

Eradicating Examination Malpractices in Nigeria: Theatre/ Drama as a Panacea

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Abstract

Examination malpractice or academic dishonesty is a major challenge to examination and examination administration all over the world. It is an epidemic in Nigeria. This affects the standards of education, the worth of certificates issued at the end of the examinations and the integrity of Nigerian educational institutions' products. Examination malpractices' impacts and implications go deeper into the society's core and last for a very long time while its consequences are debilitating and all-encompassing. As a result of these factors, there have been many efforts and measures taken to tackle this menace but all seemed not to have been able to tame this monstrous examination malpractice bogey. This paper explores the possibility of thinking outside of the box in tackling this problem. It suggests using theatre/drama as means of combating this challenge. This will be done through the vehicle of schools' drama, television drama, drama texts and feature films.

Keywords: *Examination malpractices, drama, theatre, epidemic.*

Introduction

Examinations all over the world are evaluative and assessment tools for gauging individuals' knowledge, employment, position and promotion. Examinations, however, are as good as the integrity behind them. This is in relation to preparations, administration, and the total process involved in setting of questions, admission of questions, marking,

collation of results and results publication for such examinations. Examinations, by their nature, cut across disciplines, educational levels and institutions. Examination is the common means of evaluating learning achievements in the world. It is a process of evaluating for learning improvement and also meant to ascertain whether learners have mastered what they have been taught or not (Onuka and Durowoju, 2010). As the tool used for promotion, award or certification and as an instrument meant to be used to effectively measure students' performance, it must be reliable and valid.

What is examination malpractice?

Examination by its nature can be subverted. This is because of its complex nature, the processes involved and the number of individuals involved in making an examination valid. Any examination processes for example, involve students, parents, teachers, examining body officials, examination administrators, printers, IT workers, data entry personnel, and a host of other people. In this long chain of individuals involved in making any examination reliable and valid, there can and there is usually the existence of examination malpractice. Examination malpractice has been defined, explained and explored. (Abba, 1997; Afolabi, 1998; Ijaiya, 1998; Onuka and Obialo, 2004; Oparaku, 2005; Adeshina and Mogaji, 2006; Oredein, 2006; Conteh, 2008; Nuraini, 2008; Onuka and Durowoju, 2010 and Fasasi, 2010). The summary of the various definitions is that examination malpractice is "an illegal or unethical behavior by somebody in the process of testing an examinee's ability or knowledge by means of questions" (Ikupa 1997 in Alutu and Aluede, 2005: 190). Its definition can be further extended as:

any irregular behaviour exhibited by a candidate or anybody charged with the conduct of examination before, during or after the examination which contravenes the rules and regulations governing the conduct of such examination. Such examination malpractice will include any of the following: examination leakage, impersonation, cheating, collusion, swapping of scripts, smuggling of answer scripts in examination halls, result/certificate forgery, verbal/physical assault on

examination administrators (Oluyeba and Daramola, 1992 in Alutu and Aluede, 2005: 191.)

Kibler (1988) as cited in Kibler (1993) also defines examination malpractice as “forms of cheating and plagiarism that involve students giving or receiving unauthorized assistance in an academic exercise or receiving credit for work that is not their own”. Examination malpractices are caused by many factors but Oredein (2006) points out that the reasons for examination malpractice can be categorized into psychological and sociological causes. These factors include; “poor study habits, youth prioritizing entertainment and pleasure at the expense of studies, examination officials having little or no legal/ political backing to punish offenders irrespective of their class or status, poor facilities in school, poor attitude to learning and schooling, lack of adequate classroom and indiscipline” (Alutu and Aluede, 2005). Also in a study conducted by Adeyemi, (2010:70) it was found out that:

important response given by 884 of the respondents (96.1%) was the non-implementation of the examination malpractices decree which provides for the imprisonment of culprits to 21 years jail term. Other responses include the lack of effective supervision during public examinations (94.7%), insufficient preparation for the examinations among many students (89.5%) and the desire among many students to pass the examinations at all cost (82.4%). Others include the leakages of question papers by examination officials (63.7%) and leakages by the school authorities (55.4%).

While other researchers (Aina, 1996 and Alutu and Aluede, 2005) adduced other factors, one of the most notable is the social factor, which places value emphasis on certificates for school and job placement (Iheanacho, 1997).

Examination malpractices come in various forms and types and these forms exist in internal examinations conducted by teachers within a school or an educational institution or in public examinations conducted

by recognized examining bodies. Adeyemi (2010:67) listed examination malpractices as including “misrepresentation of identity or impersonation, cheating, theft of other students’ work, tampering with the works of others, bringing prepared answers to examination halls, unethical use of academic resources, fabrication of results and showing disregard to academic regulations”. Onuka and Durowoju (2010: 2) listed a more comprehensive list that include:

leakage of question papers in the process of setting, printing, packaging, storing and distribution, impersonation, lateness of invigilators and supervisors to exam halls, lateness of students to examination hall, cheating, undue favoritism from invigilators to students, disclosing candidates identity on answer books, and bribing/influencing examination staff, invigilators, examiners. Other forms of examination malpractices are allotment of choice examination centres termed “special” or “miracle” centres, appointment of supervisors demanding for particular centres, leaking information about question papers, identification of invigilating staff and paper, using of mobile phone during examination, smuggling answer books in or outside the examination centre, tearing of examination questions, tearing of examination answer sheets, writing of answers on the chalkboard during examination, and dictating of answers during examination. Furthermore, external assistance, copying another candidate’s work, inadequate spacing of candidates, inflation or reduction of candidates’ original score by those who mark/grade the scripts and buying of questions from corrupt officials and bank officials

This list is corroborated and extended by Afolabi (1998); Kobiowu Alao (2005); Adesina (2005), Magaji (2006) and Fasasi (2006). In this technological age, examination malpractice has gone ballistic as the terms for examination cheating and malpractices have been given technological terms such as, “desktop publishing - writing on desk, laptop publishing – writing on lap, microchips – writing on sheets of paper and cell phone

publishing – writing in the mobile phone (Onuka and Durowoju, 2010: 5). Furthermore, Kobiowu and Alao (2005) using NECO 2004 report, detailed examination malpractices forms as happening at three stages — pre-examination, examination and post-examination. They explained and detailed the prevalence and the ingenious forms of examination malpractice students use in Nigerian examinations.

History of examination malpractice in Nigeria

Examination malpractice is not a recent incident in Nigeria. Alutu and Aluede (2005: 190) traced the first examination malpractice to 1914, the year the two Nigerian protectorates – South and North were merged. They stated that:

the first publicly reported case of examination malpractice occurred in 1914 when there was a leakage of question papers in the senior Cambridge Local Examination. Ever since, there have been cases of irregularities reported on a yearly basis. But, the outstanding years were 1963, 1967, 1970, 1973, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1985, 1987, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 (West African Examination Council, 2004)

Examination malpractice however, is still a problem in Nigeria till date. By its nature, examination malpractice impacts negatively on a nation's development. It reflects declining education quality. Cheating in examination at lower levels can lead to being corrupt when beneficiary graduates start working. There is also the case of those who get certificates through cheating not being able to perform in jobs they get with the certificates because they lack requisite skills. This leads to poor performance and subsequently to poor productivity. Since some of these examination cheats will end up as teachers, one can imagine the harm such will wreck on the nation's educational system.

Stemming examination malpractice in Nigeria

The grave impacts of examination malpractices on Nigeria's development has led to many actions being taken to stem the tide of examination malpractices. These include:

provision of legislation with stiff penalties for bringing the culprits to book; the revisiting of mass promotion policy; motivation of teachers by increased incentives and regular payment of salary in order to teach well with dedication; provision of adequate class rooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, textbooks and other learning materials; abolition of illegal and mush room schools/centres; regular monitoring and inspection of schools and examinations; adequate funding for education and examinations; improve students study habits; teachers endeavour to cover syllabus; re-teaching of difficult topics; honesty and involvement of highly integrity invigilators, supervisors and WAEC officials. (Onuka and Durowoju, 2010:8).

There are other measures put in place to stop the menace of examination malpractices (Conteh, 2008; Onuka, (2008); Onuka and Amusan (2008) and Onuka and Durowoju (2010). In spite of these measures, examination malpractice is still with us in Nigeria and all over the world. The questions we then have to ask ourselves are: what again can be done to eradicate the problem of examination malpractice? Are there other remedies to this examination malpractice?

An out-of-box method to solve examination malpractice

The answer to the above is that there are still other ways and methods that can be used in countering the almost overriding and debilitating influence of examination malpractices on Nigeria's examinations environment. Some of these include the use of existing technologies, enforcement of existing legislations and the maximization of theatre/drama as an entertainment and behaviour modification tool. The present decision of examination bodies in Nigeria like JAMB, NECO and WAEC to use technology to fight examination malpractice is commendable.

Some initiatives like online registration, embossing of candidates photographs on certificates, the use of candidates biometric data as means of examination registration and identification in examination halls and the plan to make examination computer based and online are worthwhile steps geared towards reducing to a bare minimum examination malpractices incidences. These, however, are not enough to combat the epidemic that examination malpractices has become in Nigeria. The focus of examining bodies like WAEC is to work towards eradicating the menace totally. To do this, there is the need to try some out of the box methods and one that is easily available. Also, it must be one that can be used and accessed by all segments of the society and is malleable enough to be used over a long period for all society's demographics, a method that will incrementally affect the perceptions and behaviours of those involved in examination malpractices such as officials, parents, students, teachers, and examination administrators.

Theatre/Drama as solution to examination malpractice - Why?

Theatre/drama in its various dimensions and forms is a veritable tool in combating examination malpractices. The question is how and why is this so? Theatre/Drama, in its various forms, entertains, educates and informs. As a means of entertainment, theatre or drama as a stage play, written text, radio play, television drama, tele-novellas or films entertains and educates. This fact is reflected in the multimillion creative industries that Hollywood, Bollywood and Nollywood has become. One of the main objectives of theatre/drama is to entertain while educating the individual, hence the coinage of the term, 'edutainment' to express theatre's most important aim. Theatre or Drama, however, is difficult to pigeonhole with one definition. There is a consensus among renowned drama researchers like Male (1973:11), McGregor, Tate and Robinson (1977: 9), O'Toole (2004: 1), Bason (2005:1) that drama is an "art form" that "*exists wherever there are people*" (O'Toole and Haseman, 1998). Heathcote in Dodd and Hickson (1970:53) says drama is '*sociologically based, employing individuals within groups and the interaction of their active processes. It is also play based, having a defined area of intention...*' These assertions imply that drama is an activity "*not literature, or words on page*"

consciously engaged in by humans because “*drama itself happens and not accidentally*” (O’Toole (2004:1). A further back-up by McGregor, Tate and Robinson (1977:3), sees drama as ‘*an integral part of our cultural life...*’. Again, O’Toole (2004:7) expounds his view of drama as:

a group art, involving a number of people directly and indirectly in the action, with a number of different functions, taking part simultaneously as individuals, as sub-groups clearly identified by function, and as a whole group within the dramatic event.

Subsequently, in recent times, “*educationists have begun to claim a separate place for drama in timetables of our schools*”. Schools now engage the services of trained specialists, schools are equipped with drama studios, and local education authorities now give prominence to and promote the teaching of drama in primary and secondary schools. (McGregor, Tate and Robinson, 1977:3). The relationship between and importance of education and drama cannot be quantified as Way (1967:2) puts it that ‘*education is concerned with individuals; drama with individuality of individuals, with the uniqueness of each human essence. Indeed this is one of the reasons for its intangibility and its immeasurability.*’ With this development, drama ceases to be merely for entertainment. It underwent metamorphosis as a subject, as a medium of self-expression and as a system. Through theatre/drama, practitioners aim to help learners

... facilitate some new learning...helping children to understand the world around them, a world that is rapidly changing. We aim to develop the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed not only to meet challenges they will face both daily and in the future but also to enable them to become lifelong learners (Hendy and Toon, 2011:54)

The art of drama explains human conflict and tension in form of a story presented to an audience through dialogue and action. To achieve this, other elements of theatre are inculcated ranging from acting to props, light, music, costumes, make-up, and set. Drama’s impact

transcends both emotional and intellectual aspects of actors and audience alike. Also, drama is a mirror of self-examination and evaluation, especially in understanding of human motivation and behavior. It further creates opportunities of re-assessing life from different perspectives, which consequently broaden human minds (www.DramaEd.net retrieved 02/05/11). Drama, by its characteristics, mirrors education's aims and objectives. This in a way creates a symbiotic relationship between the two concepts. This intricately intertwined relationship between drama and education has been of immense interest to educators over the years. This has led to the evolution of various instructional and teaching methods in formal and informal teaching and learning process. Drama as well as education aims at evolving behavioral modifications meant to reform the society. The introduction of drama into education is therefore germane as it equips the teacher in creating a responsive learning environment to meet the diverse needs of learners.

Education is a means of transmitting knowledge about an aspect of life to a learner who in turn use it in a reasonable and beneficial way, not only for personal interest but also for communal interest. Education develops the personality of an individual within the society. The process of education makes it increasingly difficult to separate an individual from the society. The immediate environment of an individual is vital to his or her output and productivity. In essence, the learning environment created by the teacher for learners consequently becomes a yardstick for measuring the academic performance of such learners. So, the question of whether drama actually plays a significant role in education should not arise because the art of drama is intrinsic in every field of endeavor and teachers adopt it consciously or unconsciously since "... *education promotes discovery learning by using group projects, learning contracts, role plays, cases studies and simulations*" (Mezirow, 1997, in Pearce and Jackson, 2006,). Leigh and Kinder (1999:1) further buttress the above by stating that, '*... many people do not find it easy to learn from hearing information, but prefer to learn through involvement and active engagement of their senses*'. This participatory learning helps pupils to learn and relate what is learnt to their experiences.

Drama varies in meaning among scholars, and its curriculum is different depending on the instructional goals, teachers' philosophies, cultural and institutional contexts, and other elements. Types of drama activities also range from extra-curricular activities in school musicals and promotional events; in drama clubs, speech training, self-expression, emotional development and confidence building... (O'Toole & O'Mara, 2007 in Wee, 2009:12). Drama in education finds expression in the use of drama as an educational pedagogy for students at all levels of learning. It facilitates student's physical, emotional and cognitive development. As a multi sensory mode of learning it is designed to:

- increase awareness of self [mind, body, and voice] and others [collaboration and empathy]
- improve clarity and creativity in communication of verbal and nonverbal ideas
- deepen understanding of human behaviour motivation, diversity culture and history. [www.DramaEd.net, 2005]

"Drama in education also focuses on participants' process of exploration and meaning-making" (Schonmann, 2011:94). As participants engage in a drama education session or series of sessions, they create a unique set of social relationships that becomes a single unit of experience capable of analysis and study (Carroll, 1996:77). As a fusion of many related disciplines and art forms like storytelling, radio, or television drama, improvisation [process drama], speech, acting, directing and play productions drama in education is a useful tool in pedagogy. As a participant oriented activity, there is no external audience but in the process of participating in drama and during reflection and evolution, participants live through the drama. Ulas, (2008:875) expatiating on the above fact, averred that, *"several scientific investigations have demonstrated that creative, instructional and educational drama activities have positive contributions to the general education process"*. A fact that Wessels (1987:67), way back in his research discovered that *'using drama activities helped to bring written materials to life by infusing the lifeless print with feeling, imagination and thought for the learner, who became an active participant in the learning process.'* Buttrressing the above facts,

Maley and Duff (1984) in Ulas (2008:877) considered advantages of drama activities in the learning environment as including:

- (i) Making learning an enjoyable experience
- (ii) Setting realistic target for the students
- (iii) Creatively slowing down real experience and linking subject-matter experience with the student's life experience.
- (iv) Putting more responsibility on the learner, as opposed to the teacher.

Also, as a teaching method, Drama yields many fruits and as Samlioglu and Karaku (2009:1) state:

in terms of long-lasting learning, individuals' establishing relationship with the outside world, catching up with the scientific and technological advancements and a growing awareness in social and cultural developments as well as arousing curiosity for the current issues

Theatre/Drama has no parallel as a teaching method when compared to other instructional and teaching methodologies. This advantage over other methodologies made drama a better way and tool of instruction and learning. It also makes it a good tool in behaviour modification and in teaching of new behaviours. The question then is "How can this veritable tool be used in combating examination malpractices?"

Using Theatre/Drama in eradicating examination malpractices

Theatre/ Drama as earlier explained exists in varying forms like written text, stage play, radio drama, television drama, film, school drama, educational drama, psychodrama and applied drama. As a concept, which covers all aspects of human existence, theatre/drama can and is used in health, education, management, publicity, advertising and in other fields of communication. Thus the issue of examination malpractice, can be written about as a stage play or drama text like *Expo 77*, the novel written by Chukwuemeka Ike which centres on examination malpractices which is then used as recommended text for examinations like WAEC, NECO, JAMB or other examinations. The drama text can be produced in schools, adapted for radio and television broadcast. It can also be turned into featured film and be produced. Such a play would be based on various

themes that centre on examination malpractices. It will create characters that depict the various dimensions of examination malpractice. It will also explore the implications and effects of examination malpractices on the society and on the individual. The play will also suggest remedies and strategies that can be used in combating examination malpractices. While trying to publicize the evils of examination malpractices, such play or plays must not be preachy but must be entertaining enough while sending out necessary messages on examination malpractices to people. A soap opera or series on television that explains areas like the above would not only be interesting enough but will help in changing people's perceptions and beliefs about examination malpractices and its effects. The interaction between the nation's publics and theatre/drama productions based on examination malpractices may help some individuals to realize the evils and the effects of examination malpractices on themselves and on the society.

Conclusion

Examination malpractice is an evil that needs to be exorcised from examinations in Nigeria. It is a cancer that has eaten deep into any type of examination that is conducted in Nigeria. Right from the primary school level to tertiary institutions, examination malpractice has become an albatross on the neck of effective and efficient examination system. To combat this disease, there is no magical cure but an unusual disease like examination malpractice needs unusual medicine. The act of examination malpractice is a dishonest act and it is generally recognized that dishonesty of any kind is a behavioral issue, which must be unlearned to go into extinction. (Covey, Saladin and Killen, 2001)

Examination malpractice also constitutes an act of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is in actual fact; stealing from others to gain unfair advantage and taking shortcuts instead of working honestly to earn targeted rewards (Olasheinde, 2000; Olasheinde-Williams et al., 2003). Academic integrity is the antonym of academic dishonesty and this simply means academic honesty. Psychologists tend to see honesty as a moral value (Lapsley, 1996; Baldwin, Adamson, Sheehan, Self & Oppenberg, 1996, & Cummings, Dyas, & Maddux, 2001). As Olasheinde – Williams opines:

when faced with temptation to cheat, students are confronted with an ethical decision: whether to comply with the academic norm not to cheat or to give in to temptation and engage in academic dishonesty. The manner in which the decision is made, the factors that influence the decision and the outcome of the decision might differ between individuals because of differences in their moral reasoning and action.

Studies like Newstead, Franklyn-Stokes, & Armstead (1996) for instance, found from their study that students who scored highly on moral reasoning tests did not engage in cheating as much as their low-scoring counterparts. Also, academically dishonest behaviour is more common among students who judge cheating leniently than students who do not (Jensen, Arnett, Jeffrey, Feldman, & Cauffman, 2002). Academic dishonesty, therefore, constitutes a violation of academic integrity ideals and is symptomatic of weak moral standing.

Theatre/drama as explained above can therefore be used to reinforce moral suasion and also used to banish the idea of academic honesty and its effects into the minds of people. This may take some time, but over a period of time, there is a high possibility that a new set of people who have learnt about academic honesty through the media, theatre and read and watch plays that preach academic honesty will insist on being honest in an examination.

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