

CAUSES OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN NIGERIA EDUCATION SYSTEM DETERRENTS AND SOLUTION

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Abstract

Examination malpractice is like an outbreak of ebola disease in its devastating nature. It does not wish any one well when it knocks at your door. It is an aspect of stealing that destroys our young citizens, turn them into cheats at all level of their lives. Any nation or country built on academic corruption; cheating and moral misfits cannot survive and sustain their economic development. Therefore, calls on all meaningful Nigerians, irrespective of your status, age and position in the society to rise up and fight against the epidemic of examination malpractice that is eating up our educational development.

Introduction

In many society, the essence of establishing educational institutions is to enable the individual attain a certain height and evolve changes which will invariably affect the behaviour and active of the person, these changes include the cognitive, the affective (involving emotion and attitudes), the intellectual behavior and the psychomotor or manipulative behaviour. Consequently, these changes enable a healthy condition process of the mind, necessary for proper adaptation in complex and dynamic situations. They learned toward the cultures, customs, acceptable ethical norms and values of the society, above all, the entire individual is developed all-round ranging from attitudes, character and the emotion.

In addition, there are a good number of criteria and level from which the quality of any school system can be measured. One of such is the proper administration of examinations in Nigeria, Rivers State in particular as early in 1970's a good of problems have been known to surround school examination in which examines go out of their ways to gain include advantages resulting in examination malpractices. Examination malpractice is a phenomenon that has no doubt attained an alarming proportion in Rivers State with its attending adverse effects. Examination malpractices occur in institutions of learning right from the nursery schools to the tertiary institutions, and can be seen as a malignant disease.

Examination malpractices has indeed, become a national disaster in our educational sector, and all stakeholders in the educational sector must be concerned about it and rise up to tackle this monster living among us and living with us.

This becomes imperative because Olagunju (2014), says examination in education is an exercise designed to test or determine progress or knowledge that is attained as a result of past instructions. It is the stage at which and learners' knowledge, skill, ability and competencies are assessed and judgment made about such performance the outcome of the judgment is used for identification for students area of strength and weaknesses as well as placement of students. This topic is designed to examine the definition, concept of examination malpractice, forms of examination of malpractice, causes of examination malpractice, effect of examination malpractice, deterrent and solutions of examination malpractice and some solutions or the way forward.

Definition of Examination

Examination could be seen as a process which students, staff, applicants are evaluated or knowledge they have been able to acquire within a specific duration. Examination does not necessarily serve as a tool for providing accountability of educational programmes, it also helps

in career guidance and maintaining publicly recognized standards in the society. Examination is a means of assessing students learning outcome, it is conducted to ascertain the extent to which the examinees have mastered what they are taught. For Baken (2003) as cited in Abah (2014) examinations are used to measure present proficiency, mastery and understanding of general and specific areas of knowledge. This implies that examination is an integral part of teaching and learning, process in any educational institution, which exerts a very authoritative influence on educational system on what is taught, how it is taught and determines the extent students can go in their academic endeavors and job aspirations. In summary, examinations are not only restricted to students but also to staff for promotions, applications for appointment, etc. An examination according to the Oxford advanced learner's dictionary, new 8th edition, is a formal written, spoken or practical test, especially at school or college to see how much you know about a subject, or what you can do. In addition, the chamber's concise dictionary simply defines examination as a means to test, to inquire into, to question, to look closely at or into, to inspect, a test of capacity and knowledge. Nnamani (2005) as cited in Umany (2010) posits that examination is an instrument of testing, assessment, evaluation and accreditation.

Concept of Examination Malpractice

The concept of examination malpractice has no universally accepted definition and no such definition is found in any of the statute books. This means it is evident from various studies that the term cannot end to any single definition. However, examination malpractice in the Nigerian educational system is widely discussed by stakeholders and the literate population. According to Nwana (2000), examination malpractice is described as the massive and unprecedented abuse of rule and regulations pertaining to internal and external examinations, beginning from the setting of such examinations through the taking of the examination, their marking and grading, to the release of the results and the issuance of certificates.

WAEC (2003), in their report says, examination malpractice is an irregular behavior exhibited by candidates or anybody charged with the responsibility of conducting examination in or outside the examination hall, before during or after such examination. Many of these irregular behaviours or misconducts surround examination and it came to alarming rate in the last decades. In the past, students tended to hide the acts, but now they advertise them and are more sophisticated in the act.

According to Adesina (2005), examination malpractices include leaking out questions to students, giraffing, and smuggling of materials into examination hall. Others are deliberate extension of time by supervisors and invigilators, change of scores, buying and selling examination grades, question papers and prepared answers, and trading sex for question papers, marks, and grades. More so, Magaji (2006) identified impersonation, collusion between candidates and officials, assault and intimidation, mass chatting, teacher-student affair, bribery, spying, submission of multiple scripts, use of codes sign language, multiple entry for the same examination among others, are different forms of malpractices in Nigeria.

Furthermore, other stakeholders see it in their perspectives e.g.

- ❖ It is the absence of the adherence to the rules and regulations guiding the conduct of examination (Olagunju, 1994 in Jega, 2006).
- ❖ It is any wrong doing, misconduct, dishonesty or improper practice for personal gains, or violation of set rules of conduct during examinations (Jegede, 1996 in Jega, 2006).
- ❖ It is any irregularity which is premeditated and perpetrated by candidates or their agents with the intention of gaining undue advantage over others in an examination (Argungu, 1997 in Adamu, 2001).
- ❖ It is a punishable offence which is committed during the process of normal and recognized examination (Saye, 2003 in Jega, 2006).

❖ It is any form of misbehavior that leads to the alteration of or tempering with the prescribed ways of conducting examination in any given system (Jega, 2006).

Synthesizing these and other definitions, Joshua(2012) defines examination malpractice as any unauthorized or unapproved action, inaction, activity, behavior or practice that is associated with the preparation, conduct and processing of examination and other forms of assessment, and carried out by any person involved in preparing for, giving, taking, and processing that examination at any level. It is an academic disease that has affected and infected many members of the instructional team. It is an academic fraud (or fraud in academic/schools system) and it is a form of corruption.

Examination malpractice is indeed a monster thriving strongly in our midst that is why it should be tackled by all.

Forms of Examination Malpractice

In recent times, examination malpractice has gone from simple giraffing where students occasionally stretch their necks to catch glimpse of what they want to copy from other students' scripts to a variety of sophisticated ones. However, the involvement of teachers, parents, supervisors, invigilators and other stakeholders in the education has helped in the advancement of the act.

It is clear that examination malpractice is not limited to the time and place of examination. In fact malpractices occur either before, during or after examination. One important example of pre-examination malpractice is in the process of registering candidates for examinations. Ojerinde (2004), report that one of the commonest forms is the registration of non-school candidates for school examination by principals in spite of very clear instructions against this practice .What they do is to register candidates who are not in SS3 (final years). Often referred to as private candidates. Many of such candidates who are from Urban areas, prefer to register in less urban centres or rural area where monitoring is not likely to be strict.

The principals not only charge them more for registration, they equally falsify continues assessment results for them and their scores depend on how much money they can pay. Other forms of examination malpractice include:

One reported by (Chimakas,2003).

Electronically Assisted Malpractices

In recent times, students cheat in examination using electronic gadgets like unauthorized scientific calculators, organizer and mobile phones. At times, the examination questions are solved outside and the answers are texted to the candidates via their mobile phones.

Inscription

Some students inscribe information on materials like their dresses, chairs, handkerchiefs, purses, tables and walls of examination halls. Some even write on parts of their bodies like palms and thighs.

Leakage

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

Impersonation

An individual who is not registered as a candidate taking the place of one that is registered, usually this involves collusion between the chief examiner and the examination supervisor. It frequently involves tertiary institution students taking the test for monetary

reward or a favour for a girlfriend or boyfriend. Sometimes young employees are coerced to take the examination in place of the rightful examinee.

Intimidation

Examination official including supervisors and markers of papers use physical threat. This usually involves people seeking support for individual candidate. Candidates can also place weapons in clear view of supervisors to intimidate them.

Smuggling of Foreign Materials

This is perhaps the most common form of malpractice it relates to the introduction of unauthorized material (e.g notebooks, crib notes, charts and answer) into the examination hall materials are frequently smuggled in plants, shoes, hems and bra, or information is written on parts of the body.

Personality Connection

There are cases where some influential students make use of political godfathers, parents and cult members to influence the outcome of an examination. In this case, underserved grade are given to the connected students.

Copying

This entails the reproduction of another candidate work with or without permission.

Collusion

Unauthorized passing of information between candidates usually by exchanging notes or scripts usually involves only the candidates, but can be facilitated by inadequate spacing between desks as well as by supervision.

Causes of Examination Malpractice

Several factors have been identified as being responsible for the perpetuation of the menace of examination malpractice in Nigeria. They include:-

Institutional Factor

Most of public schools suffer lack of accommodation (classrooms) dilapidated building and ill equipped laboratories, empty libraries, etc. In addition, qualified and dedicated teachers in the respective core subject areas are in short supply. Due to this the number of invigilators assigned to invigilate is most of the time grossly inadequate. However, learning can only take place when the learner is ready, the learner can only be ready if he is put under conducive atmosphere, conducive atmosphere can only exist when all the necessary learning materials put in place most schools are making do with substandard and over-crowded classroom and libraries. The examination halls are, sometimes, jam packed with examinees it is thus, easy for candidates to copy from one another.

Psychological Factor

The individual writing an examination play an important role, if the mind is misdirected, it affects the whole being and vice versa the psychological phenomenon of an effort to maintain the grade point of an individual, high percentage pass in the school have also contributed to examination malpractice, moreover, those who engage in examination malpractice do not have any business with integrity or moral values consequently, all the mind tells them is cheat and you will pass. This proves why some students who engage in malpractice copy anything at any time.

Operational Factor

It is glaring that from past experiences poor operational strategies, adopted by the examination bodies and the law enforcement agent of government have contributed to the high

rate in examination practice in Nigeria. Due to the large geographical landmass of our country, it is impossible for the examining bodies to effectively supervise centres located in the remote areas where examination malpractice is very rampant it is unimaginable why examination bodies would be listed among those facilitating examination malpractices, it is however, not in doubt that many officials of examinations bodies join fraudulent teachers and sometimes school administrators not only to allow cheating in examinations but promote same with impunity. Some internal and external invigilators are bought over with money, material gift, and surprisingly with woman. Poor conduct of examination, inadequate spacing of students in examination halls, clack, supervision of examination, inefficient invigilation are some of the ways examination bodies contributed to malpractice.

Functional Factor

It is very obvious that most students do not have good study habits (reading culture) and good counselors to give them the necessary guidance. Also lack of implementing the decree on examination malpractice to the letter has also encouraged examination malpractice of. If this was a functional one, the rate of misconduct in examination could have been grossly reduced if not totally eliminated. The urge to be a graduate at all cost has also led many people into examination malpractice misconduct. Also, the urge to be promoted to the next level has pushed many into examination malpractice as the presentation of a certificate will gain him/her another promotion.

Socio-Economic Factor

In Nigeria today, the prevailing economic situation has destroyed the moral values once upheld. Responsible looking examination officials, teachers, lecturers, security officers fall prey to the get rich quick syndrome, by selling questions papers to candidates, sorting, bringing in missiles, etc, just to make ends meet. With irregular salaries and allowance in the country, they can hardly afford their families the basic needs of life such as food, shelter and cloths. To this end, they are compelled against their conscience to engage in this morally and socially unacceptable practice just to survive.

Parental Factor

The fact that examination malpractice is traceable to parents is not in doubt. It is no more news to hear of parents paying for mercenaries to write examination on behalf of their children. Some go to bribe teachers or buy live examination papers for their children. This of course has contributed in no small way to the menace of this terrible monster. It is good and proper for parents to desire good success for their wards, children, but wrong and condemnable if they would find no way of helping them succeed other than aiding them one way or the other in examination malpractice. Beyond these, there are other causes such as:-

- a. Mass cheating
- b. Unemployment
- c. Unstable school calendar
- d. Continual industrial strikes
- e. Too much involvement in school activities in school.
- f. High enrollment fees etc.

Effects of Examination Malpractice

Every reliable examination can be determined by the examination result and the practical output, that is, through the good performances of the students candidates in their working places or during further studies, These however, seem to be contrary in Nigeria, where one finds paper qualified candidates (people with intimidating results or grade like A, B etc in the external examinations mentioned earlier, or 1st class, second class upper, division etc from Universities)

performing poorly or questionably in their working places and some times during further studies some visible and discernible effects of examination malpractices in the nation according to Solomon(2014) malpractice that:

Examination Malpractice

Have grave consequences on the individuals and institutions of learning, communities and the country as a whole. Dismissal, termination, loss of position and self-confidence are effects and have brought much embarrassment and suffering to individuals, families and communities. The guilty ones who are not caught and punished cannot defend their certificates issued to them not to talk of such people performing their duties effectively.

Examination Malpractice

Lead to irreversible loss of credibility. A country that is ranked high in examination malpractices loses international credibility. The implication is that from such country's educational system will be treated with suspicion and doubt. Since certificates are becoming valueless in Nigeria, our educational institutions are dead as far as international cooperation in education is concerned.

Furthermore, production and indiscriminate sales of fake drugs by pharmacists and massive fraud in commercial banks are linked to examination malpractices.

Examination malpractices render the goals of education invalid, the actualization of the goals of education will continue to be a mirage if the scourge of examination malpractice is not eradicated from the system. The country will end up producing graduates who lack the knowledge, skill and competence to exploit the resources of the nation. Besides, our graduates will lack the right type of values and attitude needed for survival in a globalization economy.

Examination malpractice is a social evil that can damage society to the extent of possibly leading to a failed state. It has very serious economic, political and social consequences. In the last ten years alone, the West African examination, council (WAEC) had to cancel the results of 814,699 candidates in its May/June examinations (Aminu, 2006). Considering the cost of buying examination forms alone, this amount to a waste of about 2.5 billion naira. Apart from direct wastage of money, there is also wastage in the form of opportunity costs to the nation and society.

As long as examination malpractices are prevailing, we will end up producing doctors who will forget scissors and towel in the stomach after surgical operation. This vice will continue to produce students with distinctions in our examinations, without quality knowledge in any definite course or subject. In addition, we will continue to have teachers who cannot impart knowledge to the students, as well as produce lawyers who cannot differentiate between an accused person and the complainant.

The fight against corruption cannot succeed if examination malpractice continues to be endemic in the educational system. As leaders of tomorrow who have gone through a school system characterized by academic fraud and dishonesty, the youths of the country will sow and nurture this fraudulent behavior in any organization, they find themselves. They will be destined to a life of crime, fraud and corrupt practices, the consequences of examination malpractice are grave as elaborated above.

Deterrents and Solutions of Examination Malpractice

The deterrents are possible measures that prevent the recurrence of examination malpractice. In view of this, the following suggestions and some possible solutions are hereby offered in order to curb the incidence of examination malpractices:

- ❖ Parents should be given proper sensitization on the dangers and harm caused by examination malpractice. Teachers should as well try all possible best to guide and encourage

their students to study hard and desist from exam malpractice. Parents who are caught in examination malpractice should be arrested and allowed to face the full wrath of the law. This is applicable to teachers who indulge in this act; they should be fired from their jobs to serve as a deterrent to others.

- ❖ As part of the ways of scaring students from examination malpractice, there should be an effective enforcement of the punishment approved by the Federal Government for students who engage in examination malpractice, which is the payment of N200,000.00 as fine or serve five years jail term or both.
- ❖ For any student who brings materials relating to the examination into the examination hall, gives or receives assistance from or to another candidate on matters relating to the paper during the progress of the examination, there should be a cancellation of that particular paper or cancellation of all papers of the candidate for that particular examination as a punishment for the misconduct.
- ❖ For the candidate to receive or give assistance that is not necessarily relating to the examination without permission there should be a subtraction of some scores from the defaulter's paper because the offence constitutes to distractions in the examination hall.
- ❖ There should be a cancellation of all the papers of a candidate who copies from another candidate without the candidate's knowledge.
- ❖ On receiving assistance from invigilators on matters relating to
- ❖ The examination, the punitive measure should be a cancellation of that particular paper, then the invigilator should be referred to the investigating panel for further action.
- ❖ Any student who takes away answer scripts should be given a written warning and a cancellation of that particular paper, meanwhile, being rude to the invigilator as a first offender should attract a written warning.
- ❖ Presentation of forged certificate/document to register for or write examination should attract a penalty of blacklisting the candidate. The same punishment goes for candidates who substitutes answer script with prepared one.
- ❖ Impersonation of candidate by way of asking another person to write a paper on his/her behalf will attract the handing over of the candidate to the police, blacklisting and banning the candidate from all examination of the institute, publication of candidate's identity and malpractice in CITN journal, CITN news and National dailies.
- ❖ Bringing dangerous weapon or act in such a way to disturb the examination process should be punished by the cancellation of the paper and the candidate barred from continuing the examination. More so, bringing mobile phones or any communication aid, programmable calculator, etc., to the examination hall, leaving the examination hall without permission should attract a penalty of the student being barred from the examination hall.
- ❖ Any physical assault/beating up of invigilator or being rude to the invigilator as a second offender should attract the punishment of being barred from the examination for two to three times as the case may be.

Conclusion

Examination malpractice is like an outbreak of ebola disease in its devastating nature. It does not wish any one well when it knocks at your door. It is an aspect of stealing that destroys our young citizens, turn them into cheats at all level of their lives. Any nation or country built on academic corruption; cheating and moral misfits cannot survive and sustain their economic development. Therefore, calls on all meaningful Nigerians, irrespective of your status, age and position in the society to rise up and fight against the epidemic of examination malpractice that is eating up our educational development.

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