

AVERTING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN, KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Examination malpractice is a deadly agent for destroying quality of the nation's education system. Because of the far reaching effects it at undermining writer discussed the meaning, causes, effects and practical ways of averting it in Nigerian educational system. Most important in the discussion is that averting examination malpractice is the responsibility all stakeholders irrespective of position.*

Key Words: *Stakeholders, Examination, Malpractice, Misconduct, Averting Curbing, Examination, Malpractice, Moral Education*

Introduction

The process of developing the innate potentials of individuals is education. It is a process of developing an individual into a responsible, purposeful, innovative, creative and useful personal, who is able to contribute meaningfully to the society where he/she finds himself. The Federal Government of Nigeria (FRN, 2004), clearly states that education fosters the worth and development of the individual for each individual's sake and for the general development of the society; and that education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plan because it is the most important instrument of change (FRN, 2004).

Toro (3013) asserted that learning outcome is determined with a view to assessing performance and attainment. Assessment of learning is done to determine what has been learned and also for decision making with respect to selection of candidates for either higher studies or job placement. It is the end product of examination results which naturally determine what will happen to candidates. When candidates who perform below a set requirement for admission for further studies or placement for job miss a chance, the next time they rewrite similar examination they tend to employ any means for scoring high. When candidates employ unconventional means during examinations or during marking and or reporting to score high grades, this is called examination malpractice.

Also Nwana (2000) defines the concept as the massive and unprecedented abuse of rules and regulations pertaining to internal and public examinations, beginning from the setting of such examinations through the taking of the examinations, their marking and grading, to the release of the results and the issuance of certificates. Another scholar, Nwawuchi (1993) defined it as seeking, obtaining or giving undue aid to any candidate before, during or after the examination. The main key points as highlighted in the above definitions is that examination malpractice is an unconventional or unlawful, ways which testers or learners use in passing their tests or examinations.

Several negative consequences for the individual and the society are associated with examination malpractice; we have heard cases where as a result of desperation of the perpetrators of the offence, several employees of examining bodies and law enforcement agencies have either been maimed or killed. Standards are lowered and consequently degenerate into a culture of mediocrity. Sometimes it leads to cancellation of result as in the case of "Miracle Centers." "Special Examination Centers," "Miracle Centers" exist e.g. in Anambra State (Agu, 2006), and "Special Examination Centers" equally exist they are mostly situated in private schools or study centers and are littered in all states of Nigeria. Perpetrators include a syndicate consisting of school proprietors, officials of various examination bodies, security operatives, school principals and some other agents. Fees are charged and mostly high at registration. These centers are usually located in very remote areas where it will be difficult for examination supervisor to reach them during the examination.

According to Ukwuije (2012), products of "quality education should be intellectually sound, socially adaptable, technologically skilled, vocationally competent and morally sound". This shows clearly that education is measured in terms of learning outcomes. The extent of assimilation of knowledge, skills, values, norms, attitudes, etc is determined/carried out through assessment of the learners. Every learner is expected to satisfy to a reasonable extent and conditions for decision making that he/she has been taught a

prescribe content for his/her overall development. In other word, the learner is assessed on what has been taught in learning institutions. Assessment according to Buzzetto-More and Alade (2006), is an ongoing process that involves planning, discussion, consensus building, reflection, measuring, analyzing, and improving based on the data and artifacts gathered about a learning objective". Ukwuije (2007) stated that educational assessment is a process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, skills, attitudes, beliefs, practices or generally what behaviour a learner does or does not have, acquire or developed before, during and at the end of instruction, or course of study.

This is the stage at which the learner's knowledge, skills, ability and competencies are assessed, and judgment made about such performance. The outcome of such judgment is used for diagnosing as well as placement of students as it is the best tool for an objective assessment and evaluation of what learners have achieved after a period of schooling.

Fagbamiye (1998) described examination as a tool for measuring and judging the standard of education in any country. Examinations provide information about students' progress, serve as innovation for students in their academic pursuit, provide feedback as regards the effectiveness of the teachers' methods of instruction, diagnose and predict future performances, license candidates for occupations or profession. Ukwuije (2012) posited that examinations are instruments for determining the degree of change that has occurred among individuals following the end of treatment conditions on them.

The examination may be internal or external. These examinations could be oral, written or both. It is unfortunate that these two forms of assessment in Nigeria have been bedeviled by examination malpractice which started from the inception of formal education which was brought by the Missionaries. Specifically, examination malpractices was first recorded in 1914 in Nigeria when there was a leakage of Cambridge examination question papers. Other outstanding years of examination irregularities in Nigeria include 1963, 1967, 1970, 1973, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1985, 1987, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 (Ukwuije, 2012; Fasasi, 2006; Alutu & Aluede, 2006; and West African Examination Council, 2004).

The University of Port Harcourt's academic policy refers to examination malpractice as: "all forms of cheating which directly or indirectly falsify the ability of the students" which include "...cheating within an examination hall, cheating outside an examination hall, and any involvement in all illegal examination related offences" (University of Port Harcourt, 2004).

Examination malpractice is also defined as any misconduct before, during and after examination leading to unfair advantage for a person or group of person that contravenes the rules and regulations to the extent of undermining the validity, reliability, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificate issued (Olatunbosun, 2009; Fasasi, 2006; Alutu & Aluede, 2006; FRN, 1999 and Oluyeba & Daramola). Moreover, Salami in Ogunboyede (2010) defined examination malpractice as "an improper and dishonesty act associated with examination with a view to obtaining an unmerited advantage. It is therefore a misdemeanor and for some of its perpetrators, it is an abuse of their position of trust".

These misconducts include falsification of name, impersonation, in orderliness, stealing of examination papers, disturbances at examination, obstruction of supervisor, forgery of result, smuggling of examination materials into examination hall, collusion between candidates, collusion between candidates and invigilators, change of scores, buying and selling of examination grades, question papers and prepared answers, and trading sex for question papers, marks and grades, girraffing, assault and intimidation of students and examination officials, teacher-student affair, bribery, spying, submission of multiple scripts, use of coded sign language, substitution of answer sheet, fake passport, Ghost voice/centres, improper completion of entry forms, electronically assisted malpractice through mobile phones high cost of sale of handout and test books by teachers/lecturers, admission racketeering, award of fake certificates, multiple entry of the same examination, inscription on thigh, palm, baby pampers, dresses, handkerchief, rulers, purses, chairs, tables, walls of examination halls, copying from one another, exchange of question/answer sheets, collaboration with an invigilator/lecturer where it involves a lecturer providing written/oral answer to a students in the examination hall, improper assignment of placing candidates under the supervision of corrupt official, etc (Ogunboyede, 2010; Magaji, 2006; Alutu & Aluede, 2006; University of Port Harcourt, 2004; Adesina, 1993; and Afolabi, 1998).

According to Examination malpractice is so widespread across the country to the extent that it has several popular names among students, teacher/lecturers and the populace. Several coded names given to examination malpractices include ECOMOG, ECOWAS, OAU, Hi-tech Micro computer, Networking, Microchips, Super print, Bullets or Missiles, Expo, Contractor, GSM, Settle, Cyber, Girraffing, Symbiosis, repeaters course, laya, Mercenary, Line fishing, Dubbing, etc (Ukwuije, 2012; Denga & Denga 1998; Imogie, 1993; Ivowi, 1993; & Ogunu).

Forms of examination malpractice

Leakage: This means the content of the examination or part of it is disclosed prior to taking the examination. Usually it involves one or more of the following: staff member or examination authorities, printers, proof readers and messengers, personnel employed to develop the paper (setters) or to determine its suitability (moderators) and school administrators.

Impersonation: An individual who is not registered as a candidate takes the place of the one that is registered. Usually, this involves collusion between chief examiners and the examination supervisors.

External assistance: Individuals who are not examination candidates giving unauthorized assistance to candidates usually it involves invigilators (examination room supervisors) dictating answers, writing answers on the chalk board, circulating sheets of worked out answers during the course of the examination or acting as couriers of material into an examination center. Today, handsets (phones) aid significantly.

Smuggling of foreign materials: This is perhaps the most common form of malpractice. It relates to the introduction of unauthorized materials e.g. note books, key points, crib notes, charts, and answer booklets complete with answers into the examination hall. Material is usually smuggled in pants, shoes, hems and brazier or information is written in part of the body.

Copying: Reproduction of another candidates work with or without permission Collusion Unauthorized passing information between candidates, usually by exchanging notes or scripts. Sometimes information can be passed on by unauthorized person(s) who would collude with school authority or supervisors.

Intimidation: Examination officials including supervisors and markers of scripts are physically threatened usually involving people seeking support for individual candidates. Candidates have also placed weaponry in clear view of supervisor to intimidate them. In some instance charms are placed in clear view too!

Substitution of scripts: Replacing answer sheets handed out during the course of the examination with one written outside the centre before, during or after the examination. Usually involves examination officials, invigilators and sometimes teachers working outside the examination room.

Improper assignment: Deliberate placing of candidates in centre under the supervision of corrupt officials. This is perpetrated by officials or local educational officials.

Ghost centre: Fictitious examination centers are established by corrupt officials where candidates can complete the examination with the support of a helper and without supervision. Ghost centers have no formal authority to operate.

Marker malpractice: Deliberate alteration of marks designed to inflate or deflate a candidate's original mark. This can be initiated by examination official, or by candidate (making contact with the marker) or marker (marking contact with the candidate) for a fee or some form of reward. Asinya (2012) refers to payment made to aid or abet examination as logistic.

Award of certificate: Deliberate enhancement of initial award and/or certificate. In the past usually confined to examination officials but in more recent years included printers and candidates with high level of skills in technology.

The following form part of the explanation for the persistence of examination malpractices:

- The high stakes of the examination. Success in an examination can have profound, immediate, and long term impacts on a candidate's life in Nigeria for instance; examination successes and secondary school graduation represent the sole avenue for poor students to secure non- menial jobs. Many parents are keen to resort to various corrupt tactics to ensure that their children "pass" the public examination.
- Teacher and school status. In many instances, teachers and schools' reputations depend on the success of students in examinations. This is particularly true where officials or unofficial, league tables are published.
- Personality dispositions. Some students are more prone to cheating than others. That is the way they are made!
- Quota system are always applied to determine pass rate, where students perceive that success is independent on the number of available places rather than on attaining a given level of performance they many conclude that success is due to factor beyond their control. They may feel that success cannot be guaranteed by hard work and become poorly motivated. They are poorly prepared for examination; they may see little alternative to resorting to malpractice.
- Inadequate school facilities and teacher textbook shortages, inadequate qualified teachers, teacher absence from work, teacher lacks competence in subject, strikes and frequent school closures are common features of education. Parents and students may perceive conditions of learning to be inadequate that they have no option than to resort to unfair means to increase the likelihood that

the students will pass the examination.

- f) Inadequacies of the examination. Where the standard aimed at is too high or obscure, teachers and students may lose confidence in their abilities to master the materials. In such instance students many resort to smuggling materials such as textbooks and notes in to the examination room.
- g) Inadequate government; where students perceive that rewards are based on personal rather than professional criteria, where they perceive widespread corruption in national and local government, where corruption is the in thing, they are less likely to adhere to formal examination regulations that in societies where high levels of integrity does not obtain.
- h) Location of examination center: Remote centers tend to receive materials in advance thus increasing the opportunity of gaining access to examination paper: they are less likely to be closely supervised. Or scripts may be exchanged while in transit because of the poor terrain in which it takes longer time to travel to the collection center.

Low salary level. Salary level of teachers' examination, officials and examination supervisors are frequently below the poverty line. In such instance bribes from parents may prove irresistible.

Why Examination Malpractice

- Reasons for examination malpractice abound around us and people have given different kinds of reasons why malpractice has continued to be on the rise in Nigeria. Some of the reasons adduced according to Ukwuije (2012); Obasa (2000); Olasehinde (1993); Adegboye (1998); Adeyinka (1993); include:
- Emphasis on cheating as malpractice is no longer as a moral issue. What the society wants now is that an individual is successful, not how he/she came about the success. Morality in fact is decaying in the society.
- Our society and the government places more emphasis on certificate than the talent that the individual possesses. People are ready to be involved in examination to get the certificate whether they will be able to perform when on the job or not.
- The society recognizes wealth above hard work, integrity and dedication to work.
- Record still shows that most of the teachers are not well trained while majority are not qualified teachers. This adversely affects level of assimilation of learners.
- Many examination centres are crowded due to poor sitting arrangement, lack of ventilation, shortage of invigilators, etc.
- Poor planning for examination and maladministration of school heads and examiners;
- In most cases examination materials may not be enough and most pertinent logistics for examinations are not provided given the examinee opportunity for malpractice;
- Some students indulge in malpractice because of pressure from their parents for success at whatever cost.
- Most students that indulge in examination malpractice are not ready or prepared for examination.
- Students; lack of self-confidence is also a reason for cheating during examination.
- Some learners face intense pressure from their peer to engage in examination malpractice.
- Most vendors of examination papers engage in the act because of monetary gains.
- The act of examination malpractice has continued unabated because of injustice in punishment of culprit/insincerity in tackling the problem.
- Incessant staff strikes which leads to crash programme in school programme leaves student to no option than to indulge in examination malpractice to pass their examination.
- Student as a result of fear they have due to their teachers threat to fail them engage in examination malpractice.
- The desire to succeed in highly competitive or selective examinations is also a contributing factor.
- Poor reading culture of our present day youth.
- There is always availability of willing accomplices of examination malpractice due to pressure from parents and monetary gains.
- Status of academic excellence makes most school to deliberately engage in malpractice to maintain the status and get more intakes for admission.
- Some people are prone to cheating no matter the circumstance.
- Inadequate school facilities and shortage of teachers, working equipment, etc.
- Some examination centres are located in very remote areas which may not be well supervised with no proper security.

- High expectation is enough pressure on the learner to be involved in malpractice.
- Low salary level of teachers and invigilator.
- A high school fee which forces students to ensure that the fees paid is justified.
- The government has not been able to demonstrate the will to punish erring officials who aid and abet examination malpractice.
- Lack of cooperation on the part of law enforcement agencies in ensuring that culprits are actually prosecuted.

Dangers and Effects of Examination Malpractices

Some of the dangers of examination malpractices according to Ogunboyede (2010); Fasasi(2009); Sooeze (2004); Onyechere (2004); Unachukwu and Onunkwo (1999); Oluyeba(1998); Salami (1994); Ongon (1994) and Akinpelu (1992) include:

- People possess qualification that they do not deserve.
- It negates the vital objectives of conducting examination.
- It affects the psychometric properties of any test and render internal and external validation of courses and curricular very difficult.
- It affects the predicting function of examination on the learner to be able to perform in subsequent task or performance.
- It destroys the integrity of the culprits and creates a false sense of value and false impression on their abilities and capabilities.
- Most of the candidates now believe in short cut and most are unwilling to read for examination since they know that culprits are not always prosecuted.
- Most certificates from our schools are now discredited most especially in foreign countries.
- Examination malpractices have affected our standard of education.
- Most honest and innocent students are denied admission in place of dishonest and fraudulent students.
- The country, Nigeria lost about N190 billion to examination malpractice in five years due to cancellation of examination papers, rescheduling of examination days, etc.
- Examination malpractices now dominate examination planning and conduct procedures.
- Suspicion of examination malpractice delays the processing of examination scores and grades.
- Candidates are no longer satisfied with the results of examinations.
- In most cases students who engages in examination malpractice find it difficult to defend their certificate.
- Employers have to retrain graduates in order to be effective and efficient on the job.
- Many students are expelled from higher institutions on account of examination malpractices shattering their dreams and hope of a better tomorrow.
- Most employees lost their jobs because they could not perform well because they cheated throughout their time in school to obtain good grade.
- The spillover effect of expulsion and loss of jobs affects parents and relatives of culprits.
- Sometimes culprits get initiated into system dishonesty and corrupt practices (sometimes cult group) by which they become hardened.
- It makes nonsense of the educational system and it militates against the country's goal of technological advancement.
- Examination malpractice discredits certificates issued by national examination bodies and institutions of higher learning and the nation as a whole.

Most of the evils in our society at the elite level have it root in examination malpractices which permeate into all other aspect of our national development. It is a cankerworm that places mediocrity above hard work and excellence and robbed the best hands and mind of genuine placement and accountability. It is a bane to the nation's social-economical and technological development.

Agents of Examination Malpractice

Students who cheat, especially in public examinations do not do it alone. It is clear that many people are involved in examination malpractice. Accusing fingers have been pointed at teachers, principals, parents, invigilators and students as being agents of examination malpractice. According to Ijaiya (2011) examination malpractice involves students, parents, teachers, school heads, examination officials and supervisors. These groups of persons have been identified earlier as agents of examination malpractice by

Sooze (2004), Onyechere (2004), and Alutu and Aluede (2006).

However, Ijaiya (2017) in her research identified the students, peer group and fathers as the strongest agents of examination malpractice. Students succumb to temptation either from themselves or from other sources. They devise different methods of examination malpractice ranging from crude methods of grafting to such sophisticated ones as the use of electronic calculators capable of storing information and the cell phones. Other forms of examination malpractice by students according to Ugwuoke (2010) include smuggling of written examination scripts into examination halls, direct copying from textbooks, oral communication between candidates and the use of small pieces of paper which contain point usually related to particular examinations and tests.

On the part of the peer groups, they can supply information to each other on leaked question papers, source for mercenaries to assist them, and supply the amount to pay in cash or sometimes in kind. The group members can also allay each other's fears of being caught and or assist each other inside the examination hall. The parents' role is that they may wittingly or unwittingly through the usual pocket money supply the money for mercenaries or purchase of leaked papers or pay fees for special centres where leakage of papers is expected. Kpangban et al (2008: 224) summarized the roles played by different groups in aiding and abetting examination malpractice in the following words:

Parents provide the resources, school heads create the enabling environment, teachers do the solving and assist in creating enabling environment, ministry officers and examination body /officers cover the cheats and write that all is well in centres of their interest, students copy freely while supervisors collect gratifications and all forms of inducement.

Conclusion

Several examples of approaches to curb examination malpractice are suggested. Stakeholders must be seen to be at the front to ensure that the right things are employed ensuring the integrity of examination in our schools.

Examination malpractice is a social problem that has become a hard nut to crack. It is a hydra-headed problem that has defied all efforts geared towards its solution. Thus, any effort aimed at resolving the problem must deal with the root causes of the problem. Examination malpractice has been identified as a reflection of the high moral decadence in the Nigerian society. It is therefore advocated that sound moral values and development of right attitudes through effective teaching of moral education in schools be adopted.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made:

- i. Orientation on the dangers of examination malpractice should be embarked upon;
- ii. The learning environment should always be made comfortable;
- iii. Teaching of issues of morality should be made compulsory in schools.
- iv. All stakeholders should work together in harmony to discourage examination malpractice.
- v. Leaders of learning institutions should inculcate adequate discipline into both teacher and student.
- vi. Adequate teaching/learning materials should be provided by the government.
- vii. Government should provide adequate funds for effective running of institutions etc.

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