

Effective Management of University Examinations

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Abstract: - Examination is the pivot around which the whole system of education revolves and the success or failure of the system of examination is indeed an indicator of the success or failure of that particular system of education. It is one of the means used to assess and evaluate students' learning in terms of acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes with the view of taking decision on level of attainment leading to awards of certificates. The paper discusses the effective ways of managing university examinations in order to achieve high standards of academic achievement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Quality education is the hallmark of every nation. It is through quality education that every nation can produce the required manpower needs of the nation to foster national development. All over the world, universities as the highest institutions of learning are established as the machinery to provide quality education for the acquisition of skills and knowledge needed for the manpower requirements of the country. The core purpose of higher education therefore involves mental and character training for the acquisition of practical skills and theoretical knowledge and functional ideas for development, and the search for truth and knowledge and the creation of and communication of ideas. Since quality education is a product of quality teaching and learning, universities set high academic standards in order to produce quality human resource who can contribute their quota towards nation building. Furthermore, an instrument to assess the extent of acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes is set up. This instrument which is in the form of examination is organized to evaluate, assess and test the level of knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired. The outcome of the examination becomes the basis for decision-making on the level of achievement of the student. As already indicated, since quality education thrives on quality teaching and learning, universities normally set high academic standards for their assessment of the level of achievement that a student has to attain in order to gain an academic award. However, achievement of this objective would depend on the examination management system put in place.

II. EXAMINATION MANAGEMENT

According to Bateman and Snell (2004), an organisation is a managed system that transforms inputs such as raw materials, people and other resources into outputs which is the goods and services that comprise its products. Consequently, the manner in which educational inputs are processed from the beginning to the final years of an academic programme and the quality of assessment of the entire teaching and learning activities would constitute an important aspect of high quality

of examination results. This can only be achieved through effective examination management. Examination management is the act or process of planning, organising and administration of examinations. It starts from classroom teaching, setting of examination questions, administration of examination, marking of scripts, grading, to issuing of certificates. This means teachers, students and administrators are part of the examination management process. However, it has been observed that in almost all examinations, rules, regulations, standards and best practices of examination conduct are sometimes overtly or covertly violated. Examination management therefore requires marshalling, organising all the human and material resources needed for the smooth conduct of the examinations. The human resource may be construed as lecturers/examiners, invigilators, students, supervisors and administrators. The material resource involves facilities available for teaching-learning process and the assessment process. These include: provision of textbooks, library facilities, examination rooms, question papers and answer booklets as well as other examination materials needed for a particular paper. The roles of these inputs in managing examinations are discussed below.

III. ROLE OF EXAMINERS

Examinations, in the context of quality, are an evaluation that makes graded judgment about quality. Results should indicate the level of understanding of the subject matter of the course or topics taught. University examinations are internal in nature and as such lecturers are the core of examination management process in the university. The lecturers who are involved in the teaching-learning process are also involved in the management of the assessment process. Thus, they play the role of teachers as well as examiners. As teachers they have to ensure that the right kind of knowledge and skills are imparted to the students as outlined in the curriculum content prescribed by the university. Besides they are in charge of setting examination questions, marking of examination scripts and awarding marks for students which would lead to a decision to be taken for award of certificates. Consequently, when the methods of delivery and content competence of the lecturers are treated with levity, it creates enabling environment for cheating in examinations. The two basic assumptions of any examination worth the name are that (a) it should be valid and (b) it should be reliable. The two are distinct concepts. An examination is said to be valid if it performs the functions which it is designed to perform. The concept of reliability, of course, refers to consistency of measurement. Examination is no longer regarded as a test for evaluating the performance or judging the scholastic

attainment of students. Examination questions should therefore reflect the objectives and learning outcomes of courses. Examiners must ensure that as much as possible, examination questions should be devoid of mistakes for corrections to be made during the examination period.

Furthermore, it is worthy to note that examination is central to the success and recognition of universities. Degrees/certificates are awarded based on the outcome of examinations. University examinations are confidential and, therefore, all examiners must exercise due diligence to ensure sustainability of its confidentiality. Examination questions should not be shown to students before the examinations and also marked scripts should not be shown to students without the appropriate authority.

In addition to this, the duties of examiners must be as follows: Adhering to the timetable for submission of questions and marking scheme for vetting in the Department; ensuring that at the most appropriate time, the final examinations questions are submitted for photocopying; consulting the final timetable for information to be present early (30minutes before the examinations) at the venue of the examinations; cross-checking and signing for the number of scripts received from the invigilator in the examinations room or from the Faculty Examinations Officer and submission of examination marks together with the marked scripts to the Head of Department not later than three (3) weeks after the paper has been taken.

However, it is observed that some examiners fail to report at the examination centres. Those who come also do not report at the appropriate time. In the event of candidates seeking clarification about instructions relating to the paper being written, time allotted as well as typing errors leading to ambiguities in the test items, the absence of the examiner becomes problematic and would adversely affect the conduct of the examination.

IV. THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATION

The university administration as an examining body is a core of examination management process in the university. The university administration has the onerous task of making the examination process work effectively. Its major obligation is to provide an enabling environment for the smooth conduct of examinations. To this end, the responsibilities of those involved in the examination management must include:

- Ensuring that adequate arrangements for examinations in the university are made. This involves preparation of examination timetable on time, allocation of examination rooms and assignment of invigilators. Ensuring that copies of examination timetables are made available to staff (examiners and invigilators) and supervisors for adequate preparation and readiness for the examinations. Copies of the timetables for students must be pasted on Students' Notice Boards without the names of invigilators.

- Ensuring total compliance with examinations' regulations by examiners, invigilators, attendants and students as well as the general supervision of examinations in the university. In view this, it is prudent that prior to the commencement of the examinations, a pre-examination orientation should be organised to brief all examination support staff on rules and regulations and code of examination conduct.
- Ensuring security and confidentiality of examination question papers and scripts sent to the examination centres before and after the examinations respectively.
- Ensuring provision of facilities, material resources needed for the examination. Arrangement should be made for provision of adequate examination rooms, examination materials, seats, invigilators, security, vehicles and refreshment. The materials needed to complete an examination apart from answer booklets, for example, graph paper required must be known and supplied before the students are seated.
- Maintaining highest academic standards of ethics and integrity in the conduct of examination. Every university desires to uphold the ideals of academic integrity since regulations concerning academic code and ethics together with sanctions for violations are outlined in its academic programmes and students' handbook. Such regulations are also usually communicated to students during orientation programmes for freshmen and women. However, as noted by McCafe and Trevino (1996) and Marzean (2001) some individuals (staff and students) still violate them with impunity. University administration should investigate cases of violation of code and ethics of examination conduct and punish offenders to serve as deterrent to others.

V. THE ROLE OF STUDENTS

Students play a vital role in examination management. They are those who are taught and examined. Their achievement in the content areas of their academic programmes would determine whether the academic standards set by the institution have been achieved. They set the pace for academic excellence in any institution. Thus, any bad behaviour of students during the conduct of examinations would definitely mar the results obtained from the examinations. Consequently, the role of the student in the examination management process is very important. The expected behaviour must include the following:

- It is the responsibility of the student to prepare adequately for the examination by gaining thorough acquisition of knowledge of the content areas of the subjects to be examined. Lack of preparation puts fear and anxiety in students which make them engage in examination malpractice.

- They should be conversant with the university's rules and regulations governing examinations and abide by them. Though such regulations together with sanctions for violations are outlined in the students' handbook and also usually communicated to students during orientation programmes for freshmen and women, they ignore them and violate them with impunity because such rules and regulations caution them to desist from unethical behaviour they think can help them pass the examinations at all cost. Such violations undermine the examination management process.
- It is the responsibility of students to check and confirm the final timetable of the examinations.
- It is the duty of students to locate the examination center, hall or room well in advance before the examination starts.
- Students should be punctual. They are to be seated in the examination room according to their index numbers.
- Students must give the invigilators, examiners, supervisors and administrators due respect.
- Protect their question papers, answer scripts. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that he/she has submitted his/ her answer script before leaving the examination room.

VI. THE ROLE OF INVIGILATORS

Invigilators also play an important role towards effective management of examinations. The purpose of invigilation is to ensure that all examinations are conducted in accordance with the rules and regulations governing the examinations, to provide students with every opportunity within the rules to complete their examinations; to ensure that all students are treated in a fair and consistent manner; to ensure the examinations are conducted smoothly and successfully and to help deal with any problem(s) that may arise during examinations. It is the primary role of invigilators to maintain discipline and absolute silence during the examination and to be vigilant for any irregular practices or cheating. Some of the usual tricks employed by students include: storing foreign materials in the lavatories, entering the examination room with foreign materials hidden in their socks, pants, brassiers, artificial hair/wigs, bracelets, copying notes or potential answers on their body, mathematical sets, handkerchiefs, manuals of calculators, tables and chairs, intentionally copying or exposing answers to their colleagues. Others include "giraffing", using sign language to communicate answers to colleagues when multiple choice questions are used. Some students go into the wash room only to read information stored on mobile phones. Students deliberately smuggle out the answer booklets from the examination room. Some ladies dress provocatively to ward off shy invigilators to enable them copy. Impersonation is also common where students hire the services of others either among themselves or from outside to write the examination on their behalf and

students influencing attendants with cash to facilitate cheating.

It is expected that invigilators must be punctual to the examination centres. They should arrive at the examination centres at least thirty minutes before the start of the examination since their actions such as absence or lateness to examination venues contribute to compromising examination standards since they create enabling environment for candidates to cheat.

They should also ensure that the examination materials are collected at least thirty minutes before the scheduled time and distributed to the students in time to enable the examination to start at the time specified on the examination timetable. When distributing examination materials, it is important that invigilators put the examination paper on the desk face down and then cover it with the answer book, which should also be placed face down. They should ensure that no student is allowed to leave the examination room until thirty minutes after the examination has begun. Whilst invigilating an examination, invigilators should not do anything that will disturb any of the students. They are not supposed to do the following: eat, talk, read, do their own work or use a mobile phone. They have to inform the students when they may start writing and when the examination period is over. Invigilators are not expected to instruct students to begin the exams before schedule. Invigilators must sit in front of the examination hall or sit at the back. During the examination, invigilators should not read other materials, leave the examination hall or do anything that might compromise their observation of the examination and the students taking it. They should walk around the room on regular basis observing students at all times, deal with any queries or problems any of the students have.

Invigilators must ensure that only examination stationery (answer booklets, question paper, log tables and writing implements) are allowed by students in the examination room. The use of electronic calculators should not be permitted in university examinations except where specified in the examination paper that they could be used. They should not allow students to take into the examination hall any of the following: book, paper, hat, headgear, bag, mobile phone, scanner, radio, palm-top computer, programmable calculator, etc. unless specifically authorized by the examiner. They should confiscate these items and make a written report of the alleged breach of examination regulations to the University Examination Section. They should also not allow students to borrow any item during examination. Invigilators have to ensure that the attendance list is appropriately signed by the respective students during the examination. The names of absentees should be noted. They should ensure that the counting of all examination scripts in the examination hall at the end of the session tallies with the attendance list, enveloped, sealed, signed and submitted to the Examiner or the Faculty Examination Officer.

Invigilators should ensure that they announce to students regularly about the time, example every thirty minutes and five minutes to the end of the paper and they stop the examination at the appointed time and give instructions for the collection of scripts. At the end of the examination, students must remain in their seats until the examination scripts have been collected from each desk. They should ensure that the script is handed by any student who leaves the room before the end of the period of the examination. They should ensure that scripts are counted and well packed in an envelope at the end of each session. The scripts, together with all unused copies of the examination papers and answer booklets and the attendance list should be returned to the University Examination Section. They should not allow any student to take any paper/sheet out of the examination room except when authorized. To check the incidence of impersonation, invigilators have to inspect the identity cards of students before they enter the examination halls. Students without the identity cards should not be allowed to enter the examination halls.

VII. CONCLUSION

Examination is the fulcrum around which any university's standards revolves. The degrees and certificates awarded by

universities are recognized based on the fact that examinations are effectively and efficiently managed. Conducive environments should be established in universities that would promote and enhance effective management of examinations. Enough resources must be provided for the conduct of examinations. Examination halls must be in order, well equipped and seats arranged appropriately before the commencement of examinations. There must be adequate qualified and disciplined personnel for invigilation who should report at the examination centres on time and work according to the regulations of the examination process. It is expected that this article would influence decision to enhance effective and efficient planning and conduct of examinations in educational institutions.

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