

EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: CAUSES, EFFECTS AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

Examination malpractice has become a big cankerworm eating deep into the fabric of education sector of our beloved nation. Virtually all levels of education, right from the primary schools up to the university, are involved in this social vice. It is bedeviling and rocking our educational foundation. The future of the nation is bleak unless this social evil is checked by stakeholders in the education industry. It is seen as an obstacle to the growth and development of the country. It is in view of this danger that this paper examines, through experience and information available, the concept of examination malpractice, its causes and effects. Solutions were, however, made on how to curb or totally eradicate this unscrupulous act in our society.

Introduction

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Current English, "malpractice is wrong doing, neglect of duty. An instance of this is the dishonest, misuse of a position of trust for personal gain". Malpractice can also be described as an unlawful use of personal advantages by a person in a position of trust.

Bankole (2005), however, defined examination malpractice as "any surreptitious dishonest and deceitful move, arrangements and plans by a candidate, or any examination body official(s) to contravene existing examination rules/regulations to receive or give undue favour, so as to obtain undue reward for oneself or others in the educational system".

It is an immoral, illegal and unethical conduct. Examination malpractice occurs during a test or an examination in which die-hard candidate is hell bent to pass his/her papers using all influences at his disposal in order to realise his motive. All nefarious acts / activities which contravene the popular rules and regulations of examination are examination malpractices.

Schools are not established for fun. Educational institutions are set up to attain some lofty goals and objectives. Some of these aims and objectives as spelt out in the National Policy on Education are:

- i.) The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity
- ii.) The inculcation of the right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian Society
- iii.) The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.
- iv.) The acquisition of the appropriate skills, abilities and competence, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute,' to the development of the society (FRN, 2004: 6-7).

To achieve the above listed laudable objectives, our institutions, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions should be sanitized and free of all social vices such as examination malpractice, cultism, drug abuse among others. All well meaning Nigerians, associations such as ANCOPPS, COEASU NUT, ASUUP, ASUU etc and the government should join hands-with educational NGOs like EEP in the crusade of war against examination malpractice.

Parents/Guardians, students and examination bodies like WAEC, NECO, JAMB, NABTEB etc. should not be left out. Provided the war is won, our nation will know no peace and other social vices like 419, fraud, embezzlement, money laundry etc. will continue to thrive.

First Incidence of Examination Malpractice in Nigeria

Ladipo (2000), quoting Adeyegbe (1994), said that the first recorded incidence of examination malpractice in a public examination in Nigeria was in 1914. It involved the leakage of the Cambridge School Certificate Examination question papers.

Causes of Examination Malpractice

The causes are peculiar to each institution. However, the following are some of the factors that can eventually lead to examination malpractice:

- 1.) Faulty of educational upbringing of children during their school days.
- 2.) Failure to punish culprits
- 3.) Poor classroom management
- 4.) Poor attitude to teaching and learning by teachers and students
- 5.) Inability of teachers to cover the required course contents / syllabus / scheme of work
- 6.) Failure on the part of teachers to give adequate assignments and revision works.
- 7.) Inadequate teaching materials
- 8.) Insufficient examination materials
- 9.) Undue relationship between teachers / examination officials and students
- 10.) Too much emphasis on certificates
- 11.) Inability to diversify methods of measurement and evaluation of students
- 12.) Ill / non-preparedness on the part of students
- 13.) The continuous use of federal character, the quota system and catchment areas for admission.
- 14.) Strikes
- 15.) Charging of high tuition and examination fees
- 16.) Opening of special examination centers by various examination bodies encourages examination malpractices.
- 17.) Allowing external candidates in schools in remote parts of the country

Forms of Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice takes different forms at various levels of education. Some of these are highlighted below: a.) Leakages (Orijo): This involves seeing the examination questions before the scheduled time

b.) Impersonation: It involves the use of a person resource to write examination for another who is the legitimate candidate,

c.) Giraffing: This is an act of stretching one's neck in order to copy the work of other in an examination.

d.) Technological Means: This is putting answers in mobile phone, calculator and digital wrist-watch,

e.) Taking of answer material already prepared into the examination venue to aid a

f.) Writing in ones answer booklet what another candidate writes. Copying of another candidates

work. **Categories of People Involved in Examination**

Malpractice

The first set of people are students who want to pass at all cost. Unfaithful parents or guardians also assist their children in this respect believing the children cannot do without cheating nowadays. It has become the order of the day.

School heads and proprietors or proprietresses connive with examination official(s) to either buy 'hot/live' questions or give assistance to students during examination. Supervisors and invigilators are not left out in this nefarious act. They do all sorts of things to perpetrate examination malpractice to make fast money during examination periods.

The practice of automatic promotion for students in primary and secondary schools by government-especially during civilian regime worsens the scenario. Accreditation panels, made up of lecturers who approve courses that are not worthy of approval in various higher institutions contribute immensely to the ungodly act.

Touts are, at times, organised to cause disturbance at examination centres so that their mischievous motive can be achieved. Officials in the Ministry of Education/examination bodies are also guilty of this offence. Likewise, clerks / typists are equally involved. Teachers also give undue assistance to their students during examination periods. Examiners do expose what should be kept secret to their friends and relatives.

Management of some Colleges of Education, Polytechnics etc. who take more than what they can

chew and wanting to turn out a substantial number of students also contribute to the menace. Photocopying centres who engages in making copies of genuine and fake questions are part of the wagon.

Effects of Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice has a very bad negative effects on the students, schools, parents guardians and all the perpetrators of the evil and the society at large. These are the ways the effects manifest:

- The students do not realise their true potentials and talents.
- They (students) cultivate the habit of laziness and unserious attitude towards studies.
- Discourage reading habit and independent mind.
- The right recognition is not given to institution where examination malpractice is widely spread.
- Integrity of examination bodies is questionable.
- Genuity of certificates is doubted both locally and internationally.
- It is the root issue that surrounds the post-UME screening exercise in our tertiary institutions.
- Examination malpractice leads to some other evils such as 419 and other financial crime in the society.
- Inability of graduates to perform effectively in their jobs.
- It tarnishes the image of the education industry and its workers

Thomas (2005) while writing on "students and examination malpractices" observed that the West African Examination Council, WAEC, National Examination Commission, NECO, National Board of Technical Education, NBTE cancelled 800,000 results of candidates, who sat for various examinations, following examination malpractices which are perpetrated in various forms in the year 2004.

According to Olubusuyi (2004) who remarked that each year, for example, the five major public examination bodies in the country (NECO, WAEC, JAMB, NABTEB and NTI) -cancel an average of 740,000 results on account of massive malpractice. Again, the examination bodies blacklist ; an average of 450 principals, teachers, supervisors, invigilators and examiners for their involvement ; in aiding and abetting examination malpractice each year. Each year 360 schools are de-recognised ' by the examination bodies as exam centres. About 9,000 students are handed over to the police at various centres every year. Resulting from cancelled results, a whopping sum of N17 billion is wasted every year in purchasing registration forms to retake those examination.

Solutions

Many steps can be taken to avert this ugly situation our education life is being plunged into. Some of these steps are as follows:

- Implementation of examination malpractice Law No. 33 of 1999 which stipulates imprisonment for culprits.
- De-recognition of examination centres where the malpractice is perpetrated
- Enlightening of the public about the issue and its consequence
- Sponsoring bill to make examination malpractice a grievous offence in Nigeria
- Reviewing of examination malpractice Law No 33 of 1999
- De-emphasising of certificates
- A total overhauling of the structures upon which examinations are held
- Diversification of methods of measurement and evaluation of students
- Minimisation of academic work and maximization of professional training
- Creating a clear demarcation between professional courses and academic courses at our institutions
- Emphasis should be on developing practical understanding of students and not committing theories into memory.
- Employing more lecturers and teaching assistances in our various institutions.
- Changing the perception of the youths on education and get them to appreciate that it (education) is much more than just acquiring certificates and securing jobs
- High profile persons should be tried, prosecuted and convicted in line with the 1999 examination malpractice Act.

- National Orientation Agency (NOA) should work in collaboration with other education NGOs like Examination Ethics Project (EEP) to eradicate examination malpractice
- Establishing exam ethics clubs in primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions across the country.
- Organising capacity building seminars, workshops and retreats for the promotion of examination ethics
- Encouraging teachers to read widely and develop good teaching methodologies to impart knowledge to their students.
- Teachers should complete the course contents and carry out revision ahead of examination time.
- Giving students effective and functional guidance and counselling in order to discourage students from cheating during examination.
- Moral instruction should be offered at all levels of education.

Conclusion

Ike Onyechere, the founder and the executive chairman of the Examination Ethics Project (EEP), a non-governmental organisation leading the war against examination malpractices in the country once remarked "until we are able to stop examination malpractices, the standard of education

"will continue to fall. Our problem in the country is not restricted to financial crimes or bank fraud. If we want to tackle these problems from the roots, we need to go to examination malpractices".

Proper implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the aforementioned solutions will go a long way to solving the problems of examination malpractice in our country. All stakeholders should come together and have the courage to decide how to put a stop to examination malpractices so as to restore high moral standard in the education sector.

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