

**Smart Phone-Use Skills and Cheating Tendencies among Prospective Teachers in Tertiary Institutions in Cross River State**

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**Abstract**

*The major focus of this study was to investigate the relationship between smart phone use skills and cheating tendencies of prospective teachers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. The population consisted of all the prospective teachers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. The researchers employed accidental sampling method and the final study sample consisted of two hundred and sixty four (264) prospective teachers ( $m=121$ ,  $f=143$ ). The instrument for data collection was a twenty one (21) item questionnaire titled Prospective Teachers Smart Phone Use Skills and Cheating Tendencies (PTSPUSCT). The research instrument was divided into three sections; Section A sought for personal and demographic data of the respondents. Sections B sought for data on respondents' smart phone use skills while Section C measured cheating tendencies. Both sections B and C utilised a four point scale. The Cronbach Alpha for Section B was 0.81 while Section C was 0.79. One hypothesis was tested using the Pearson product moment correlation (SPSS) and the result showed a very strong relationship between prospective teachers' smart phone use skills and cheating tendencies. Based on the result, the following recommendations were made (1) Examinations should be more of applied questions where prospective teachers are required to apply knowledge and skills rather than regurgitating facts (2) Related punishments as prescribed by the institutions should be followed through to serve as deterrent and (3) Seminars and workshops should be organized for prospective teachers to expose long term ills of cheating.*

**Key words:** Smart phones, Smart phones use skills, prospective teachers, cheating tendencies, tertiary institutions.

## **Introduction**

For any nation to thrive and compete with the comity of nations in this 21<sup>st</sup> century the role of the education sector cannot be over emphasised. Education is the fulcrum upon which development takes place. It brings about change, innovation, growth, technological advancement and places a nation in a global pedestal. The National Policy of Education affirms that no education sector can grow beyond its teachers (FGN, 2014). Teachers are the vehicle that drives the educational sector and help achieve the desired change a nation needs efficient, effective and qualitative teachers devoid of corruption. Teachers interact with learners with the purpose of helping the learners acquire knowledge, new skills, positive values and attitudes (Godwin & Nsima, 2014). He or she is supposed to be a person of high morals which according to Denga (2015) refers to a people's belief of what is right or wrong. These right morals are supposed to be reflected, emphasized and upheld by the teacher because it helps to control behaviour and develop citizen's character. Therefore a teacher is a role model, a mentor, a facilitator, a person of integrity that imparts knowledge.

A teacher with cheating tendencies will therefore not be a good tool in trying to pass on to the students these morals, virtues and qualities needed to help him or her excel and become a useful and good citizen. Even more disturbing is the fact that ill equipped teachers who have cheated through school may eventually be unable to cope with subject basics he or she never really understood but cheated through. This is one of the reasons students are inadequately prepared for examinations thus continuing the vicious circle of cheating.

In Nigeria, there are two levels of pre-service teacher education namely the Colleges of Education, Schools of Education in Polytechnics and Faculties of Education in the Universities. The Colleges of Education offer post secondary teacher education programme and awards the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and this serves as the minimum qualification for teaching in Nigerian schools. Faculties of Education at the university level offer post secondary /post NCE programmes leading to the award of bachelor degrees in education. The importance of and need for quality teachers is well recognised by the Federal Government of Nigeria and captured in the goals and objectives of teacher education in the National Policy on Education as follows:

- i. To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of educational system.
- ii. To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teaching.
- iii. To help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.
- iv. To provide the intellectual and professional background for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations.

- v. To enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession, (FGN, 2014:43).

This declaration has not been well matched with actions with regards to physical infrastructure and academic literature like current books and well furnished libraries, and their dearth has negatively impacted on government's ability to realise the aforementioned goals and objectives (Igwe 2003: Ajayi 2004). However, in the recent past, the arrival and availability of smartphones at more affordable prices has caused an upsurge of undergraduate students' use of this technology for learning purposes, particularly to access literature and information on the internet. The internet abounds with so many resources for all categories of learners and also offers them vast amounts of information previously unavailable. Some of these sources of information include Open Education Resources (OER), institutional libraries, online newspapers, educational journals and chat rooms. Apart from entertaining themselves on the social media, students also use their smart phones to access and harness these rich educational resources (Akubuiro, Inyang, & Ekpa, 2014; Inyang, 2016)

The use of the smart phone in this way is a welcome development bearing in mind the fact that our libraries whether in secondary schools or tertiary institutions are poorly furnished and current publication of textbooks are not easily available. However, the emerging trend and tendency of students using this gadget as a cheating tool has become very disturbing. Cheating in both internal and external examination in the nation has assumed an alarming scale and has become a worrisome issue not only among teachers, but also among policy makers and the nation in general.

Educational malpractice did not start today but in recent times it has assumed frightening dimensions and is now viewed as a major societal problem. There is almost no examination that is safe from students who have made up their mind to cheat, whether a school internal test or external examination like the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination(WASCE) organised by the West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) and the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) organized by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) (Emaikwu, 2012; Adesulu, 2017; Folarin, 2018).

According to Maduemezia cited in Akinrefon, Ikpah, Bamigbala, and Adeniyi(2016) the first recorded examination cheating was in 1914 when the senior Cambridge local examinations leaked; and since then this vice has been practised in different ways and dimensions. Some of the methods employed before the advent of smart phones include impersonation, taking in foreign objects like notebooks or textbooks, writing on handkerchiefs or parts of the body, receiving help from fellow students, teachers, supervisors, security agents,

head teachers and even the purchase of question papers (Ikechi & Akanwa, 2012; Onyibe, Uma & Ibina, 2015). However with the advent of smart phones, more sophisticated methods have been introduced, perfected and adopted to cheat in examinations. Infact Jimoh and Omoregie in Ntamu (2017) revealed that with the aid of “the Global System for Mobile” Communication gadgets (GSM phones), students store large volumes of data for use in the examination hall or for onward transfer to candidates anywhere in the country.

Okon and Adie (2016) in their case study of 250 respondents (made up of undergraduates, graduates and parent/guardians) of Cross River State University of Technology (CRUTECH) to ascertain causes, effects and possible ways of curbing examination malpractice revealed that there was electronic cheating among students during examinations. Some of the methods adopted by the students included receiving Short Message Services (SMS) from syndicates, online browsing in the examination hall and retrieval of stored material (such as images or texts, formula) from their smart phones. The researchers noted that retrieval of stored materials ranked third by 60% of the respondents.

According to Lynch (2017), of the 23,000 high school students surveyed and interviewed about academic ethics by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, 51 percent had knowingly cheated in an examination, but more troubling was the fact that these students did not see the use of phones in such situations as an act of cheating.

Omonijo and Nnedum (2012) studied e-cheating habit of students in 3 selected Universities in Nigeria. Both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data comprised 199 students caught with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools in the examination hall. The secondary data consisted of cheating records from the examinations committee of these universities in the last three years. Results from the study revealed that the mobile phone was one of the five ICT devices identified with cheating in examinations among students. Also their result showed that there was significant relationship between e-cheating habits and ICT skills because e-cheating habits were more prevalent among ICT-compliant students than with students in non-science oriented programmes.

Toppo (2000) reported that in a survey of 1,013 teens, 84% of them had phones and a significant number revealed that they had stored information on a phone to look at during a test or had texted friends about answers.

In the United States, according to the US Government Accountability Office, 32 states had reported cancelling, invalidating, or nullifying test scores from individual students, schools, or districts because of suspected or confirmed cheating by school officials for the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years (Waters, 2013).

Back home in Nigeria, in the Punch Newspaper of 25th April, 2018, Folarin (2018) writing under the caption “*How Nigerian pupils cheat during WASCE through websites*” reported concerning the just concluded 2018 WASCE, that online cheating assisting websites actually encourage students to subscribe with recharge cards ranging from ₦400 MTN to send a link to the answers of the examination and ₦800 for direct answers to their phones. Some of such sites listed were *naijaclass.com*, *examcrown.com*, *examsort.com*, *waecexpo.com* and *guruslodge.com*. It is appalling and frightening, the extent to which digital cheating has been taken. Also “Mobile phones” (2010) found that there has been a great rise in the number of students trying to cheat in their examination by smuggling phones into the examination hall. Omonijo and Fadugba (2011) described these set of students who delight in exploiting these technologies for cheating as “E-cheats”. Interestingly, in spite of the cheating tendencies associated with these technologies, it is observed that not much literature is available concerning e-cheating tendencies among prospective teachers in whose hands the nation intends to entrust the future of her young.

For a student to be able to use the smart phone for cheating, he or she must possess some smart phone skills. These skills involve the ability to exploit and put to use the internet functions available on the smart phones. Some of these include ability to visit and obtain information or materials from websites, up-load or download pictures, music and movies. It also involves ability to use its recording facilities, send and receive electronic mails and use social media amongst other things.

Cheating, in any manner is a form of corruption and is one of Nigeria’s biggest challenges. Corruption is found in almost every sector and the education sector is not left out. Corruption is a potent cancer that mercilessly destroys decency, eats away the virtues of the society and in the end destroys creativity and hard-work and encourages mediocrity and complacency. It breeds ills wherever it is allowed or permitted and is a vicious circle that must be checked, especially in the education sector. The Webster online dictionary (2018) defines corruption as a dishonest or illegal behaviour. Wikipedia (2018) sees it as a form of dishonesty undertaken to acquire illicit benefits. The Online English Oxford living dictionary (2018) sees it as dishonest and fraudulent conduct. In other words, corruption, in any form and on whatever scale it operates, is bad. Whether it is in or out of the classroom, cheating breeds decadence if allowed to continue.

According to Idaka (2005) more than 90% of Nigerian graduates are ill-equipped, or poorly qualified to take up any form of employment because they cheated their way through examinations. This has led to many incompetent people rising to leadership positions they are practically unable to cope with, (Onyechere, 2005) and this includes many teachers who are ill equipped to serve

in that capacity to bring up young learners and equip them with skills needed for nation building for the next generation.

Many reasons have been given for the various cheating sprees some of which include governments' undue emphasis on paper qualification (Emaikwu, 2012), over reliance on examination performance (Ibukun & Oyewole, 2011), and laziness, inability to cope with their choice of course and poor study habits (Joshua, Ekpoh, Edet, Joshua, & Obo, 2017). However, no matter the numerous reasons that may be given for cheating, we must note that this job of building the next generation is being invested in the prospective teachers, who is assumed at the end of their studies would have imbibed sufficiently not only the relevant skills and knowledge but also the moral qualities and character expected to help them efficiently impact the lives of the young learner. Bearing in mind the policy statement that no nation can rise above her teachers (FGN, 2014); it is in the light of this truth that this study seeks to investigate smart phone use skills and cheating tendencies among prospective teachers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

### **Hypothesis**

1. Smart phone use skills do not significantly relate with cheating tendencies among prospective teachers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

### **Methodology**

The study utilised a survey design and the population for the study consisted of all the prospective teachers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. The researchers employed accidental sampling method. A total of three hundred (300) copies of the questionnaires were administered and two hundred and eighty (280) were successfully recovered for analysis. Sixteen were found un-usable, therefore the actual subjects of this study were two hundred and sixty four (264) comprising 121 males and 143 females prospective teachers from the University of Calabar, College of Education, Akamkpa and the Cross River State University of Technology.

Data collecting instrument was a twenty (21)-item Prospective teachers' Smart Phone Use Skills and Cheating Tendencies Questionnaire (PTSPUSCT). The research instrument was divided into three sections; Section A sought for personal and demographic data of the respondents. Sections B sought for data on respondents' smart phone skills use and it utilized the options "All the time" (ATT), "Most of the time" (MOT), "Some of the time" (SOT) and "Not at all" (NA). Section C measured cheating tendencies like using their smart phone skills to check for answers online, take and store images of their notes for use in examinations or send and receive help via short Message services (SMS) while in the examination hall. This section utilized options like "Regularly" meaning in

almost every test or examination, “Sometimes” meaning in at least 5 examinations or tests taken, “Rarely” if in at least one examination or test taken and “Never”. Both sections B and C utilised a four point Likert scale.

The research instrument used in this study was given to 2 lecturers in Test and Measurement for face validity. The reliability indices using Cronbach Alpha statistics for Section B was 0.81 while Section C was 0.79. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and the data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

### **Result**

Hypothesis 1. Smart phone use skills do not significantly relate with cheating tendencies among prospective teachers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Table 1. Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis of the relationship between prospective teachers smart phone use skills and cheating tendencies.

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	r	P
Smart phone skill	18.16	4.76	.223	.000
Cheating tendencies	15.33	5.68		

(n=264)

\*\* Significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results from the analysis shows ( $r=.223$ ,  $p<.05$ ) since  $p(.000)$  is less than  $p(.05)$ , this implies that there is a significant relationship between prospective teachers smart phone use skills and cheating tendencies, thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

### **Discussions**

The major focus of this study was to investigate the relationship between smart phone use skills and cheating tendencies of prospective teachers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. The result from Table 1 above is not very surprising when one imagines the strong desire and eagerness to benefit from the volume of free and easily accessible information littering the internet, not to mention the underlying quest for better grades which they try to obtained without much stress by using the smart phone in a negative way. This is matched with dexterity in the manipulation of these gadgets by the students as true “digital natives” of their time. Apart from this is the fact that smart phone are more affordable now and most parents purchase these gadgets for their wards to help them access free educational literature on the internet which most institutions cannot provide. Even where some schools provide e-libraries, accessibility is

many times erratic, so smart phones afford these prospective teachers the leisure of accessing whatever they need at their own time and pace. This situation affords them the time to explore and discover the various resources they can easily tap into and also perfect methods they can use to access them un-noticed at the snap of a finger. This explains the fact that the more skilled prospective teachers are in smart phone use, the greater the tendency to cheat.

This result corroborates the findings of Omonijo and Nnedum (2011) who also concluded that ICT-compliant students were more involved in e- cheating habits than other students in programmes that are not science oriented. This is because ICT- compliant student would tend to have more interactions with ICT and therefore would also be more able to use them albeit negatively for their own benefits.

The result is also in line with the findings of Lynch (2017) who reported that teenagers had cheated by checking for answers using smart phones and Toppo (2009) who revealed that students surveyed agreed that they had purposely stored information on their phones for use in texts and examination.

ICT skills are part of the much desired 21<sup>st</sup> century skills all learners are encouraged to acquire. However when such skills are used negatively even by prospective teachers who are expected to be tutors, mentors, moral agents and guides to the next generation of leaders, then there is real cause for worry concerning the path our educational system may be going. It is even more troubling when prospective teachers see nothing wrong in using smart phones as aids during examinations.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The study investigated smart phone use skills and cheating tendencies among prospective teachers and findings suggest a strong relationship between smart phone use skills and cheating tendencies among prospective teachers. The job of building the next generation of leaders is invested in the prospective teachers; therefore this finding should generate great concern.

Smart phones and many other technological devices have come to stay and will definitely become more pervasive among learners and teachers alike. Smart phones can be tremendous learning tools just as they can be used to circumvent educational best practices. Cheating by any means destroys the values of educational output and the use of smart phones to promote cheating is sure to have a very damaging impact on the whole segment of education.

Based on the finding, the following recommendations are proffered:

3. Examinations should be more of applied questions where students are required to apply knowledge and skills than regurgitating facts.
4. The use of smart phones should be banned in examination and test situations and these rules should be enforced.



5. Related punishments as prescribed by the institutions should be enforced to serve as deterrent.
6. Seminars and workshops should be organized with prospective teachers to expose long term ills of cheating.
7. Smart phones applications should be directed toward very useful learning like note taking, assignment and research.
8. Value orientation on the negative effects of wrongful application of smart phones should be enshrined in code of conducts.

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