

CHECKING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The dimensions of examination malpractice in schools are discussed. The paper also discussed the use of moral instruction as a way of managing students' examination malpractices in schools. Examination malpractice tends to relegate certificates issued at different levels of education. The level of this corruption in society inadvertently originated from primary and secondary schools. It is now affecting our tertiary institutions and thus has become a societal problem. It is however noted that students are not the only culprits and so there are needs for urgent moral instruction for all educational stakeholders. Among other recommendations, it was suggested that a good foundation of self-discipline and moral character be laid for youths.

Introduction

One of the objectives of education in Nigeria is to prepare the young ones to face future challenges and develop them to meet the nation's manpower requirements. Schools need to conduct examinations as yardstick for assessment. It is the most practical way of assessment in education Maduka (1993) defined examination as a way to ascertain how much of a subject matter in a particular field of study the candidate has mastered. Homby (1995) defined an examination as *a formal test of somebody's knowledge or ability in a particular subject, especially by means of answering questions or practical exercises* (p. 58). Balogun (1999) also defined it as the process through which students are evaluated or tested to find out the quality of knowledge they have acquired within a specified period.

Examinations could be internal or external. It could be oral, written or both. Examples of internal examinations are continuous assessment tests, terminal, semester and annual or promotion examinations. Examples of external (public) examinations common in Nigerian schools are Common Entrance Examination for admission into secondary school. School certificates examination are conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO). The Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) and National Teachers' Institute (NTI) conduct admission tests into tertiary institutions while the National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB) conducts professional examinations for teachers and technicians respectively.

Examination malpractice is any wrong doing before, during or after any examination. Although one may not be able to rule out examination malpractice in the past, the current trend is alarming and calls for proper management in order to rid the school system of its consequences. Whereas in the past, students tended to hide the acts, now they advertise them with positive blatancy. The things that others thought right to draw a veil across, the modern biographer reveals with all the gusto of a showman. Ruwa(1997) traced back examination malpractice to 1914. He further reported that in the University of Maiduguri, about 25% of the students interviewed admitted to have engaged in one form of examination malpractice or another. Examination malpractice occurs in both internal and external examinations. In short, it has become an epidemic in the nation's educational system, which needs a prompt attention. New paragraph the situation of examination malpractice is so embarrassing to the nation that the federal military government in 1984, promulgated Decree 20 to deal with it. Part of the Decree reads thus:

Any person who fraudulently or with intent to cheat or secure any unfair advantage to himself or any other person or in abuse of his office, produces, sells or buys or otherwise deals with any question paper intended for the examination of persons at any examination or commits any of the offences specified in section 3(2 7) (c) of this Decree, shall be guilty of an offence and on conviction be sentenced to 21 years imprisonment... (Fagbemi, 1998, p.1 7)

However, Examination Malpractice Act 33 of 1999 revised the above decree but now stipulates punishment ranging from a fine of N50, 000.00 to N 100, 000.00 and imprisonment for a term of 3-4 years with or without option of fine. This new development is due to the inability of the appropriate authorities to enforce the old Decree 20 of 1985. Despite all these laws, examination malpractice has been on the increase and this may be due to non-implementation of the laws. Reasons for it being the low moral standard in schools, candidates' fear of failure, lack of confidence in themselves, inadequate preparation, laziness and '419' syndrome that have eaten deep into the life of the society. Pratt (1981) stated that students are likely to cheat when they are not prepared for examinations. Ruwa (1997) as well reported that university lecturers are of the opinion that inadequate teaching and learning facilities, poor conditions of service of teachers fear of failure by students and admission of unqualified candidates into universities are responsible for examination malpractices. Fayombo (2004) categorised the reasons for examination malpractices into psychological and sociological causes. The over dependence on certification has led to 'mad rush' by the populace and the resultant effect is that people either acquire certificates legitimately or otherwise. This messy situation is having a negative effect on the nation's quality of education and the kind of certificates issued to students at different levels. So many people can no longer defend their certificates.

Okwilagwe (2001) opined that the interest in non-intellectual factors would seem to have stemmed from the idea that "the human being is a complex whole" That is, man is made up of intellectual, emotional, affective and psychological traits. For them to develop and reach their full potential in life, these traits must be understood, harnessed, and be catered for by the school. Students' involvement examination malpractices has become perennial and institutionalised. It is a testimonial to the flawed process of admission into secondary schools and tertiary institutions. It has invariably, reflected in the multifaceted crises in the nation's educational system.

Moral instruction is the detailed information, which concerns the principles of right and wrong behaviours. The study of moral development has become a lively growth industry within the social sciences. Theories have maintained that

human morality springs from emotional disposition that are hardwired into our species. Man is a complete entity, and there is no emphasis on the development of the whole individual that can play Out morals. All children are born with a running start on the path to moral development. These children grow up to become adults in society. This is the more reason why children should be trained in self-discipline and filled with useful information. Education expects to provide a full Training for children, and the training involves examination and other forms of assessment from time to time to ascertain the level of knowledge / skill acquisition. This is the more reason why examinations must be well managed. Farrant (1964) states that educationists are often tempted to over-concentrate on certain aspects of the child's make-up to the detriment of the others. The focus of this paper therefore is on how moral instruction could be used for managing examination malpractice in schools.

Dimensions of Examination Malpractices

Year-in-year-out, students come up with new dimensions of examination malpractices. This is the more reason why drastic steps must be taken. The instances of examination malpractices vary. They range from impersonation, leakage of questions, tampering with results, computer fraud to fraudulent practices by invigilators, officials and security personnel charged with supervising examinations. Parents are not left out of the business. Some of these dimensions are discussed below:

- 1. Bringing of foreign materials into examination hall:** This is a situation where students bring into the examination hall notes, textbooks, and other prepared materials. The method is nicknamed as hide and seek, microchips, tattoo and magic desk. Sometimes, students bring into the hall unauthorized materials like sophisticated and scientific calculators or four-figure tables. Abba(1998) identified some methods like giraffing, contraband, bullet, super print, escort, missiles, pregnant biros and so on.
- 2. Assistance from educational stakeholders:** Examination stakeholders include parents, teachers, lecturers, supervisors, security agents, printers and staff of examination bodies. Some parents go to any length in buying question

papers for their children while some others even buy certificates for their children. Supervisors colluding with teachers, school principals or students by allowing teachers to come around to teach the students during the examination period; lecturers or teachers releasing question papers or giving underserved marks or allowing students to illegally re-take examination papers. Security agents, printers and staff of examination bodies also sell question papers. Afolabi (1998) stated that :

leakage is one problem which appear to defy all solutions. Its persistence, despite methods of blocking loopholes, is an indication of the malaise and corruption in society

3. Irregular Activities inside and outside the examination halls: Students who had the mind to cheat exhibit strange and unwholesome behaviours. They use various such methods as:

- (i) Stealing, converting, substituting or misappropriating the scripts of other candidates.
- (ii) Substituting worked scripts during or after an examination.
- (iii) Tearing part of the question paper or answer booklet during the examination to enhance cheating.
- (iv) Seeking and receiving helps from other candidates.

4. Impersonation: This a situation where a candidate sits in an examination for another candidate, thereby pretending to be the real or original candidate. Impersonation is becoming very rampant, even among school candidates. Afolabi (1998) listed various methods that have been devised by students and these include:

- (a) Posing as a bona-fide candidate: impersonators write the examination on behalf of the candidate they are impersonating. Under-graduates and graduate youth Corpers engage in this type of cheating.
- (b) Entry for similar subjects: the plot is hatched right from the entry stage by making the impersonator to enter for the same subjects and sit for the examinations in the hall with the candidate; he writes the candidate's name and number on his booklet while the candidate writes the impersonator's and they exchange scripts before submitting.

(c) Multiple entries: that is candidates entering for the same examination in several parts of the locality.

It has also been observed that several candidates struggle unnecessarily for live question papers at the beginning of a paper which are then passed to touts for assistance. Also, candidates deliberately come into the hail with the sole aim of smuggling the question paper out as soon as the paper starts and bringing the solution inside later.

5. Insult or Assault on Examination Officials: There are cases of students insulting examination officials as they carry out their businesses. The aim is to distract them from effective supervision, so that they can have a way out. Sometimes students disturb the conduct of examinations due to poor preparation.

6. Electronically assisted malpractices: In recent times, it has been discovered that students make use of electronic gadgets to cheat during examinations. Such things as unauthorized scientific calculators, organizers, compact disc (the smallest size) and **mobile** phones (GSM) to take advantage of others.

7. Collusion: This is a situation where two or more candidates agree to receive or give assistance to each other. If it is verbal, this is called ECOMOG or ECO WAS. Maduabum (1998) identified the use of terms like 'laya', Ecornog, and so on, which are also common among students. Afolabi (1998) said that

collusion involves exchange of scripts, passing notes for help from outside and inside the hail; delaying commencement of examination in one centre to obtain question paper from nearby centre which has started, collusion, arising from bribes or threat to the lives and/or property of supervisors...

8. Mass cheating: Candidates in an examination hail at times are massively involved in one or some of the irregularities aforementioned.

9. Inscription: Students have now advanced to the level of inscribing materials or information on anything like parts of their body, for example palms, thighs,

baby pampers; dresses, handkerchiefs, rulers, purses, chairs, tables, walls of examination halls and so on. Some student even code points and synthesize their notes in such a way that they will be the only one that could understand and use them for cheating.

10. Personality Connection: There are cases where some influential students make use of godfathers in politics, economic high towers, parents, and cult members to influence the outcome of examinations.

Dangers of Examination Malpractices

Some of the dangers of examination malpractices include:

- a. Not being able to defend the certificate (failure in job performance).
- b. Perpetual condemnation of the conscience.
- c. Possibility of unfulfilled dreams and vision, if the student is rusticated **from** school or terminated at the working place.
- d. Spill over effect borne by parents and other relatives of culprits.
- e. The culprit may be initiated into a system of dishonesty and corrupt practices by which they become hardened.
- f. it makes nonsense of the educational system and it militates against the country's goal of technological advancement.
- g. it discredits certificates issued by national examination bodies and institutions of higher learning and the nation as a whole.
- i. It makes students to loose the ability to study or work hard in their studies.
- j. When a candidate is caught and expelled, there will be no certificate to show for whatever year(s) they might have put into their educational career.

Ways of Managing Examinations

There are certain truths that every student needs to be reminded of from time to time, and the consequences of examination malpractices is one of them. Every effort must be made to stop it as quickly as possible before it becomes a serious epidemic in the society. The following steps will help in managing examination bodies and schools to reduce malpractice:

- All staff of examination bodies should be well paid so that they will not be enticed with money.

- Examination papers should not be within the reach of the security agents.
- Posting of Supervisors should be changed on daily or weekly basis. Invigilators to conduct examinations in a ratio of about one to twenty students.
- Sitting arrangement of students should be changed on daily or weekly basis. Students could be arranged according to their registration\examination numbers or names.

- Efforts should be made to inspect all examination centres at least once daily.
- Parents and communities should train-up their children to imbibe the traditional values of honesty, hard-work, fairness, uprightness at home and be complemented by schools.

- Government should provide conducive-learning environment in schools by providing learning facilities and enhanced remuneration for teachers.
- Enough resources must be made available for the conduct of examinations (Ene and Ursula, 1998).

- Examination bodies, school administrators and government should encourage individuals and groups towards prevention of examination malpractices like the EXPO WAR SIMULATION GAME and activities of EXAMS Society of Nigeria.
- Examination bodies and Chief Executives of educational institutions should plant secret cameras in halls to monitor examinees.

- Government should be serious with Act 33 of 1999 and enforce it. (Fagbemi, 1998)

- Proper orientation on avoiding examination malpractices and its consequences of all new students in all institutions at their resumption.

- National campaign on the values of honesty and integrity may help in combating leakage and other irregularities.

- External examination bodies should publish the rules and regulations guiding their examinations. Schools, teachers and students must be compelled to have a copy.

- Schools and examination halls must be in order, well equipped and arranged

before the commencement of the examination. There must be enough personnel for invigilation.

- Principals, teachers, lecturers, need to be tutored on consequences of examination malpractices and anyone caught to be remotely involved in examination malpractices should be summarily dismissed.

- Techniques for identifying specific causes of examination malpractices in various schools and how to eliminate them should be made known to school personnel.

- There should be a department or committee for both external and internal examinations. This department or committee should ensure that justice reigns, rules are appropriately adhered to and only those adjudged guilty are recommended for punishment. The department or committee should pay prompt attention to malpractice cases.

- Embossment of candidates photographs as practiced by WAEC could be on all external examinations, tertiary institution and National Youth Services Corps certificates as a way of curbing impersonation.

- Candidates caught cheating should have their results cancelled or barred from future examinations (for external examinations). For internal examinations, students caught cheating should be rusticated or expelled, their names should be published in newspapers and the school authority should inform their parents.

- Tertiary institutions should always examine the new students immediately they resume and the students who do not meet up with the required level of performance should not be registered

. For all examinations, students should not sit too close to each other and they should be checked very well before they start their papers.

Conclusion

The dimensions of examination malpractices and its current status have been discussed. Also, the paper looked into the dangers ahead if the epidemic is not curbed. The paper has also identified moral instruction and agents through which it could be disseminated to students as a way of managing examination

practices. If all efforts are not geared towards managing the examinations in schools the implication is that malpractices will increase and certificates issued at all levels will become useless, not recognised locally and internationally. The nation would be producing half-baked graduates. If we know that corrective steps should be taken if education will continue to serve as bedrock of development of our nation rather than becoming a prey to other nations through this cankerworm (Balogun 1995).

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