36

Table 2 indicates that respondents who strongly disagreed that examinations were strictly invigilated were 38.8%, those who disagreed were 31.0%, 1.8% were not decided on the variable, 16 % agreed that examinations were strictly invigilated and those who strongly agreed were 12.2%. The overall $\bar{X}$ was 2.32. The findings of this part showed that a majority of respondents indicated that examinations were not strictly invigilated by university examiners, consistent with the findings of Aulo (2004), who reported that most lecturers in universities were not strict in the process of examination invigilation. The study revealed that students who engage in examination malpractices were punished, as indicated by 33.7% of respondents who agreed and 44.5% who strongly agreed. Those who were undecided were 9.6%, those who disagreed were 12.3% in total. The findings on punishment were similar with those in the study by Bitrus (2013), who recommended that culprits of examination malpractices should be punished to prevent others from engaging in the vice. The overall $\bar{X}$=4.04%. The study therefore informed that students who cheat in examinations were punished accordingly. University administrators need to keep acting on cases of examination malpractices in order to control the menace.

Responses indicated that 10.1% strongly disagreed that students requested for remarking of their scripts in case they were not satisfied with initial marking, 12.2% agreed while 12.8% of them were undecided.

The majority of respondents 38.8% indicated that they agree that remarking was be done while 26% strongly agreed; the overall $\bar{X}$=4.04. This finding implies that 64.8% of respondents affirmed that remarking was possible. This means that university students were satisfied with the way lecturers marked their examinations. The practice of remarking should be upheld because when students understand that their papers can be remarked for rightful assignment of marks, cases of malpractices are likely to reduce with time. The study indicated that students were well prepared for examinations during teaching as reflected by 44.5% of the respondents who are agreed they were and 36.4% who strongly agreed that they were well prepared. Those who did not agree were 11.7%, and those who were undecided were 7.5%; meaning lecturers delivered the content to satisfactory levels. The statement 'examinations test the application of knowledge' had 77.6% level of disagreement and 5.1% disagreement. Respondents who agreed were 17.3%, meaning examinations do not test the application of acquired knowledge, instead, it tests the memory of leant knowledge and skills. Respondents indicated that invigilators averagely display high levels of integrity as shown by 41.8% disagreement and 41.5% agreement. Those who were undecided were 16.7%. This means that invigilators do their work fairly.

The study revealed that students were not effectively frisked as they entered examination rooms. Respondents who did not agree to effective frisking was done were 63.5% against 20.7% of those who said frisking was well done. This showed that examination invigilation needed more improvement. Time management was well done by invigilators during examinations as revealed by 56.4% of respondents against 33.7% who declined and 9.9% were undecided. The study showed that students were inducted on examination rules and regulations at 73.2% agreement and 18% disagreement. Finally, the study indicated that students, at large, did not carry electronic devices into examination rooms. This was informed by 30.1% disagreement and 61.2% agreement.

4.2 Objective 2

Second, the study sought to assess the effectiveness of examination mitigation strategies used in public and private universities in Mount Kenya region. The study hypothesized that there is no significant mean differences in the effectiveness of examination mitigation strategies in public and private university in Mount Kenya region. To test this hypothesis a t-test was computed. In order to establish whether there existed a statistically significant difference in the effectiveness of examination mitigation strategies in public and private university in Mount Kenya region, independent sample t-test was computed for public and private universities; Table 3 presents the results of the computed independent sample t-test on effectiveness of examination malpractice mitigation strategies in public and private university in Mount Kenya region.

Table 3: Independent Sample t-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Strategies used to mitigate malpractices	Equal variances assumed	4.936	.027	1.714	333	.087	1.31629	.76788	.19422	2.82679
	Equal variances not assumed			1.650	238.347	.100	1.31629	.79797	.25569	2.88827

Computed data provided in Table 3 shows that the calculated t yielded a p-value of 0.087 against the theoretical value (α) of 0.05. Since the computed *p*-value (0.087) was greater the theoretical *p*-value (0.05), the null hypothesis was accepted and alternative hypothesis was rejected at α =.05, and concluded that the mean difference was largely not different, implying that there is no significant difference in effectiveness of strategies when public and private universities were compared. The inferences made from the findings of the study were; students were not effectively invigilated in examination rooms, there was no effective frisking of students as they entered examination rooms, time management was well done during examinations, students were well inducted on examination policies in both private and public universities.

5. Conclusion

The study concluded that examinations were not strictly invigilated in universities. In addition, the study revealed that students who engaged in examination malpractices were punished. University administrators need to keep acting on cases of examination malpractices in order to mitigate the menace. University students were satisfied with the way lecturers mark their examinations. Students were well prepared for examinations during teaching because lecturers deliver the content to satisfactory levels. Another establishment was that examinations did not test the application of acquired knowledge, instead, they tested the memory of learnt knowledge and skills. The study revealed that students were not effectively frisked as they entered examination rooms. Time management was well done by invigilators during examinations. The study showed that students were inducted on examination rules and regulations.

6. Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;
1. University examinations invigilators should enhance their invigilation skills during examinations for accountability and transparency of evaluations in universities.
2. University lecturers need to cover the intended course content within stipulated times as per course outlines.
3. University examiners should test students' application of acquired knowledge and not mere memory of information.

4. There should an improvement in frisking of students as they enter examination rooms in order to curb examination malpractices.

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