
EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN NIGERIA, ITS ORIGIN, CONSEQUENCES AND THE WAYOUT

By

LUKE A. S. HOUNVENOU

*School of Languages,
Federal College of Education,
Kontagora,
Niger State.*

and

ELIZABETH CHINENYE HOUNVENOU

*Primary Educations Studies Department,
Federal College of Education,
Kontagora,
Niger State.*

Abstract

Many schools of thought over the years and especially in the recent past, are replicated with issues concerning examination malpractice in the country. Information from the West African Examination Council shows that the results of 145,795 candidates representing 9.61 percent of total number of those that sat for this year's May/June 2014 WASSCE (West African Senior School Certificate Examination), are being with-held as a result of various types of examination malpractice. This latest result of mass failure coupled with high examination malpractice is an indication that whatever is being done by the nation's education authorities to improve the situation is not yielding the desired result. And still more serious, is that many succeed at various examinations through examination malpractice un-caught or un-noticed. This paper therefore tries to look into how this plague crept into our education system, the consequences and suggests

concrete remedies or ways out through the combined efforts of all concerned.

It is lamentable that despite all measures government is applying to check the menace of examination malpractice in the nation's education system, much is still expected to be done to see that this cankerworm is eradicated completely or brought to the barest minimum. The latest dismal result of the 2014 May/June West African Senior School Certificate Examination showing a high examination leakage coupled with mass failure should be another wake-up call on the state and federal governments as well as parents, teachers, students and private school proprietors on the need to tackle the problem headlong. The situation is so disturbing that young Nigerians hardly go for examinations, confident of what they can produce on their own without depending on one type of examination malpractice or the other

In view of the above, this write-up tries to look at the genesis of examination malpractice since the early 1990s, the consequences, and ex-rays the various roles played by individual groups in enhancing it, and suggests concrete ways or remedies out of it.

The Genesis of Examination Malpractice Since 1990s

Examination malpractice according to Fowoyo (2012), "is a deliberate wrong doing contrary to the laid-down examination rule mapped out to place a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage". Examination malpractice is regarded as a criminal offense carried out by students who are not serious with their studies but want to pass their examinations at all costs.

Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners' describes examination as "an important test of your knowledge ..." so then, if examination is regarded as an important test" of one's knowledge, it also goes further to show how well a learner has mastered what has been taught him over a period of time.

Examination malpractice, according to Fowoyo, (2012) was recorded even during the era of the white men in the country, and is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. This can be accepted as a fact, but one must also agree that this cankerworm has gotten to a devastating state that Nigerian certificates presented outside are questionable and regardless. This scourge started becoming the order of the day in the late 1980s and the 1990s during the military regimes when the educational sector at both the federal and state levels fell to sorry states. Previous regimes during these years, mangled the school systems and starved them of funds, treated the academic cavalierly and kept the students to their chagrin, out of the campuses. Schools at all levels were starved of necessary funds and allowed to dilapidate. Public schools degenerated to something like learning centers meant only for the less privileged. Teachers at all levels despite

Examination Malpractice in Nigeria, Its Origin, Consequences and The Wayout – Luke A. S. Hounvenou and Elizabeth Chinenye Hounvenou

the meager honorarium were owed several months of salaries. And whenever the strikes were called off, the school calendar was jam packed only for the students to hurriedly enter into a new semester or academic year as the case may be. One knows his year into the university but one's year of graduation remains uncertain. Academic Staff Union Of Universities (ASUU) and Non-Academic Staff Union Of Universities (NASUU) strikes became a regular phenomenon with students spending the greater parts of the academic calendar at home.

Teachers in the dilapidating secondary and primary schools, and poorly paid as well, sometime went to work only when they wanted to, and often left to catch up with other businesses during school hours, and so not being able to cover their schemes for the period specified. As a result of these, the option for private schools by parents became a necessity. To meet up with this demand, private schools started springing up at every nook and cranny of streets in major towns and cities in the country. As these schools competed to retain the highest number of students/pupils, examination malpractice started rising. To start with, most of these schools have no standard for admission. Anybody, no matter the background or level is admitted so long as the bargain is beaten with the expectation of performing "the magic" at the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) level. Emphasis was no longer placed on standard but on money. In fact, hardly will a student pass out from these private schools without having chains of distinction and As. Proprietors whose students fail woefully the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) or the National Examination Council (NECO) examination, are regarded as not "knowing the way". They may have been 'new comers' in the system. Thank God for JAMB and post JAMB examinations that serve as a check and balance to a certain extent. If not how will one explain a situation where a student cleared all his papers at the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) or/and the National Examination Council (NECO) examinations, but can hardly score 150 in JAMB and post JAMB respectively. Was it magic? This persistent jinx of examination malpractice must be broken and now! This can be done by the government centralizing examination centres where students will leave their various schools and converge with other students from different schools, be supervised and invigilated by teachers other than those from their schools.

Stake Holders-Holders\Their Contributions

Findings have revealed that the following have contributed in one way or the other to the rise of examination malpractice in the country: These include parents, the students, the teachers, proprietors of private schools and the government.

The Parents

The following are ways parents assist in perpetrating examination malpractice:

- ❖ Impersonation (buying people to sit for examinations on behalf of their children/wards)
- ❖ Tipping supervisors/invigilators to write and or solve on-going examinations for their wards or children:.
- ❖ Financing/encouraging special/magic or choice centres for their wards.
- ❖ Encouraging/buying leaked examination questions.

There are cases where parents waiting outside for their wards or children writing examinations, (like the common entrance to secondary schools), contribute money to influence examiners in favour of the children. What examples are parents inculcating in their children even at this stage? Many Nigerian parents and their children are only interested in acquiring certificates not minding about qualitative education. They are interested in having good grades that they do not deserve and cannot either defend. A child who is well grounded will surely get there and even better. Parents should shun all forms of examination malpractice and discourage their children from everything about it.

The Students

Once the foundation is shaky, the top will be even more complex. A student who started from the cradle depending on one form of examination malpractice or the other may find it difficult to do without. Once a student has the ambition of furthering his education and finds out that he did not make it at the West African School Certificate level, what stops him/her from re-registering and be re-tutored in a school for another one or two years? This should not be regarded in any way as time wasting. Rather it is believed will make the student better placed to face his examination and come out with flying colours. The problem is that the zeal to learn has waned among Nigerian youths and this does not augur well with the development of the country. Education is no race, and it does not matter who finishes earliest or first. There should be no un-healthy competitions among peers. Seriousness to study is what is expected. What can a graduate with a certificate he cannot defend contribute to the society? That person will find it difficult to find his footing in the society and will hardly defend the certificate he bears.

The Teacher

The teacher is regarded as a molder of lives, an embodiment of wisdom and knowledge. In the circumstances that we are faced with, there is no other body better placed to fight this scourge other than the teacher. This light and gateway to every educational system (i.e. the teacher) must not be allowed to be pushed around by any private proprietor, parent, student, etc at no matter the prize offered. A teacher, who knows his worth, will do his work to the letter, cover the scheme, prepare well his

Examination Malpractice in Nigeria, Its Origin, Consequences and The Wayout – Luke A. S. Hounvenou and Elizabeth Chinenye Hounvenou

students and allow them to face their examinations independently. Why should a teacher be called upon to solve questions for students he stood in front of the class to teach? Where is the worth and respect then of the teacher? Why waste the time teaching when questions will be solved for students at the end? Teachers should learn to shun and refuse to be used by individuals whose aims are only to fill their pockets, and create false impressions at all school levels at the expense of the children kept in their custody, not minding the after-effects to the children and the society at large. Teachers should teach principles and help to lay and set standards. They should stand out and serve as the conscience of the society. Let their students know that a teacher laboured for his certificate, thus theirs should not be gotten on a platter of gold. They must labour for theirs also, through diligence and hard work.

Moreso, when students have at the back of their minds that no teacher will render any sort of assistance during examinations nor will they get any elsewhere, they will certainly get serious, bend down and study to pass. This will in turn go a long way to curb examination malpractice, improve the quality of our examinations and the quality of products we produce.

Private Proprietors

Private proprietors are also known as independent owners of schools that are independent and not administered by state or national government. Most private schools in the country came into existence when the government owned schools became poorly funded with no infrastructure, coupled with unending and countless strikes that kept learners out of schools for wasted periods. These private schools turned out to become succours and reliefs to parents who were tired of the education problems found in the country. But sadly enough, some of these private schools, instead of maintaining and helping to raise the standard of education in the country, have helped to ruin it, by indulging and master-minding various forms of examination malpractice. Firstly, because of their crave to maximize gains; they have no standards for admissions. Secondly, teachers in these schools are made to work to the last, most often also, teaching too many subjects in addition to courses in which they are not specialized. Thirdly, they encourage fraudulent means to make their students pass their external examinations for fears of mass failure which they believe will turn out to dent the image of their schools and so reduce the number of intakes they yearn to have. In fact, students graduate from these schools with distinctions but can hardly make it at the university Joint Admission and Matriculation Examination (JAMB). One begins then to ask how these results were gotten by the students.

Below are the various forms of examination mal-practice carried out by these schools:

- ❖ appointment of choice invigilators
- ❖ leaking information about question papers
- ❖ using subject teachers to assist in solving questions

- ❖ bribing and tipping external supervisors in order to have their ways
- ❖ changing/replacing roll members
- ❖ Inflating marks while compiling terminal results , etc (this is done to impress parents, thereby creating false impression about the child's ability/capability.
- ❖ Issuing of fake certificates to un-deservers.

All these have led to a kind of dis-interest to learning in our youths who now believe that come what may, their examinations will be passed, and at all cost.

The Government

Fafunwa (2004) maintains that education is an expensive social service and requires adequate financial provision from all tiers of government for a successful implementation of the education programmes. It is an acceptable but bitter fact that government over the years has been playing politics with education, which led to the springing up of many private schools at every nook and cranny in major cities and towns in the country, to meet the cravings of parents seeking qualitative education for their children and wards. Also, poor teacher motivation has led to countless strikes that water down the quality of education in the country. Government at all levels have looked away from education and is far from meeting the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendation of twenty six percent (26%) of annual national budgets to the education sector and the little amount mapped out for it, is grossly mis-used and un-accounted for.

Education according to Wilayat (2012) is the most important instrument of change. Any intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by education. The insensitiveness of government to play its major responsibility in the education sector has led to various stake holders not playing their expected parts thereby allowing a complete break-down of the whole system. The government has failed in its roles and allowed examinations in certain areas to be handled by examination mafias. The craze for certificates instead of quality education, is at the root of decadence in the nation's education sector.

Recommendations/Conclusion

The blame for the high level of examination malpractice in the country is not however one-sided, the blame must go round. Every stake holder is to blame. The teachers, students, private proprietors, parents and government, all must develop the will power to tackle this serious problem. Shaaba (2003) argues that education is therefore the pristine essence of learning which makes us permanently able and disposed to benefit ourselves and other members of the society in the use we make of such learning. So then our education system should be that which will equip each

Examination Malpractice in Nigeria, Its Origin, Consequences and The Wayout – Luke A. S. Hounvenou and Elizabeth Chinenye Hounvenou

individual to live a productive and meaningful life according to his ability and interest. It is time Nigeria stopped playing politics with education and ends the jinx of unending examination malpractice which is believed to be remediable if only the following suggestions and recommendations are considered:

- ❖ Libraries should be built in all major cities and towns in the country.
- ❖ There should be centralized examination centres in every town in the country where all students irrespective of their schools, will coverage to write public examinations.
- ❖ Supervisors and invigilators should be principals and vice principals who will be well remunerated to do the work.
- ❖ Fafunwa (2004) maintains that one of the major defects in the Nigerian educational system is the low priority accorded to technical and vocational education.
- ❖ Disrupted academic calendars due to incessant strikes and chaotic school system that has become a national embarrassment should strictly be resolved.
- ❖ In the light of this, government should build vocational technical and other skills acquisition secondary schools where students will be admitted based on their interest, skills and abilities.
- ❖ Parents should shun all forms of examination malpractice and discourage their children from everything about it. Nigerian students/children should be encouraged from the cradle to study and be helped and guided based on their talents and abilities. A child with a good foundation should be able to clear his papers at first attempt. Where this fails, short-cut means of passing examinations may not be the best. Education is no race, nor a do or die affair, as such, there should be no unhealthy comparisons and competitions among peers as to who finishes first.
- ❖ Talents should be identified right from the primary schools where children will be placed either in secondary, vocation or technical secondary schools.
- ❖ Parents should serve as guidance and counsellors to their children over their careers.
- ❖ Children should not be forced to offer courses against their interests/ability.
- ❖ They should as well, guide their children choose their vocations without forcing them against their career choice.
- ❖ According to Patience, Esther and Bame (2007), adults often assume the role of teachers to their children . . . thus, parents are the first teachers to their children. Children should not be pushed to the next class if they do not merit it When a child does not make it at the West African Certificate Examination, (WASSCE) nothing should stop him from re-registering as a student in the same or another school and be re-tutored for a year or two more. With this encouragement he will be able to face the examination better prepared and confident instead of seeking short-cut means of passing his examinations. .

- ❖ The New National Policy on Education re-affirmed that Teacher Education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all educational planning, because no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Mohammed (2004) stressed that many laudable educational initiatives have failed mainly because they did not take due account of the teacher factor. So, teachers should be well motivated and sent regularly on re-fresher courses. Moreover, only qualified teachers who are trained to do the work should be employed.
- ❖ Corporate and private organizations are also urged to show more interest in education instead of promoting leisure activities like music, dance, and talent hunts.
Finally, let all work together now to destroy completely this persistent jinx of examination malpractice in the country and change the perception of the Nigerian youth that hard work does not pay.

References

- Awopegba Patience O. Oduolowu, Esther A., Nsamenang, Bame A. (2013). *Indigenous Early Childhood Care/Education (IECCE). Curriculum Framework for Africa: A Focus on Context/Contents.* (pgs. 108/109.)
- Daily Sun Newspaper*, August 17, 2014. (pg. 11)
- Fafunwa, Babs O. (2004). *History of Education In Nigeria, Ibadan: Arin Printers,* (pgs. 298, 305)
- Fowoyo, J. T. (2012). *Enhancing Students Performance In Public Examination In Nigeria secondary schools.* Organized by School Of Education Research and Publication Unit, F,C,E, Kontagora on September 26, 2012
- Gilbert, H. (1915) *The Art Of Teaching.* London: (pg. 44).
- Macmillan English Dictionary For Advanced Learners'. (2002): Macmillan Publishers, London.*
- Miss Wilayat (2012): *Causes of Examination Malpractice Unfair Means* I.E.R University of Peshawar.
- Mohammed, Idris N. (2001). *Views, Rewievs and Overview of UBE:* Lapai: Aljahizat Biz Vent. (pg. 18)
- Onwuegbu, O. I. (1979). *Discover Teaching. Enugu:* Fourth Dimension Publishers
- Shaaba, Muhammad Mann (2003). *Introduction to Philosophy of Education for Classroom Teaching.* Ilorin: Adufe Press. (pgs. 298, 305).