

MORAL JUDGMENTS OF NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ON EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES: THE PRE-DURING-AND-POST EXAMINATION SCENARIOS

Kingsley Chinaza NWOSU, PhD¹, Victor Chekume NWASOR², Chioma Assumpta NEZIEANYA³

**kc.nwosu@unizik.edu.ng, vc.nwasor@unizik.edu.ng,
chiomanezieanya@gmail.com**

- 1. Department of Educational Foundations Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria**
- 2. Anambra State Post Secondary School System**

Abstract: *The preponderance of cheating in examination/test has become so alarming that concerned stakeholders are perturbed on its impact on the moral ethos of the Nigerian society. Students' engagement in examination malpractices might stem from their moral judgment stance. This study determined the moral judgments of secondary school students on examination malpractices scenarios (pre-during-and-post) in Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted and four hundred secondary school students were sampled from two local government areas in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State. Results showed that on the average the percentages of students who agreed that it is not wrong to violate the listed pre-during-and-post examination ethics are 26.13%; 33.84% and 21.3% respectively. Also the violation of the during-examination ethic had higher mean score/percentage response in favor of those who think that it was not wrong to violate them than the violation of pre-and-post examination ethics. Multiple regression analysis showed that sex, class level, type of school and location of the school are (joint) significant predictors of students' moral judgment in only two scenarios. However, only school type made individual significant contribution in students' moral judgment of the three examination malpractice scenarios. Based on the findings recommendations were made.*

Keywords: *moral judgment; examination; malpractice; ethics; secondary;*

1-Introduction

Educational endeavour is often embarked on with the aim of producing graduates of the best quality who will contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. It is through examinations that society can glean quality in an individual's thinking and gain confidence in his or her potentials. However, most nations have lamented the impact examination fraud has on the attainment of national goals. The attainment of the educational goals of the Nigerian state has also been hampered by fraudulent activities that go on during examinations both at public and internal examinations. The menace looks so insurmountable that it has been nicknamed by some concerned stakeholders. To some, it is "a hydra-headed monster" to others it is "a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of academic development" (Ajogbeje, Olofinlae & Jeje, 2015). Within the students' parlance, it has been renamed and redefined in such a way that it is almost losing its characteristic illegality. Some refer to it as "Mgbo", "Igwebuiké" "micro chip" "live wire" "brain support", and the centres where examination malpractices are perpetuated are now referred to as "miracle centres" or "special centres". The names given to it by perpetrators suggest harmlessness of this fraudulent practice which now question the moral ethos of the present Nigerian society. What used to be a very abnormal practice typical of those who were considered academically lazy has now become a normal phenomenon in which even school personnel are now syndicates to this unholy practice.

The percentages of students who were involved in officially reported cases of examination malpractices in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 are 6.86%, 7.19%, 5.97%, 7.88% and 8.74% respectively (Ruqqayatu, cited in Anzene, 2014). Anzene referring to the report of the Weekend Times, 2007 presented the number of secondary schools derecognized from 2007 to 2010 by the Federal Government of Nigeria across the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria as a result of their involvement in examination malpractices. Fifty-four (54) secondary schools were derecognized in North Central, 8 in Northeast, 12 in North West, 48 in Southeast, 116 in South-South, 86 in South West.

The flouting of examination rules and regulation may begin before and even after the examination. Actually, adequate arrangement to perpetrate examination malpractice before the actual examination may consolidate this unwholesome act; and on the other hand, the post-examination malpractice may invalidate efforts made to control/avert examination malpractice during the examination. Post-examination malpractice has as its major constituents bribing the examiner for upgrade of marks, using sexual gratification to evade failure, mutilation of already submitted examination answer scripts and using the influence of higher authorities to convince examiners to

indiscriminately award marks to undeserving examinees. Pre-examination malpractice stems from the candidate preparing strips of paper with key points from his or her texts or lecture notes as reminders to answers in the examination hall, or bribing the lecturer before the examination is taken.

Government and concerned stakeholders have come up with strategies, laws, and edicts to exterminate the menace in Nigeria but it looks as if the problem is worsening every day. New trends in examination malpractices are defiling every measure adopted by examination bodies in Nigeria. The nation was hopeful with the introduction of computer based tests (CBTs) and CCTV cameras in examination centres by some public examination bodies in 2016. Sadly, the hope was dashed when the examination conducted using this method was greeted with large scale of examination malpractice cases leading to cancellation of results of candidates and derecognition of many centres this 2017. One wanders what could be done to stop this ugly situation. Many researchers have suggested instilling sound moral values in students to a point that they will have the right value system and stand up against violation of examination ethics. To do this, it warrants that studies be undertaken to ascertain the moral judgment of students on examination malpractices so that appropriate intervention programmes be mounted for them. This led to the present research in which the moral judgments of students on examination malpractices before, during and after examination were ascertained.

2-Cheating in Schools and Moral Judgments

West, Ravenscroft and Shrader (2004) have investigated academic dishonesty in a natural experiment and found that moral judgment of undergraduate students correlated insignificantly with their cheating behaviour and that action based on notions of justice which is referred to as Utilizer affected the relationship between cheating and moral judgment significantly. Further findings in their study revealed that moral judgment and honesty did not correlate while higher levels of cheating correlated with less honesty.

Grym and Liljander (2016) conducted a research indicating that by signalling a reminder of moral conduct, universities can create norms that reduce the chances of undergraduate students indulging in unethical behaviour in tests. They conducted an experiment in a Finnish business school, where 99 students were tested with a mathematical quiz. The participants were given the opportunity to cheat by self-reporting the scores. During the course of the experiment, half of them received a reminder of moral conduct which decreased the reported math scores, thus indicating less cheating. Findings showed that male students cheat more than females.

Based on the findings they recommended the use of primes to mitigate cheating.

Looking at plagiarism as another form of cheating in school, Jonsson & Orlenius (2013) investigated the correlations among moral standards and acceptance of plagiarism, cheating, collaboration and equity of treatment, and also, the impact of educational experience and discipline on these factors using 357 undergraduate students. A close to zero relationship was found between students' personal, conventional moral standards and their acceptance of plagiarism. They found that students' moral standards significantly correlated negatively with cheating and equity of treatment. The degree to which students find plagiarism unacceptable and also their acceptance of cheating and collaboration was influenced by educational discipline, teacher education versus informatics, norms and ethical value systems.

3-Examination Malpractice through the lenses of Moral Judgment Theories

Scholars have noted that the universality of what constitutes morality may be difficult to come by because what appears to be morally acceptable in a particular society may be greatly abhorred in another. However, there is a consensus that morality questions concern issues pointing to the rightness and wrongness of actions. Moral judgment strives to determine that which is right or that which wrong. Efforts have been made to untangle what determines moral judgments. There is the rationalist model of moral judgment pioneered by Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1969) which proposes that moral judgments are products of the controlled, effortful, slow process of reasoning (Liao, 2010). For the rationalists, moral judgment is influenced by the ability to reason and matures along the lines of reasoning advancement. For them, the *primus inter pares* in moral judgment is ability to reason. Also, the social intuitionist model of moral judgments pioneered by Jonathan Haidt in which determinant forces of moral judgment may not necessarily rest on reasoning but on human intuitive system have surfaced in recent time in social psychology (Liao, 2010). The third school of thought in moral judgment theory is the emotionalists who brought to the fore the importance of human emotions on judgment considering the enormous emotions exhibited when making moral judgment and also the apparent inability to defend moral judgment rationally when confronted with question to explain such moral stance (Monin, Pizarro & Beer, nd).

Seeing examination malpractice (a moral weakness and infraction) through the lenses of moral judgment theories demands an integrationist approach taken into account the interplay of forces that could lead to this. There is the place of the level of reasoning, emotion and intuition of the

individual concerned. As children grow and develop cognitively there could be apparent variance in the way and manner at which they reason the implication of moral infractions. The issue of morality could be differently subjected to sophisticated reasoning in which there is a weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of a particular situation. Differentially, certain people are likely to concede to fear of punishment or rejection referred to as the pre-conventional stages, some others may be those who see the rules of society as such that must be religiously followed, observed and deserving respect which has been labelled the conventional stages, and not many are likely to go against the norm considering what they see as universal principles which has been termed post-conventional stages (Monin, et al, nd). However, this stance could be 'consumed' by emotions attached to a particular thing; for example, the significance attached to certificate acquisition in Nigeria as against mastery could arouse a heightened emotion that could becloud the moral reasoning of an individual. Moreover, the pressure and the stress to succeed in an examination that has been seen as survival of the fittest could lead individuals to indulge in fraudulent practices in test/examination conditions and more especially those who have not attained the post-conventional moral stage. This pressure may come from friends, parents, other significant persons and even the structure of the society (Kaufman, 2008).

3-Method

In this study the survey research design was adopted since the opinions of respondents were sought by the researchers from a relatively large sample considered representative of the population. This is informed by the fact that students' opinions on the phenomenon under investigation could be generalizable to population, and are also measurable. The fact that the moral stance of students affects their judgment of examination malpractice would be better understood from the realist ontological perspective.

4-Sample and Sampling Technique

The respondents comprised 400 senior and junior secondary school students in two local government areas in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. These students were selected from JSS 3 and SSS 3 classes given the fact that they were getting ready for public examinations in the 2016/2017 academic session. The researchers distributed the 400 copies of the questionnaire to students.

A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in selecting the students in the study. First the researchers utilized a purposive sampling technique in selecting two local government areas in Onitsha Education Zone. One local government was purely an urban area while the other was a rural area. Then

simple random sampling technique was used in sampling 4 private secondary schools and six public secondary schools from the rural and urban settings of the two local government areas in the Education Zone. Two private schools were from the rural area; the other two private schools were from the urban area; 3 public schools were from the rural area while the other three public secondary schools were from the urban area of the Education Zone. Then senior and junior secondary school students who gave their consent to the study after being sensitized by their teachers who served as research assistants were used.

5-Data Collection Techniques

6. Instrument

A 25-item questionnaire structured in the four-point scale of strong agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) was used in collecting the data used in the study. The instrument was developed after an extensive literature review was conducted. Also the work of Bisong, Akpama, and Edet (2009) was consulted during the questionnaire construction. It was later subjected to content validity. The instrument has two sections; section A contains students' demographic information while section B has three clusters. The reliability test of the instrument was conducted using Cronbach Alpha in which the coefficients for the three clusters (Pre-Examination Malpractices Scenario, During-Examination Malpractices Scenario, and Post-Examination Malpractices Scenario) are 0.67, 0.75 and 0.78 respectively. The pre-examination malpractice scenario cluster dealt with instances of the moral views of students on unacceptable means of passing examinations that are perpetrated before the actual examination; the second cluster centred on instances of infractions that are practised during the examination proper while the third cluster dealt with such amoral means of passing examinations that occur after the examination had just been taken.

7. Data Collection Procedure

The consent of the school authorities was sought and a brief was held with the research assistants who are ten (10) regular teachers in the schools sampled. These teachers were contacted by the third co-author and had discussions on the essence of the study. The consent of the students was sought and their teachers explained to them about the study. The teachers were told to monitor the filling in of the questionnaire and collect the copies.

8. Data Analysis

The research questions were answered with percentage and mean statistic while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using multiple regression.

9. Results

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by socio-demographic characteristics

	Variables	Frequency	Percent(%)
Sex	Male	130	32.5
	Female	270	67.5
Class level	Junior	212	52.9
	Senior	187	46.9
School type	Private	157	39.3
	Public	243	60.8
school location	Rural	178	44.5
	Urban	222	55.6

Table 1 shows that 32.5% Of the respondents are males while 67.5% are female, 52.9% are junior students and 46.9% are senior students, 39.3% of the students are in private schools while 60.8% are in public schools, 44.5% of students are from rural areas while 55.6% are from urban areas.

Table 2: Percentage/Mean Responses of Students' Moral Judgments on Pre-Examination Malpractices Scenarios

S/N	Before writing my examinations.....	A(%)	D(%)	Mean	Remark
1	I don't think it is wrong to see the question paper before the examination	31.1	68.5	2.05	Disagree
2	If I have the opportunity to bribe a teacher to tell me the answers to questions to examination I will do that	15.8	83.8	1.70	Disagree
3	I don't think it is wrong to prepare some material prior to entering the exam hall	27.6	69.3	2.09	Disagree
4	It is not wrong to hire a mercenary to write exams for people.	20.1	78.8	1.85	Disagree

5	I don't think it is wrong for somebody to contribute money as "kola nut" for the invigilator	38.0	60.4	2.23	Disagree
6	It is not wrong writing some formula in my hand/laps before entering the hall, as reminder.	23.3	75.8	1.86	Disagree
7	It is not wrong to pay for a special centre where I will write my exam and be assured of good grades.	31.3	67.7	2.16	Disagree
8	It is not wrong to pay for the invigilator not to come to my school during examination.	21.8	77.3	1.90	Disagree

Keys: A=Strongly Agree +Agree, D= Strongly Disagree +Disagree

Results in table 2 shows that on the average 26.13% of the participants agreed it is not wrong to violate the listed pre-examination ethics while 72.46% of the participants disagreed with statements. Items 2, 4, 6, 8 had the highest percentages of disagreement while over 30% of respondents agreed to items 1, 5, and 7.

Table 3: Percentage/Mean Responses of Students' Moral Judgments on During-Examination Malpractices Scenarios

S/N	When I am writing my exams I don't think-----	A(%)	D(%)	Mean	Decision
1	It is wrong to ask my mate questions I couldn't remember during-exam	70.8	28.8	3.04	Agree
2	It is wrong to peep from my mate's work during examination	30.8	68.3	2.10	Disagree
3	It is wrong to exchange ideas in examination hall with my colleagues	49.3	48.8	2.53	Agree
4	It is not wrong to ask teachers for an answer in examination hall	26.5	71.3	2.05	Disagree
5	It is not wrong for one to copy answers written on the board by teachers	33.3	61.9	2.19	Disagree
6	It is not wrong to allow somebody to write for you in exam hall	19.6	80.3	1.80	Disagree
7	It is not wrong to pay for a separate hall where one can be helped in exam	20.6	79.0	1.76	Disagr

					ee
8	It is not wrong for one to cheat in exam hall when an exam is difficult	33.6	66.0	2.12	Disagree
9	It is not wrong to cheat in exam malpractice when one is supported by parents and school authorities	35.0	63.3	2.22	Disagree
10	It is not wrong to indulge in exam malpractice when one is supported by parents and school authorities	31.0	66.8	2.09	Disagree
11	It is not wrong to send extra paper to mercenaries who will help you in exam.	21.3	72.3	1.82	Disagree

Keys: A=Strongly Agree +Agree, D= Strongly Disagree +Disagree

Results in table 3 shows that on the average, 33.84 of the participants agreed it is not wrong to violate the listed during-examination ethics while 64.24% of the participants disagreed with statements. Items 4, 6, 7 and 11 had the highest percentages of disagreement while over 30% of respondents agreed to items 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10.

Table 4: Percentage/Mean Responses of Students' Moral Judgments on Post-Examination Malpractices Scenarios

S/N	After writing exams, I don't think.....	A(%)	D(%)	Mean	Decision
1	It is not wrong for one to give the invigilator money even after the time of the exam has elapsed.	26.0	72.1	1.95	Disagree
2	It is not wrong for one to go to the teachers to plead for scores when one did not write well	22.5	76.2	1.87	Disagree
3	It is not wrong to put money in one's script to bribe the examiner	16.8	81.3	1.68	Disagree
4	It is not wrong if my school should bribe the assessor that will mark our script	26.0	71.1	1.97	Disagree
5	It is not wrong to pay for special marking during marking of examination scripts	22.8	76.4	1.91	Disagree
6	It is not wrong to pay for another person's results to be given to me	13.8	82.5	1.55	Disagree

Keys: A=Strongly Agree +Agree, D= Strongly Disagree +Disagree

Results in table 4 shows that on the average, 21.3% of the participants agreed it is not wrong to violate the listed post-examination ethics while 76.6% of the participants disagreed with statements. All the Items had very high percentages of disagreement while about 26% of respondents agreed to items 1 and 4 which recorded the highest percentage of agreement.

Table 5: Regression for predictors of Moral Judgments Before- Examination Malpractices Scenarios

Source	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	p-value
(Constant)	2.654	.079		10.458	.000
SEX	-.028	.053	-.018	-.360	.719
LEVEL	-.023	.077	-.021	-.428	.669
SCHOOL TYPE	-.276	.073	-.185	-3.572	.000
LOCATION	-.091	.079	-.064	-1.244	.214
R	.186				
R ²	.035				
F	2.932				.007

As shown in table 5, the multiple regression coefficients (R) was .186 while R² was .035 This is an indication that sex, class level, type of school, and location of the school contributed to 3.5% in explaining students' judgment of pre-examination malpractices. However, the corresponding F (4, 398) = 2.932, is statistically significant as shown by the p-value (.007) which was less than the stipulated significance level (0.05). It was therefore decided that sex, class level, type of school and location of the school are statistically significant. However, only school type made significant contribution to students' judgment of pre-examination malpractices by contributing 27.6%.

Table 6: Regression for predictors of Moral Judgments During- Examination Malpractices Scenarios

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	p-value
(Constant)	2.131	.254		8.406	.000
SEX	.140	.079	.089	1.778	.076
LEVEL	-.016	.053	-.016	-.310	.757
SCHOOL TYPE	-.225	.077	-.150	-2.912	.004
LOCATION	.119	.073	.083	1.631	.104
R	.213				

R ²	.045	
F	4.659	.001

As shown in table 6, the multiple regression coefficients (R) was .213 while R² was .045. This is an indication that sex, class level, school type and school location contributed 4.5% in explaining students' judgment of during-examination malpractices scenarios. However, the corresponding F(4, 397) = 4.659, is statistically significant as shown by the p-value (.001) which was less than the stipulated significance level (0.05). It was therefore decided that sex, class level, school type and school location are statistically significant during examination. However, only type of school made significant contribution to students' judgments of during-examination malpractices scenarios.

Table 7: Regression for predictors of Moral Judgments After-Examination Malpractices Scenarios

Source	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	p-value
(Constant)	2.345	.270		8.682	.000
SEX	-.044	.084	-.027	-.528	.598
LEVEL	-.043	.056	-.038	-.753	.452
SCHOOL TYPE	-.222	.082	-.141	-2.692	.007
LOCATION	-.016	.078	-.011	-.209	.834
R	.148				
R ²	.022				
F	2.215				.067

The result in table 7 shows that the multiple regression coefficients (R) were .148 while R² was .022. This is an indication that students' sex, class level, school type and school location contributed 2.2% to explain the variances in response. However, the corresponding F (4, 397) = 2.215, is not statistically significant as shown by the p-value (.067) which was greater than the stipulated significance level (0.05). It was therefore decided that sex, class level, school type and school location are not statistically significant. Only school type made significant contribution to students' judgment of after-examination malpractices scenarios.

10. Discussion

The essence of this is to empirically ascertain how students could judge the violation/infractions on examination ethics since moral judgments of students could in a way direct their actions. Taking the pre-examination malpractices scenarios into account, results showed that on the average 26.13% of the participants agreed it is not wrong to violate the listed pre-examination ethics while 72.46% of the participants disagreed with statements. For the majority, the actions were adjudged wrong while 26.13% of the students could not see anything wrong in violating such ethics. This percentage should not be over-looked considering the enormity of effects engagement on examination malpractice could have on national development. What is disturbing in the results is that percentage increase occurred in judging 'seeing the question papers before examination, bribing the invigilator before examination and registering in special centres' as being acceptable. These are actually very serious offenses in public examinations and could point to the fact that when students consider actions as benefiting them they could go for it even when they are infringements on the ethics of the examinations. This agrees with some findings that moral reasoning or judgment may not actually have direct impact on the actual behaviour (West, Ravenscroft & Shrader, 2004). Generally, students judged most of these unethical pre-examination cases as morally unacceptable.

The multiple regression using sex, class level, type of school, and location of the school as predictors contributed to 3.5% in explaining students' judgment of pre-examination malpractices. The predictor variables - sex, class level, type of school and location of the school - could jointly predict students' moral judgment of pre-examination malpractices scenarios. However, only school type was able to make individual significant contribution to students' judgment of pre-examination malpractices. Gender not making significant contribution might have resulted from the fact that it has been found by West et al; Okafor, Okaro and Egbunike (2015) that cheating and as well as honesty was equivalent across male and female students.

Also, findings on students' moral judgments on during-examination malpractices scenarios showed that on the average, 33.84% of the participants agreed it is not wrong to violate the listed examination ethics as they taking their examination while 64.24% of the participants disagreed with statements. Items 4, 6, 7 and 11 had the highest percentages of disagreement while over 30% of respondents agreed to items 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10. Looking at individual items in the table, items that have to do with violation of examination ethics as it gets to do with peer collaborative copying and exchanging of answers in examination hall had the highest nod from the students. What this implies is that they are likely not to see anything

wrong with violating such ethics during examinations. West et al has noted that why students engage in similar acts even when they are proscribed is that they often rationalize it and argue that they are used to working in groups and helping one another out. Other items that got higher nods from students are items that had to do with when they are supported by parents and school authorities to engage in examination malpractices; and also when the examination is considered difficult. This is likely to reveal the level of moral reasoning of these students. They are likely to operate below Kohlberg's post-conventional level of reasoning and as such since the moral is just like social contract; the violation of it by significant persons and those in authority is likely to make it inconsequential. This agrees with the findings of Milem (2007) that faculty and peer behaviours are more likely to influence students' decisions regarding academic integrity than any other factor.

The multiple regression using sex, class level, school type and school location contributed 4.5% in explaining students' judgment of during-examination malpractices scenarios. The predictor variables - sex, class level, school type and location - jointly significantly predicted the students' moral judgments on during-examination malpractices scenarios. Only type of school could individually make significant contribution to students' judgments of during-examination malpractices scenarios. This could have arisen because moral development occurs in a context and different institutions are likely to have different ways of stimulating moral development and those with superior strategy could influence moral judgment of their students more especially when it demands that difficult decisions must be made like during examinations when one may not have an alternative but to pass the exams (King & Mayhew, 2002).

Findings on students' moral judgments on after-examination malpractices scenarios showed that on the average 21.3% of the participants agreed it is not wrong to violate the listed examination ethics as they taking their examination while 76.6% of the participants disagreed with statements. All the Items had very high percentages of disagreement while about 26% of respondents agreed to items 1 and 4 which recorded the highest percentage of agreement. The items that had the highest percentage of agreement were items that they considered could directly help them make higher marks. Such items were items like bribing the invigilators and assessors even after the examinations. The multiple regression using students' sex, class level, school type and school location contributed 2.2% to explain the variances in response. The predictor variables - sex, class level, school type and school location were not statistically significant in predicting students' moral judgment on post-examination malpractice scenarios. Only school type made individual significant contribution in predicting students' judgment of post-

examination malpractices scenarios and this is also in agreement with the views of (King, et al).

Interestingly, however, the violation of the during-examination ethic had higher mean score/percentage response in favour of those who thinks that it wasn't wrong to violate them than the violation of pre-and-post examination ethics. This points to the fact that moral reasoning of the students could dwindle in the face of tension. They could easily compromise their stance when they see that they have no other alternative.

11. Conclusion

The study found that a good number of students see nothing wrong in violating some of the examination ethics especially in the during-examination scenario which indicates that students' moral judgment could be compromised in the face of difficulty. This is an eye-opener for stakeholders who are coming up with strategies to tackle the problem that the issue of examination malpractice involves the moral/value system of the person involved and efforts must be made to uproot wrong value systems in our society through early intervention. Therefore, there is need to explicitly and conscientiously teach examination ethics and as well boost the moral ego of the students. Students who are outstanding in their conducts during examinations should be singled out and rewarded. There is also the need to de-emphasize certification and emphasize mastery of skills in our schools so that the tension associated with certificate acquisition considered the only ticket to having food on the table will be minimized. Instructional strategies and psycho-educational interventions for learners should be such that could help build their self-confidence in their abilities, make them self-regulated and intrinsically motivated learners who could comfortably venture into new and difficult areas. They should be allowed to appreciate their 'academic weaknesses' and see them as platforms for academic progress.

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