

Emerging Issues and Solution to Examination Malpractices in Nigeria: Implication on Education Managers

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Abstract

Examination in broad perspective is an instrument for test, assessment, evaluation and accreditation. It is also used for the purpose of selection, placement, certification and promotion. Unfortunately, examination malpractices tend to relegate certificates issued at different levels of education. It becomes a societal problem as it is now being largely perpetrated across all levels of education. Moral laxity, laziness on the part of the students, inadequate teachers, teaching and learning facilities, among others, are the causes of examination malpractices. Forms of Examination Malpractices and other related offences are the two main forms of examination malpractices. The effects of examination malpractices are that it makes parents spend unnecessary by looking for 'orijo' from teachers or workers in the establishment; or pay for someone else to sit instead of their wards. It is noted that stakeholders including parents, teachers, examination board officials, students and governments are to curb the examination malpractices. Among other recommendations, it was suggested that all schools should teach good moral principles and all stakeholders should be discouraged from cheating.

Keyword: Examination, Malpractices, Stakeholders

Introduction

It is a known fact that the objective of examination is to find out the extent to which students understand what they have been taught and therefore grade the students in order of merit or competence, no

student is to get preferential treatment or undue advantage over others. In education, an examination is a test to show the knowledge and ability of a student. A student who takes an examination is a candidate; the person who decides how well a student has performed is the examiner. An examination may be a written test, an on screen test or a practical test. According to Wikipedia, examination is an assessment intended to measure a test-taker's knowledge, skill, aptitude, physical fitness or classification in many other topics.

Furthermore, Collins English Dictionary states that an examination is a formal test that people take to show their knowledge or ability in a particular subject, or to obtain a qualification. Examinations could be internal or external. It could be oral, written or both. Examples of external (public) examinations common in Nigerian schools are Common Entrance examinations for admission into secondary schools, Secondary School Certificate Examinations conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO). The Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) and National Teacher's Institute (NTI) conduct admission examination tests into tertiary institutions while the National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB) conducts professional examinations for teachers and technicians respectively.

Success in a sectional examination does not only determine entry into higher education but also to professional posts; likewise, success or failure in an examination is not the criterion for future prospects. This is of course true as far as the Nigerian educational system is concerned. Success in examinations served to bring in financial benefit (good job due to good result), social prestige and personal satisfaction. From observation, most students facing their final examinations in schools often suffer from pre-examination strain, examination panic and phobia. These factors can eventually push some students to involve themselves in one form of examination malpractice or the other.

Examination, however, is not necessarily the best test of knowledge; many who have excelled in life have one time or another had failed in examinations. Sir Winston Churchill, a one-time British Prime Minister, described examination as an exercise that portrayed his ignorance where

he portrayed knowledge Danbaba 2004). In Nigeria's formal educational system, examination is the summit of an academic exercise in an institution. For this reason, its sanctity, transparency and conduct largely determines the credibility of both the certificate and that of the institution. It is perplexing, however, that examination as a means of evaluating student's performance has gradually changed from a fair competition and a true reflection of a student's ability to a non-competitive and unreliable exercise.

Despite the importance attached to examinations in schools and the society at large, and the stringent rules and regulations governing the conduct of examinations, complaints about malpractices are prevalent. This is an issue of great concern not only to the survival of educational institutions but also to the leaders of our country, Nigeria.

Examination Malpractice/Leakage

Examination malpractice has graduated from mere stretching of the neck to see what another person is writing during exam, or carrying pieces of paper into the exam hall, to such sophisticated methods as the use of mobile phones, walkie-talkies, amongst others.

Arifayan (2004), quoting Usman (2000), defined examination malpractice as any act or wrong-doing that contravenes the rules of acceptable practice during and after an examination. It could also be seen as examination leakage or cheating and can easily destroy the image of any person or educational institution in any part of the world. Idugboe (2002) further stressed that it is a dangerous monster that is destroying the moral foundation of our society, planting seeds of unethical and criminal values in the fertile minds of youths at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. Idugboe pressed further that it robs the nation of a peaceful and harmonious society where professionalism, ethical values and certificates are a true reflection of sound knowledge and competence.

Onyechere (2003) noted that the spate of malpractices in health care delivery by medical professionals sworn to the Hippocratic oath, the auctioning and miscarriage of justice by the judiciary, the mindless looting of public treasury by Generals and Senators, the chronic political

and electoral fraud, regular collapse of buildings designed by 'engineers' and 'architects', the mindless theft of customers' money by bank operators; all have their roots in an education system bedeviled by malpractices.

It is carried out by cheating (inside and outside the examination hall), impersonation, selling of scores (grades), certificate forgery and any involvement in illegal examination related offences. Other stakeholders have lamented that the crisis of examination malpractices in our educational system is one of the most ethical problems facing Nigeria today. It is more serious than contract fraud, advance fee fraud, election fraud, election rigging, and so on; because it is the mother of other types of fraud and corruption.

According to Collins Dictionary, malpractice is an immoral, illegal or unethical professional conduct. Examination malpractices are defined as a deliberate wrongdoing contrary to official stipulations.

Examination malpractice can also be seen as any illegal act committed by a student single independently or in collaboration with others like fellow students, parents, teachers, supervisors, invigilators, printers and anybody or group of people before, during or after examination in order to obtain undeserved marks or grades. It is a situation where students go into the examination hall with various items with the intention to cheat. Such items may include already prepared answers to questions on the examination, answers written as texts on phones, giraffe at neighbor's work, using key point's notes on thighs and clothes. The act has consistently remained a bane of Nigerian educational system. Most foreigners say the academic certificates issued to graduates in Nigeria are of no value than ordinary pieces of papers.

The intention is to attain success through fraudulent means. Therefore, such examination has no values. Examination malpractices are very bad practice that portends grave danger to the nation.

Examination malpractices are unlawful behavior or activity engaged by some students to have undue personal advantage over other students. It is an illegal and misconduct that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian-education life. Examination malpractice is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, as well as indeed in any part of the world. The

current trend is alarming and calls for proper management in order to rid the school system of the consequences of examination malpractices. Whereas in the past, students tended to hide the acts now they advertise them with positive blatancy.

Ruwa 1997 traced back the first reported examination malpractice in Nigeria to the year 1914 when there was a leakage of question paper into the senior Cambridge local examination; others traced the origin of examination malpractices to the wave of cancellation of Nigerian's candidate paper in 1948 and during the matriculation examination to the then 'Yaba' - Nigeria Technical. The most pronounced malpractice in Nigeria was that of 1964 that was tagged 'expo' subsequently in 1970, 1973, 1974, 1979, 1981, and 1991.

Ruwa 1997 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. In short, it has become an epidemic in the nation's educational system, which needs a prompt attention. Since 1991 to date, examination has taken advanced and more sophisticated dimensions. Records emerged yearly indicating high or low percentage in examination malpractice in the national core examinations (external)-the situation of examination malpractice is so embarrassing to the nation that the Federal Military Government in 1984 promulgated a Decree that 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, produce, 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(27) (c) of this Decree, shall be guilty of an offence and on conviction be sentenced to 21years imprisonment.... Fagbemi 1998, p.17)

However, Examination Malpractices Act 33 of 1999 revised the above decree but now stipulates punishment ranging from a fine of N50, 000.00 to N100, 000.00 and imprisonment for a term of 3-4years 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.

Examination leakage is a prior release of examination questions directly or indirectly in oral or written form. In other words, seeing or having access to examination questions before the day or time of the examination. A popular terminology for this act is 'expo' others are 'dubs', 'missiles', "masquerade", etc.

The infamous 'expo' 77 that rocked the nation was the very first publicly known massive examination leakage. This examination was conducted by the WAEC in May 1977 and all the questions to all the subjects were leaked to students. The case of the prestigious Nigerian Law School where there was an embarrassing examination leakage in January 2002 is still fresh in peoples' minds. It was the most horrifying and disgusting news, that with the kind of credibility and public rating of the law school for the quality of education offered; examination malpractice could still take place.

Also, in 1991, WAEC had to cancel almost all the papers for the May/June 1991 examinations about two weeks after commencement due to examination leakage. The examination was later rescheduled to August/September of the same year.

However, examination malpractices can be broadly categorized into two major parts:

- a. Examination leakage
- b. Other related offences (Danbaba, 2004)

A. Examination leakage takes the forms of:

- i. Bringing of foreign materials into examination hall
- ii. Assistance from educational stakeholders
- iii. Irregular activities inside and outside the examination halls
- iv. Electronically assisted malpractices
- v. Inscription of envisaged answers on hidden body parts.

B. Other related offences are as follows:

- i. Threatening of lecturers/teachers and their relatives by some students
- ii. Impersonation
- iii. Assault on examination officials, examination staff, invigilators and paper settlers/examiners

- iv. Collusion
- v. Mass cheating
- vi. Personality connection

Other types of examination leakage are:

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 jokingly referred to as “hide-and-peek”, “microchips”, “tattoo” or “magic desk”. Sometimes, students take unauthorized materials like, sophisticated and scientific calculators or four figure tables into examination halls. In year 2013, WAEC was able to provide calculator for each candidate to prevent any avenue to hide illegal materials. Abba (1998) identified some methods like “giraffing, contraband, bullet, supper print, escort, missiles, and 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.

Furthermore, supervisor 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-takes examination papers.

3. Irregular Activities inside and outside the examination halls. Students, who have the mind to cheat exhibit strange and unwholesome behaviors,. They use various means, such methods as: Stealing, converting, substituting or misappropriating the scripts of other candidates.
 - a. Substituting worked scripts during or after an examination.
 - b. Tearing part of the question paper or answer booklet during the examination to enhance cheating.
 - c. Seeking and receiving help from other candidates.

4. 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 discs (the smallest size) and mobile phones (GSM) to take advantage of others.

5. Inscription or otherwise call “omo” reminder ;Students have now advanced to the level of inscribing materials or information on anything like parts of their bodies, for example palms, thighs, baby pampers, dresses, handkerchiefs, rulers, purses, chairs, tables, walls of examination halls and so on. Some students even code points and synthesize their notes in such a way that they will be the only ones that could understand and use them for cheating.

B. Other Related Offences

i. Threatening of lecturers/teachers and their relatives by some students: some students especially cult members, just for them to pass at all cost, threaten lecturers. A very good example is that of the Director-General of the Nigerian Law School, Mr. Kayode Jegede (SAN) who in February 2002, informed the public that his life was under threat following the threat letters he had received from students who claimed to have murdered Bola Ige (Nigerian Tribune May 23, 2002. The said letters he was warned, that if he did not stop the investigation into the examination leakage at the law school in 2002, his head was going to be cut off and his disremembered body would be scattered abroad.

ii. Impersonality: This is 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.

a. Posing as a bona-fide candidate:

Impersonators write the examination on behalf of the candidates they are impersonating. Under-graduates and graduate youth corpsers 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 same examinations in same-hall as 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 hall with the sole aim of smuggling the question paper out as soon as the paper starts and bringing the solution inside later.

iii. Insult or Assault on Examination Officials:

There are cases of students insulting examination official 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 examination due to their poor preparation

iv. 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 ECOWAS. 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 hall, 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.

v. Mass Cheating:

Candidates in an examination hall at times are massively involved in one or some of the irregularities aforementioned.

vi. 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.

Factors Responsible for Examination Malpractices in Nigeria

1. **The low Moral Standard in Schools:** Compromise and accommodation of all sorts of moral, social, physical, mental and spiritual misbehavior by teachers, principals, school head, and so on characterize the education system. Many parents bribe their way through for the admission of their children. There is a general trend in our society towards cheating and this is encouraged by almost all members of the population.
2. **Laziness on the part of students and 419 (Advanced Free Fraud) syndromes** have eaten deep into the life of the students: Many students are not serious at their academic work. Most of them have little time for their studies. They spend their time attending parties; they form gangs that engage in nefarious activities.
3. **Unpreparedness on the part of the Student:** Many students are not serious want to excel by all means. Some want promises from parents fulfilled; others want to be on the pages of newspapers as the best candidates in particular examinations.
4. **Inadequate teacher, teaching and learning facilities:** In some subjects' areas, teachers fail to cover the syllabi for such subjects as Physics and Chemistry due to unequipped laboratory for practical exercises. These are wide and difficult subjects. There are system shifts and late resumption by students which also prevent adequate coverage of syllabuses. In a number of schools, specialist teachers are few and not easy to find. Students are therefore not adequately prepared for examination.

5. Poverty, lack of integrity, selfishness and self-centeredness on the part of some invigilators and supervisors. Students are ready to offer bribe to invigilators. Such compromised invigilators allow students to cheat in examination halls. In many cases, they render illegal assistance to solve examination questions in exchange for money.

To expatiate this manifestation, Prof. Bello Salim, former JAMB registrar said that thirty out of one hundred and sixty-six examination towns were involved in cheating and malpractices while forty-five thousand, four hundred and forty-eight candidates seeking university admission had their results cancelled in year 2002 because of examination fraud in the country. Nigeria's former President, General Olusegun Obasanjo said students in the country perceived education as a means of getting a meal ticket and getting a job. The President further argued that the perception or orientation must change so that students would appreciate the intrinsic value of education, which is the total development of the individual to be able to make meaningful contributions to the family, community and country at large.

Effects of Examination Malpractices

Effects of examination malpractices are enormous, these include; discouragement of good students from studying hard for examinations, denying innocent students the opportunity for admission, delaying the processing of students examination scores and grades, decrease of job efficiency, dissatisfaction of student on the process of examining students and parents spending unnecessarily to mention few.

Dangers of Examination Malpractices

Dangers of the examination malpractices to quality of education being given include the following:

1. Not being able to defend the certificate (failure in job performance).
2. Perpetual condemnation of the conscience
3. Possibility of unfulfilled dreams and vision, if the student is rusticated from school or terminated at the working place.
4. Spillover effect borne by parents and other relatives of culprits.

5. The culprit may be initiated into a system of dishonesty and corrupt practices by which they become hardened
6. It makes nonsense of the educational system and it initiates against the country's goal of technological advancement
7. It discredits certificates issued by national examination bodies and institutions of higher learning and the nation as a whole.
8. It makes students to lose the ability to study or work hard in their studies
9. 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.

Suggested Ways to Eradicate Examination Malpractices

There are certain truths that every student needs to be reminded of from time to time, the consequences of examination malpractices inclusive. Efforts must be made to stop examination malpractices as quickly as possible before it becomes a serious epidemic in the society. To deal with this scourge, the following steps will help in eradicating or managing examination bodies and schools to reduce malpractices.

- i. Government should provide conducive learning environments in schools by providing learning facilities and enhanced remuneration for teachers and provide basic infrastructure needed to stimulate learning.
- ii. Government should be serious with Act 33 of 1999 and enforce it. This provides penalties: imprisonment, fine or both for both persons and bodies found guilty of involvement in aiding, abetting, negligence or dereliction in the conduct of examinations need to be activated. Perhaps seeing the law in action may stem the tide.
- iii. Government should be serious about developing the education sector by allocating the 26% UNESCO advice on the sector so as to cater for the educational system.
- iv. All staff of examination bodies should be well paid so that they will not be enticed with money for example WAEC, JAMB, NECO, Proprietors, police, etc.

- v. Examination papers should not be within the reach of the junior staff of the examination bodies; this is because they can easily be lured with little money.
Posting of supervisors should be changed on daily or weekly basis. Invigilators are to conduct examinations in a ratio of about one to twenty students.
- vi. Examination bodies and Chief Executives of educational institutions should plant secret cameras in halls to monitor examinees as practiced by West African Examination Council (WAEC).
- vii. Sitting arrangement of candidates should be changed on daily or weekly basis. Students could be arranged according to their registration/examination numbers or names.
- viii. The number of invigilators and supervisors should be increased in the examination halls. That is, Exam Officers, Vice Principals should occasionally pay visit to exam halls to observe what is going on or efforts should be made to inspect all examination centres at least once daily.
- ix. 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. Parents must discourage their children from taking part in examination fraud. Parents must play their God-given role of bringing up children with good morals that will be tomorrow's leaders. They will help them in future.
- x. 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.
- xi. Proper orientation on avoiding examination malpractices and its consequences of all new students in all institutions at their resumption.
- xii. National Campaign on the values of honesty and integrity may help in combating leakage and other irregularities for example that advert on 'Change is here' song to stop Examination malpractices and bribery in the country on Nigerian Television Authority (NTA).

- xiii. External examination bodies should publish the rules and regulations guiding their examinations. Schools, teachers and students must be compelled to have a copy.
- xiv. 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.
- xv. Principals, teachers, lecturers, needs to be tutored on consequences of examination malpractices and anyone caught to be remotely involved in examination malpractices should be summarily dismissed.
- xvi. Techniques for identifying specific causes of examination malpractices in various schools and how to eliminate them should be made known to school personnel.
- xvii. 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 adjusted guilty are recommended for punishment. The department or committee should pay prompt attention to malpractice cases.
- xviii. Embossment of candidate 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.
- xix. 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.
- xx. 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 be checked very well before they start their papers.
- xxi. Guidance counselors should be employed in all schools to guide the students on study habits, career prospects and requirement for various careers.

- xxii. Incessant strikes by Academic Staff union of Universities (ASU), Non Academic staff union of Universities (NASU), Labour and any other bodies in charge of works should be minimized.
- xxiii. Continuous assessment should be practiced correctly. It will reduce examination malpractices as 40% of marks are accumulated from various assessment techniques such as projects and assignments before actual examinations.

Conclusion

The dimensions of examination malpractices, issues and problems on the current status have been discussed. Also, the paper looked into ways in which the epidemic is curbed. The paper has also provide ways to eradicate examination malpractices through dissemination of information to the Examination bodies, stakeholders which include the parents, teachers, Examination Board Officials, students, government and other collaborators. If examination malpractices are not curbed, the nation could be producing incompetent graduates and may not increase the efficiency of productivity in the country.

Way Forward

1. More than one set of question papers in each subject should be generated to create uncertainty as to which paper will be finally used in the examination.
2. Mixing students of different disciplines in the same examination hall may also help to reduce cheating.
3. Question papers may contain space for answering as WAEC is doing thus eliminating the need for separate answer book.
4. At present highest attention is paid to the performance of students in terminal examinations. This induces a tendency of the last hour preparation in great hurry, thus leaving no scope for digesting the knowledge. Learning is a continuous process and hence, evaluation of learning outcomes must be done on a continuous basis.
5. Give magisterial power that is; power to arrest offenders to examination board officials.

6. Conduct a public awareness campaign to highlight the importance of integrity of the examination system.
7. Not writing student's names rather use coded numbers.
8. Conduct frequent and unannounced visits to examination centres.
9. Adequate sitting arrangement should be provided during examinations to discourage cheating.
10. National and international examination board and organization should share information on new threats to examination security and procedures for counteracting malpractices.
11. All schools should teach good moral principles.
12. All stakeholders should be discouraged from cheating. Stakeholders include parents, teachers, examination board officials, students, government, touts and other collaborators.
13. Schools should be handled by religious organization bodies.

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