THE IMPACT OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study focused on the impact of examination malpractices and its implication on national development. It traced the emergence of this social vice to the late 1970s and observed that examination malpractice came on board as a result of overemphasis on paper certification. It also traced the different forms and causes of examination malpractice in Nigeria. Similarly, the study discovered that examination malpractice has far reaching negative implications on national development and equally undermine the quality of the nation’s educational system. It made useful recommendations for the eradication of the social vice. Some of which include improving the curriculum content and methodology of instruction, de-emphasizing paper certification and emphasizing practical skills and experiences among others.

The issue of national development has been a matter of serious concern to both government and individuals alike. National development has equally been tackled through different approaches. The question has been, how will Nigeria attain the desired growth and development? Against this backdrop, Education occupies a prime position and interest. Similarly, the National Policy on Education (2004), clearly stated that education in Nigeria is an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. It has also been seriously contended that no nation can rise beyond her educational system. This means that the level and quality of education in any society determines the level and quality of development of that society (Onwe, Opa and Ugadu 2013).

Education, the best legacy that any society or individual could leave behind for generations yet to come is an invaluable asset both to the individual and the society (Abdulwahab, 2007). Education has also been a veritable tool for cultural transmission and preservation. Generally, forms of education could be basically categorized into formal or informal. Whereas, the former takes place in a formal or official setting, compartmentalized and certificated with programmed learners and teachers, the latter is not so formally programmed. It however, has a longer life-span, starting from birth and ending in the grave, and everyone around the learner constitutes his teacher but no certificate is required.

According to Fafunwa (1991), the informal education has seven cardinal objectives namely:

1. To develop the child’s latent physical skills;
2. To develop character;
3. To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority;
4. To develop intellectual skill;

5. To acquire specific vocational training and develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour;
6. To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affair;
7. To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

Similarly, the Nigerian formal education was anchored on self realization, better human relationship, self and national economic efficiency, citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, social and political progress, science and technological progress as well as national reconstruction. Thus in line with these objectives, the nation’s educational institutions from pre-primary to higher institutions have designed their programmes in such a way that the recipients should be capable of contributing their quota to national development. However, all these well intended objectives and national development have been illusive resulting from the negative attitudes of students, teachers, the curriculum, government, parents and those entrusted with the task of measuring and evaluating the performances/attributes of students for possible certification. This has been a culmination of various forms of examination malpractices with the attendant vices which tend to negate a virile sustainable national development.

Concept of Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice has remained one of the singular contemporary social vice in society that has continued to search for adequate definition for effective management and control. Hence, unless it is given proper definition and control measures, its eradication will continue to elude society, especially, the education sector. Accordingly, Olanipekun (2003) sees examination malpractice as the failure to carryout properly or honestly conditions specified by the examination body (school authority for instance) for the evaluation of students in a programme of study. This implies that any student who before, during, after or in anticipation of any examination or test goes against the rules and regulations guiding the conduct of the examination is involved in examination malpractices. But this definition lacks specificity as it has not indicated any specific acts or incidence, persons, time or place. Onwe (2011) traced the history of examination malpractices to the late 1970s and observed that since its upsurge and preponderance in the nation’s educational system resulting from a general decadence in moral, ethical, cultural and socio-political spheres of the national development; like a cankerworm and monster it has seemed to defile all measures for eradication. He further sees examination malpractice as ‘any act or wrong doing or neglect that contravenes the rules of acceptable practice before, during and after an examination by anybody in any way’. He argued vehemently that prior to the 6-3-3-4 system of education, it was difficult for a student to obtain five credits at one sitting in the WAEC examinations, and anyone who did was sure to have merited the results. Such a student was sure to do well in both higher educational pursuits or in the civil or public service. But now hardly can you see any student with less than eight credits including English and Mathematics at one sitting in both ‘SSCE’ and ‘NECO’. The question now is, how many of these latter (students) wrote the examinations on their own?

However, to fill the gap in the inadequacy of definition of the concept, Badmus and Odor (1996) defined examination malpractice as wrongdoing in terms of construction, custodianship,
administration, marking and release of results, with the intention of conferring advantage on some candidates over others. Again, the World Bank (2003) in addressing the issue to public examination system sees it as a practice which involves deliberate act of wrongdoing, contrary to the official examination rules designed to place the candidate at an unfair advantage.

**Forms of Examination Malpractices**

Examination malpractices can take any of the following forms. However, the form of malpractice is dependent on the persons and artistry of the culprits involved. According to Abdulwahab (2007), Onwe (2011) and Osim and Ndifon (2012), various forms of examination malpractices include micro-chips, Macro-chips, download, giraffe, mercenaries, assault and intimidation of invigilators, leakages etc. Micro-chips and Macro-chips involve bringing in extraneous materials into the examination hall. The difference between micro-chips and macro-chips lies in the size of the materials imported into the examination hall. Download involves the use of GSM mobile phones to store data and browse internet to solve problems in the examination hall. Giraffe has been an age-long style whereby candidates stretch their necks in order to see and copy from other candidates in the examination hall. Mercenary involves the recruitment of an external body to write the examination on the candidate’s behalf. The mercenary is seen as an intellectual prowess and engages in the illegal business to earn a living or sometimes as a means of sustaining one’s educational pursuits. It is also asserted that the ‘mercenary’ syndrome is usually male-dominated, often with pecuniary benefits attached or sometimes to compensate an amorous relationship. There have also been a few other cases where the mercenary is believed to do it in compassion for someone not for any monetary incentive or gratification but as a demonstration of love and concern.

**Causes of Examination Malpractices**

Examination malpractices may be caused by a number of factors. Some of which include:

- **Poor Curriculum and Policy Implementation.** Most of the nation’s educational policies and programmes seem to be perfectly suited to the needs of the time, however, the problem has been that of improper implementation. For instance, the ‘6-3-3-4’ and most recently, the ‘9 3-4’ systems of education which were both modeled from the informal education system to emphasize creativity, functionality and development of specific skills, health, attitude towards honest labour among others have serious lags in implementation. In fact, the highest degree of examination malpractice is noticeable in the system as majority of students with fantastic SSCE and NECO results cannot defend such results.

- **Poor Teaching Methods and Absence of Instructional Materials.** The poor teaching methods and non-utilization of instruction materials are serious factors contributing to the persistence of examination malpractices. And to this end, Senwua made a case for the re-introduction of teacher’s grade II certificate and Teacher’s education programme at the post primary level as a starting point for teacher education in Nigeria.
Equally Worthy of Note is the Attitude of Teachers and School Principals. These important stakeholders in education feel that the better the result of their students are in external examinations such as SSCE and NECO, the more students and parents will strive to enroll in their schools. As a result, they organize systematic examination malpractice. This they do by bringing experts either students in higher institutions or subject masters to solve the examination questions and systematically distribute same to students in the examination hall. The school authority in bid to perfect this unwholesome act station syndicates or spies who give them information about the monitoring agents/officials from either the ministry of education or WAEC/NECO.

Other causes Include: The existence of dubious and fraudulent admission process, right from the primary level to tertiary level, the frequent and indiscriminate closure of institutions of learning as a result of protracted strike actions, the erosion of the autonomy of academic departments which over-robs the department of the discretion of taking students or persons they consider suitable for their peculiar courses; over admission of students and high cost of undergoing academic studies (Osim and Ndifon 2012:330 – 331).

Implications of Examination Malpractices on National Development

The implications of examination malpractices on National development is a cause for concern to all well meaning Nigerians, especially now that the nation is soliciting for a change in attitude, cultural and value re-orientation and national development. Consequently, this social vice has thrown quite a lot of challenges to the nation’s developmental aspirations. Senwua (2012), observed that education is a fundamental human right associated with national development and well-being, but this lofty ideal is marred by the persistence of examination malpractices in the nation’s educational system. She further noted that this vice causes poor production of the products of schools (primary, secondary and tertiary), who cannot defend their certificates at work places or higher institutions of learning.

Another implication is the emergence/persistence of cultism. Cultism which is a twin monster of examination malpractice is further perpetuated by examination malpractice. Abdulwahab (2007), observed that growth and maturation of examination malpractice tendencies in the nation’s tertiary institutions have been considered as one of the direct fallouts of cultism. Taiwo (2004) equally noted that examination malpractice has turned the education sector into a sad reflection of corruption and insecurity in the society. He argued that most members of secret cults are from rich homes and are never serious with their studies; thus prompting their venturing into examination malpractice. And whenever they fail their courses, they react violently through their cult members against the teachers.
in charge of those courses they failed. This breeds insecurity and terror and no one is in doubt that terrorism and insecurity are the banes of national development.

Low quality of education is another serious implication. Because of the terror and insecurity unleashed by cult members who indulge in examination malpractices, teachers (lecturers) are forced to graduate half-baked graduates who lack the requisite skills and experiences. This has devastating effects on the path to sustainable national development.

Other serious implication of examination malpractice is that it undermines the integrity of the examination bodies as well as the quality of certificates they issue. This ugly scenario withers the image of the country both at home and abroad as holders of unmerited certificates and degrees lack the wherewithal to hold their own in the labour market.

Furthermore, examination malpractice has correlation with prostitution and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Similarly, female students are known to exchange sex for grade in institutions of learning. This unfortunate act is usually done without cause to any form of protection like the use of condoms. This may predispose the victims to the spread of HIV/AIDS and encourage prostitution among female students.

Finally, examination malpractice especially certificate racketeering leads to loss of human resources and debasement of professional status. This happens when dubious individuals fake results and professional certificates/degrees. In this case a fake medical practitioner may administer wrong medication on patients. This may lead to death of the victims thereby calumniating to loss of the nation’s scarce human resources. Similarly, such an act constitutes a serious debasement of the profession concerned. Instances abound in Ebonyi State where earlier this year, a medical doctor was discovered to have faked his MB degree in medicine at the Federal Medical Centre, Ebonyi State. Unfortunately, this fake medical practitioner escaped and disappeared without facing the full force of the law. This was believed to be as a result of his ‘connectedness’ and ‘Godfatherism’. In a similar development, 15 lecturers of Ebonyi State College of Education were demoted for parading fake certificate/degrees. All these constitute serious devastating blow on national development.

Human resources have remained the most essential of all resources needed for both individual and societal developments. Again, the educational system remains the most veritable instrument through which human resources could be created and developed. It therefore becomes unequivocal to state that the individual and society’s success in laying the good foundation for the nation’s tomorrow lies in the nation’s ability to rise above the challenges posed by this ugly monster, examination malpractice.

Conclusion

The negative impact of examination malpractice especially its negation of the path to sustainable national development and the undermining of the nation’s educational objectives cannot be left unresolved. It therefore, behooves on all well meaning citizens to aggressively put a common front to
tackle this social vice so as to restore the hope of Nigerians in the educational system as a vehicle for engendering sustainable national development.

Recommendations

The researchers hereby make the following recommendations as a panacea for eradicating examination malpractices in the nation’s educational system.

- Strengthening the implementation machineries of the current educational system (9-3-4).
- Improvement in the curriculum content and methodology of the new educational system.
- Re-introduction of the teacher’s grade ii certificate as a basis for teacher education.
- Meting of adequate punishment to offenders/culprits.
- Proper definition of what constitutes examination malpractice.
- Public enlightenment/awareness campaigns on the dangers of examination malpractice.
- Mass re-orientation of the Nigerian public on cultural values and ethics.
- Improvement in admission policy at different levels of educational institution.
- De-emphasizing paper certification and emphasizing practical skills/experience.
- Reduction in the rate of strike actions.
- Improvement in the conditions of service of teachers/lecturers.

References


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