

## EVALUATION OF STUDENTS AND EXAMINATION ETHICS

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### **Abstract**

Evaluation occupy a strategic position in our lives and society today. In a situation where the moral guidelines, rules and regulations for conducting examinations are truncated by either the teacher or the learner, the validity and reliability of the examination and certificate are at risk. The essence of this paper is to look deeply into evaluation of students and ethical values of examination. Talking about ethical issues, we are all aware the extent to which examination malpractice has eaten deep in our school system generally and secondary schools in particular. This paper articulated ethical issues in conducting examinations and stated categorically that it is the wrong handling of examinations that has brought in examination malpractice or irregularities. At the end some measures were suggested to take care of some ethical issues in examinations and this will go a long way to normalize examination system in our society.

Student evaluations should be ethical, fair, useful, feasible and accurate(The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation,2003). The importance of the evaluation of students is evidenced in the publication of the Student Evaluation Standards(JCSEE,2003). The standards are offered as "principles that should guide and govern student evaluation". Education serves as the spring board for social and economic change and it occupies a center stage in the social political and economic development. According to Denga & Denga (1998), education is a fulcrum on which all other

development facets are hinged. Proper Education has to do with the balanced development of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of an individual and not the development of one aspect of the individual at the expense of the others. It is very important to always find out the extent the teachers have acquired the theoretical and practical skills needed for both personal and national development. The process through which the above can be achieved is known as examination. Examination according to Akindele and Adeyemi (2002) is the process, which comes after a period of learning, and it is an organized assessment of an individual's performance.

Education has to do with equipping the young ones with those capacities and abilities that make it possible for him to be able to acquire the behaviors that will make him a useful member of the society in which he finds himself (Nkemakolam, 2002) Education has devised a means of determining by means of scientific techniques the level which each pupil going through the education process has acquired the derived behavior and thus be in a position to place each individual where he is most suited and as well monitor general development progress of pupils and for improving instruction.For learning to be said to have taken place there has to be observable change from little ability to more ability in doing what one is not able to do previously – hence the amount of change has to be observed or measured and qualities assigned in some systematic way.

It is important that the distinguishing features of these concepts are well understood. Measurement has to do with the systematic process of collecting quantitative information about specific attributes or characteristics of object, person or event. It is only when value is attached to these qualities or judgment made as to the worth or the number can evaluation be said to have taken place. In the same manner a test is a generic nomenclature which includes all the devices or instrument which consists of a carefully selected representative sample of activities a given tested is expected to respond to at specified stage of learning or development. It is seen as an instrument for measuring education and psychological authorities or constructs which are desirable in terms of their associated characteristic behaviors.

For example a construct of verbal aptitude could be characterized by behaviors such as:

1. Verbal fluency
2. Ability to spell correctly
3. Appropriate use of words
4. Synonyms
5. Finding opposites of words, etc.

On the other hand, examination is employed in particular in the measuring of achievement in a specific course of instruction or subject area at the end of a broad unit of instruction or unit of school period. In examination the following are present:

1. Uniform task
2. Non – generous time limits
3. Performance usually in the presence of an invigilator
4. Situation is somewhat stressful (Nkemakolam, 2000).

The term assessment include all the activities employed in determining the presence of some quantity and quality of an attribute or

property of interest in a person object or event. These attributes refer to knowledge, attitudes, aptitudes, interests and skills possessed by a pupil through the use of tests, examination, interviews etc.

### **Purposes of Evaluation of Pupils**

This could be seen as the important positive functions served by education of pupils in the classroom in particular and in education in general. The major purposes served by evaluating pupils in the classroom are as follows:

- a) Organization of instruction
- b) Clarification and placement
- c) Diagnoses of strengths and weaknesses
- d) Provision of feedback during instruction
- e) Self education of teacher effectiveness
- f) Monitoring pupil progress.

Survival of the fittest seemed ideal. It is only recently was it realized that such meritocratic approach to evaluation have many disadvantages irregularities and problems. Some of such problems could be highlighted under the following headings.

- i. Subjectivity of assessment
- ii. Exhibition of defensive behavior
- iii. Influence on self concept
- iv. Examination malpractices
- v. Need for confidentiality
- vi. Limited assessment of objectives relevant to real life.(Nkemakolam, 2000).

### **Examination Ethics**

Examination is routed in the realm of philosophy having to do with conducting ones behavior in relation to what is wrong or right within the expectations of a given society or group. In this regard certain social groups or progressions go ahead to specify guidelines or principles that operate as control intension for concluding business in such a way that would be judged as right. Alutu & Aluede (2005) asserts that ethics can simply be defined as laid down

guidelines, principles, codes of conduct, rules and regulations guiding behavior of a group or organization.

Examination ethics could therefore be seen as a set of rules packaged by the teaching profession to guide the behavior of its members, students and other stakeholders to ensure fairness and equity in the conduct of examinations. Recall that examination questions are usually presented to a set of persons the ultimate purpose being to determine status of those being examined in relation to the criterion of interest. It therefore becomes very important that such a process be as transparent as possible. Examination ethics provide internal control mechanism to ensure that the behavior of all those concerned conform to such expectation. This will also ensure the external validity of the result of such examinations. In other words when the internal control systems of the process is seen to be valid then the level of acceptability of the outcome can easily be prided as high.

The reason examination ethics is being rigorously revisited in teacher preparation is that the degree to which results of examination is being accepted by the public it is expected to serve has become very low and this indicates that compliance to ethical issues in the conduct of examination must be low.

### **Principles Governing Conduct of Examination**

There are three major aspects guiding the conduct of examination in relation to school based examination. These are do's and don'ts preceding during and after the actual sitting for examination. Let us quickly summarize the aspect that deal with examination malpractices. Exam malpractices are those unethical behaviours by an examiner or examinee, group or both that result in unfair advantage to any given individual or group in relation to the objective of the examination or otherwise

(Uche, 2003). The three major aspects guiding the conduct of examination include:

#### **1. Issues of malpractice preceding actual examination include.**

- a. Leakage of which question papers or items in the question paper is involved.
- b. Teachers deliberately teaching specific items of a question paper during revision.

#### **2. Issues of malpractice during examination proper**

- a. Impersonation (T/S)
- b. Copying from the script of other candidates (S)
- c. Copying from text book or other materials (S)
- d. Smuggling fully answered script into examination hall (T/S)
- e. Avoiding students to copy from one another (T/S)
- f. Swapping of scripts or question paper (T/S)
- g. Submission of more than one answer scripts (T/S)
- h. Non-submission of answer scripts (T/S)
- i. Verbal and/or physical assault/intimidation of invigilator (S)
- j. Changing to unauthorized seat during examination (T/S)
- k. Refusing to sign /or hand over exam malpractice exhibit (S)

#### **3. Issues related to malpractice after examination proper**

- a. Substitution of answer scripts fully worked after exam (T/S)
- b. Reworking an already submitted answer script. (T/S)
- c. Retrieval of exam answer script from a candidate submitted during examination (T/S)
- d. Deliberately giving student more marks than he merits while marking the scripts (T)
- e. Alteration of marks upwards or downwards after scores have been entered (T)

- f. Assigning scores to continuous assessment not done by student (T/S) (Nkemakolam, 2002).

T or S or T/S means that Teachers or Students or both could be responsible for a given observed misconduct or unethical practice.

It is important that both teachers and students are drilled in these issues for avoidance of consequences of break of code.

### **Factors in the Environment of Examination Ethics**

One issue that quickly comes to mind in the examination malpractice question is "what really is responsible for this state of affair that has gradually metamorphosed from a hydra-headed problem into a dragonic malady"? The problem now is not just the question of a weak student playing a few pranks to cheat in an examination to obtain a few more marks that could result in a pass rather it graduated into a well organized syndicate both in school based examination and the wider public examination with a wide variety of stakeholders. This has resulted in the interest shifting from a few marks to augment by individual students into a syndicate whose main purpose is to acquire wealth through this method hence their in- road into tertiary institution and public examination bodies like WAEC, JAMB and NECO. At this level of criminality the overriding factor is definitely money, large quantity of money arising from the monetization of our individual, professional and national psyche. Some teachers instead of contriving to maintain "a Sidon-look" attitude decided to take on the monetization of profession ethics and the general value system culminating in moral decadence within the school system expected to be sacrosanct. What do we expect from home – grown education in which cheating in all its ramification is

condoned. Result is poor quality performance of graduants and inferiority complex when called upon to defend certificate at national and international force.

### **Conclusion**

We measure or assess learning and we evaluate result in terms of some set of criteria. These three terms above are certainly connected, but it is useful to think of them as separate but connected ideas and processes. Examinations occupy a very strategic position in our lives, both educational and industrial today. Teachers and counselors rely on examination for a comprehensive evaluation of their students and clients. To decide whether or not a student merits being promoted to another class, a series of achievement tests that will eventually culminate in a well – founded decision to be taken. Tests are also used in appraising certain individuals in our national life even after employment. Since examinations occupy such a central position in our lives, every effort must be made to properly harness every resource needed in order to achieve the objectives of examinations in the school system.

### **Recommendations**

1. Effort should be made by stakeholders in teacher's education to shield teachers and schools from evil effects of the monetization of examination, hence professional ethics and national psyche by providing a special enabling environment attractive to those would never have dreamed to be teachers. Recall that Nigeria only became aware of its decadence when it began creeping in the education system as the basic of a meritocratic society. If this is not checked we can as well sing the "nun demetic" of uprightness in Nigeria.
2. Emphasis should shift from paper qualification to what a person can produce; the upgrading technical vocational

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- education (TVE) and examination answers based on what the person can produce practically in the fill glare of everyone and not on what the candidate can write. The quest to acquire certificate anyhow and anywhere will no longer be in vogue.
3. Reduce the ease with which a person in position of trust acquire more wealth than he need.
  4. Teachers to spend more time in the classroom with students and vice versa. Teachers to keep actual records of attendance to class and any student not completing 75% will not sit for examination. This will make students to actually study, learn and practice the knowledge, skills and values embodied in education.
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