

## **Creative Drama and Eradication of Examination Malpractice Among University of Calabar Students**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Examination malpractice has shown up to be one of the most disturbing socio-behavioural challenges of the Nigerian society. It keeps deepening despite attempts made to curb it. This paper on Creative Drama and Examination Malpractice among University of Calabar Students is aimed at providing a more integral approach to solving the menace. It presents Creative Drama as an alternative learning approach that can make students learn in manners that help deeper understanding, better memory retentivity and excellent recall using content analysis method to explore earlier experiments on Creative Drama as a more effective pedagogical tool than the traditional practice currently used in University of Calabar and in Nigeria educational system generally. The findings show Creative Drama as a more excellent and effective teaching approach for science, technical and arts courses. Therefore, the introduction and use of Creative Drama as a teaching and learning approach is presented as the most effective strategy for taming examination malpractice in the University of Calabar and Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Nigeria; Creative Drama; Calabar Students.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Human life is a continuum built by series of practices by man that give distinctive marks to his existence. Living is therefore essentially man carrying out one activity after another per time depending on the exercise of his discretion and choice. On the ground of common knowledge, life is a collection of practices. In this paper, the definition of examination is aligned to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Third Edition which defines it as "a test of a

student's knowledge or skill in a particular subject which results in a qualification if the student is successful.” (Cambridge) It applies to the use of any methods and means to test the knowledge and proficiency of students who have been taught or shown the set materials designed to enhance his knowledge in that particular subject matter. This is corroborated by Emaikwu S. O. quoted by Onyibe et al (2015) that examination is a part of evaluation in education aimed at determining a learner's level of skill acquisition or intellectual competence and understanding after a given training. (Onyibe et al, 2015). Onyibe et al (2015) also observed that examination is not only a process of assessing the progress of students but, it also motivates and helps them to know their academic strengths and weaknesses apart from providing teachers with opportunities to try new methods of teaching.

It is on the premise of ‘practice’ that the term ‘Malpractice’ is built. It denotes negativity and an action generally rated as disapproved. According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, malpractice is “failure to act correctly or legally when doing your job, often causing injury or loss” (Cambridge). The adjectival prefix specifies where the malpractice applies – in this case, examination. In the words of Oko and Adie:

Examination malpractice is defined as any deliberate act of wrong doing, contrary to the rules of examinations designed to give a candidate an undue advantage... Examination malpractice is an act or irregular manner of testing candidates which contravenes the rules and conventions guiding the conduct of examinations. (Oko and Adie 2016, p. 59).

Oko and Adie (2016) have stretched the exposition on examination malpractice beyond just the students to cover the examiners, organizers of the examination and other players that create an environment of enablement to a student to engage in an examination malpractice. In their assertion, a teacher can therefore malpractice in examination by the manners they test their students. Akinrefon et al (2016) strongly state their view 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.

From the foregoing, examination malpractice is clearly disapproved and all of those voices and many more have spoken against it in the strongest of terms. As disapproved and widely spoken against, so is it largely rampant. The wide attention it draws manifests in the responses in terms of researches, publications, Government Acts of Control and Penalty, and intervention programmes. This seminar presentation was conceived based on the seriousness of the challenge of examination malpractice and the impact it has on the society.

According to Randall (1967), Creative Drama has four basic elements that identify it among other forms of communication, namely: “...full participation, no audience, association with other arts, and a sense of emotional release associated with physical expression. These same four elements are the basis for creative drama.” (p. 35). The creative drama process, according to Kilicaslan and Vural, likewise requires active participation. Students bring their own affective qualities, lifestyles and experiences to creative drama activities (2018, p. 2166).

Examination malpractice has taken a new dimension that can be described as dangerous and cancerous in the entire Nigerian society, especially among the tertiary students and those intending to start tertiary education. The new dimension has been acknowledged by different scholars who have tried to express the magnitude of the challenge. It is believed to have become an epidemic in the nation's educational system (Akinrefon et al 2016, p. 174). Oko and Adie (2016) added that examination malpractice in Nigerian educational system has “been widely discussed and viewed as a major challenge not only to examination bodies but to school administrators, the entire education system, the government and the society at large” (Oko and Adie 2015).

Zakka in his own view believe that the problem of examination malpractice has reduced certificates issued in Nigeria into a worthless paper, such that a number of candidates with outstanding results cannot defend their certificates. (Zakka ny) while Ojerinde's frank submission is that "Examination malpractice is already becoming a culture in Nigerian educational scene because it is been condoned by most parents, students, teachers and lecturers" (Ojerinde 2010). Those are a few of very gray literary pictures of the problem of examination malpractice among many given by numerous scholars and researchers in Nigeria and beyond. The needed questions to ask in this paper are:

1. What are the top reasons for the persistence and deepening of the problem of examination malpractice?
2. How effective is creative drama in curbing examination malpractice in University of Calabar?
3. What recommendations are the most suitable for curbing the challenge of examination malpractice?

## **METHOD**

This paper used the Content Analysis methodology to examine selected research works done to curb the problem of examination malpractice. It tries to address sensitive issues that had eaten deep into the fabric of the society, and approximate how effective creative drama will be in curbing examination malpractice in the University of Calabar.

The studies reviewed include the following:

1. Martin Braund and Zaiboenisha Ahmed  
These are South African science educationists and researchers that use Creative Drama to teach science subjects.
2. Hare Kiliçaslan and Serbülen Vural  
These are Turkish researchers that work in Karadeniz Technical University, Turkey. They used Creative Drama as an alternative method in the theoretical and applied courses in architecture education.
3. The Bright Young Things  
Researches done in the Theatre Arts Department, University of Calabar on Creative Drama reviewed.
4. Orok Ekanem Essien (2000), The Role of Creative Dramatics on the Child's Imagination – The Dreamboat Example.
5. George Grace Chinecherem, Cultivating the Innovative Potentials of Students Through Creative Drama.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

University of Calabar is situated in Calabar, Cross River State, south-south, Nigeria. It is a second-generation federal university and until 1975, it was a campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The University's website shows that the institution has one Graduate School, ten Faculties, and three Institutes. These are: The Faculties of Agriculture, Arts, Education, Law, Management Sciences, Sciences, Social Sciences, Allied Medical Sciences, Basic Medical Sciences, Clinical Sciences, Institute of Education, Institute of Oceanography and Institute of Policy and Administrative Studies. ([www.unical.edu.ng/about](http://www.unical.edu.ng/about)). The University's academic programmes aim at laying a sound and broad undergraduate foundation upon which further intellectual and professional pursuits can be based at the Graduate school level.

One of the strongest motivations for this paper is in the objective of the University's laid out on its website:

The University of Calabar places great premium not only on learning, but also on character. The emphasis on character is to help provide the Nation with learned Nigerian Men and Women with a sense of responsibility, crying out against Machiavellianism, bribery, nepotism, and other forms of corruption. To encourage good character, the University established an annual Pro-Chancellor's Prize for the best-behaved student of the graduating class. ([www.unical.edu.ng/about](http://www.unical.edu.ng/about))

The emphasis on good character challenges every stakeholder of the university and any other concerned member of the public to design strategies for addressing one of the top most challenge capable of undermining the possibility of achieving that objective. This paper is a contribution towards helping the University achieve that lofty objective.

### **Experiments On Creative Drama As Effective Tool For Curbing Exam Malpractice**

Different approaches have been used since the escalation of examination malpractice. How effective have those approaches addressed the root cause of the menace? The answer as glaring as the enormity of the problem. It is said that one does not apply the same strategy and expect a new and better result. In contrast to the various approaches that stakeholders of education have adopted in attempt to curb the challenge of examination malpractice, this paper reviews experiments and institutional submissions by researchers and a drama institution from different parts of the world. There are Martin Braund, Zaiboenisha Ahmed (2019), Hare Kılıçaslan (2018), Serbürent Vural, and Bright Young Thing Drama.

#### **1. Martin Braund and Zaiboenisha Ahmed (2019).**

These are South African science educationists and researchers with keen interests in the advantages the Creative Drama offers to making the learning of science subjects easier. They identified the need for behaviour change towards the learning of Life Sciences (Biology). Their aim was lessening the difficulty students often faced in the learning of Life Science which made some students lose interest in and commitment to it. So, they experimented with Creative Drama using two student teachers at a University of Technology in South Africa. One of the teachers used drama, specifically physical role-plays, to teach concepts in Life Sciences (equivalent to Biology in Nigeria) while the other used the conventional classroom method.

Unlike some recent studies, this is quasi-experimental in that pedagogical actions and outcomes for the same content taught using drama and more conventional methods are compared (Braund and Ahmed 2019, p. 2). One of the questions answered was 'What is the knowledge and understanding of target concepts for learners in two similar classes taught using drama role-play (the intervention class) and using non-drama methods (the control class)?' (Braund and Ahmed 2019, p. 2). The findings showed that there were significant differences favouring drama intervention with a large positive effect of +0.56 following increased interest in learning the subject (Braund and Ahmed 2019, p. 5).

The outcome of the experiment increased commitment to the study of Life Sciences among the members of the experimental group who found a new, more empowering and more involving way of learning. Creative drama gives boost to positive self esteem since it allows for self-expression in ways most personal and convincing to the students (Essien 2015; Andrew 2015). The involvement of emotion makes retention of knowledge learnt in Creative Drama session easier and longer. This, in turn and in addition to confidence and self-esteem boosted, makes examination malpractice of no interest.

## **2. Hare Kılıçaslan (2018) and Serbülent Vural**

Hare and Serbülentare Turkish researchers working in Karadeniz Technical University, Turkey. They conducted a research with the objectives to adopt creative drama as an alternative method in the theoretical and applied courses in architectural education, and determine how Creative Drama affects Achievement Test Results for Environment-Behavior Knowledge. They worked with 26 undergraduates in the Environmental Behavioral Knowledge course and 48 in Basic Design Kılıçaslan and Vural (2018).

To achieve their objectives, an achievement test was given as a post-test to the experimental and control groups after the application. From the tests:

1. A T-test was used to determine if a statistically significant discrepancy held between the first midterm exam averages of the experimental and control groups in Environment-Behavior Knowledge
2. A T-test was used to determine if a statistically significant discrepancy held between the second midterm exam averages of the experimental and control groups in Environment-Behavior Knowledge
3. A T-test was used to determine if a statistically significant discrepancy held between the final exam averages of the experimental and control groups in Environment-Behavior Knowledge.
4. The T-test was used to identify permanence of knowledge in the experimental and the control groups for Environment-Behavior Knowledge.

The results obtained were:

1. The achievement average of the experimental group was 75.46 while the control group average was 57.00. Thus, the experimental group employing creative drama had higher achievement levels on the first midterm exam than the control group.
2. The achievement average of the experimental group was 85.77 while the control group average was 69.61 in the second midterm exam. Thus, the experimental group employing creative drama had higher achievement levels on the second midterm exam than the control group.
3. The achievement average of the experimental group was 72.31 while that of the control group was 54.46 in the final exam. Thus, the experimental group employing creative drama had higher achievement levels on the final exam than the control group.
4. The achievement average of the experimental group was 63.00 while that of the control group was 35.77 in permanence of knowledge. Thus, the experimental group taught with creative drama showed higher scores on the permanence test than the control group taught with conventional teaching.

Therefore, the average achievement score of the experimental group was 80.54 while the control group average was 71.00. These results show that the creative drama method used with the experimental group improved students' levels of performance in the course Environment-Behavior Knowledge (Kılıçaslan and Vural 2018).

## **3. The Bright Young Things (BYT)**

The Bright Young Things (BYT) is a drama-based teaching educational institution who have come up with comprehensive evidences of the effectiveness of dram-based teaching methods, among which Creative Drama is prominent. In the web publication, they assert that increasingly the power of drama is being recognised as one of the most effective ways to develop skills and emotional intelligence in children and young people. They stress that drama promotes communication skills, teamwork, dialogue, negotiation, socialization. It stimulates the imagination and creativity as much as it allows the development of a critical thinking, ability to

make better and more conscious decisions and encourages the use of our bodies and voices (BYT Drama).

Some of the key benefits of creative drama outlined by BYT Drama and as are enjoyed by their students include Building of confidence, Development of critical thinking, helping in concentration, Encourages team work and co-operation, Support for healthy minds and wellbeing, and Assisting in physical development. Above all, Drama is fun and learning through play is a very effective way to learn skills for life, they emphasise. It offers that traditional African style of learning that develops the students and allow learn actively, having very little worries for examination since the knowledge learnt is embedded (BYT Drama).

### **Researches Done In The Theatre Arts Department, University Of Calabar**

1. Orok Ekanem Essien, was an Undergraduate Research, The Role of Creative Dramatics on the Child's Imagination – The Dreamboat Example.

The purpose of this study was to promote growth and educational as well as mental development of the children or players. The experiment has revealed that children who participate in creative drama sessions can truly become inventive, imaginative and creative. They are found to be more confident in solving problems and answering questions which strategically enable them overcome the tendency to engage in examination malpractice.

2. George Grace Chinecherem (2021), Cultivating The Innovative Potentials of Students Through Creative Drama.

The objectives of this study were:

To equip students with knowledge of creative drama processes and techniques. To enable students to think and make decision on the spot in problem solving, innovation and in life challenging situations. The study proved that using creative drama in the instructing, developing and learning skills affected the achievement level and creative potentials of students in a positive way.

Education is a process of experiencing, which transforms and reforms purposefully. It is a process of developing sound character for the good of the society. It is change in behaviour. (Eneh and Eneh 2014). Creative Drama proves to be central to that objective. All the experimental researches and the institutional submission reviewed pointed to the efficacy of Creative Drama in enhancing learning by improving memory and memory recall, re-awakening interest and commitment to learning, raising confidence and positive self-esteem, and consequently eliminating the key causes of examination malpractice.

In their contribution to the efficacy of Creative Drama in addressing critical problems, Gundogan et al appraised drama as a highly effective method that empowers participants to improve their social, emotional, physical, mental, creative and imaginative development. In drama, participants impersonate another person and use their imagination to look at the situations from that person's point of view and thereby solve a given problematic situation. (Gundogan et al 207). This rare opportunity of living another person's life for a given short time allows participants experience the consequences – either negative or positive – of a decision or action. This experience helps the participants improve the quality of their decision for maximum positive results. Personally, Braund (2018) have used and researched in depth on various forms of drama: scripted or improvised plays, mime and dance, etc. to demonstrate how arts-derived pedagogy enhances even science teaching and learning.

### **CONCLUSION**

The challenge of examination malpractice, being deeply rooted in the fabric of the Nigerian society, is one that has defied many remedial strategies applied for its correction. Creative drama having proved excellent in addressing the loss of interest in learning of science and technology as well as arts by sparking same, presents itself as one of the key solutions to examination malpractice.

Therefore, the University authority and leadership should push for the policy formulation that will empower lecturers in the use of creative drama and its application in their respective discipline. The appropriate dramatic department of each university, like the Department of Theatre, Film and Carnival Studies of the University of Calabar, for example, should be given the responsibility of providing concise orientation and exposure on Creative Drama to the university's academic staffcommunity.

The education ministries, departments and agencies of states and federal government of Nigeria should prioritise the challenge of examination malpractice, declare a state of emergency on it, and introduce the use of creative drama in the classroom.

Besides the application of drama in education for teaching in the different disciplines, the approach should be grafted at the same time as a medium-term social behavioural change communication (SBCC) strategy for solving the menace. The application of creative drama as SBCC strategy will provide a reinforcement to the approach in the classroom for learning.

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