

Causes and Effects of Examination Malpractice on Nigerian Education: Implications for Counselling

¹Usman Maddibo Hanafi

hanafimu25@gmail.com

¹Mohammed Musa Girei

mohammedmusagirei@yahoo.com

¹Science Education Department

Faculty of Education

Adamawa State University, Mubi

Abstract

Teaching and learning become more effective when the students are subjected to an examination process to determine the extent to which the students have assimilated the content of the instruction given and the teacher can also assess himself from the performance of the students. However, cheating has become a national phenomenon to the extent that forging certificates to gain admission or employment is a usual habit among desperate Nigerians even among the political class. Thus, this paper examined the concepts of examination malpractice, dimensions of examination malpractice, causes, and effects of examination malpractice on national development. The counselling implication is the societal re-engineering and re-orientation to revamp moral values: Good moral values should be properly inculcated into our youths and parents by counsellors to stop aiding their children to cheat in examinations. In conclusion, examination malpractice has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigerian educational system. Apart from counselling students to shun all manners of malpractices, teachers have a major role to play. If the teachers are determined to stamp out examination malpractices, there will be no trace of malpractices in all Nigerian schools.

Keywords: Examination, malpractice, dimension, teachers, certificates, counselling.

Introduction

Examination has been generally accepted as the best means of assessment. It is a formal test of knowledge or ability in a school setting, examination is a means of evaluating the quantity of knowledge a student has acquired within a specific period of time. Teaching and learning become more effective when the students are subjected

to an examination process to determine the extent to which the students have assimilated the content of the instruction given and the teacher can also assess himself from the performance of the students. Furthermore, examination helps to determine whether, the educational objectives set out in the school have been achieved (Nnabuike, 2013; Egbo, 2015). They noted that in the past two decades, however, examination malpractices have been and continue to be on the increase in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Examinations could be internal or external. It could be oral, written or both. Examples of internal examinations are continuous assessment tests, terminal, semester and annual or promotion examinations. Examples of external (public) examinations common in Nigerian schools are Common Entrance Examination for admission into secondary school. School certificates examination are conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO). National Teachers' Institute (NTI) and National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB) conduct professional examinations for teachers and technicians respectively.

Cheating has become a national phenomenon to the extent that forging certificates to gain admission or employment is a usual habit among desperate Nigerians even among the political class. Several members of the legislative and executive arms of government in the last few years have been accused of certificate forgery in Nigeria and some have fallen from grace to grass as a result of examination malpractices. The case of a former Speaker of the House of Representative in Nigeria who falsely claimed to have acquired a degree certificate from University of Toronto but to the utter perplexity of all and sundry, was only a secondary school certificate holder is still fresh in the minds of many Nigerians. Examination malpractice has adverse effects on all facets of society, the individual, the home, the school, the government, the private organization and the international community (Obasi, 2009).

Concept of Examination Malpractice

Akaranga and Ongong (2013) define examination malpractice as any irregular behaviour exhibited by a candidate or anybody charged with the conduct of examination before, during or after the examination that contravenes the rules and regulations governing such examination. Ugo and Odimba (2010) described examination malpractice as any action which makes it impracticable to use an examination in evaluating a candidate's level of proficiency in absorbing, reproducing, and where suitable, relating the acquired knowledge in real life endeavours. It also

refers to examination malpractice as any negative departure from the set standards and acceptable norms in the conduct of examination.

Onuka and Durowoju (2013) defined examination malpractice as any dishonest or unauthorized action or deed committed by a student on his own or in collaboration with others like fellow students, guardians, parents, teachers, head teacher, examination officials, supervisors, invigilators, security officers and anybody or group of people before, during or after examination in order to obtain undeserved marks or grades. Nnam and Inah (2015) notes that examination is a yardstick against which students or candidates' competence and progress are formally measured and appraised in the education sector. According to Emaikwu (2012), examination as part of evaluation in education is aimed at determining a learner's level of skill acquisition or intellectual competence and understanding after a given training. Evaluation usually enables the teacher to be effectively ready for further teaching as this forms a feedback. George and Ukpong (2013) opine that examination is the most common tool around which the entire system of education revolves, it is the instrument used to decide who is permitted to move to the next academic level.

Dimensions of Examination Malpractices

According to researchers (Fareo & Oladele, 2018; Onyibe, Uma & Ibina, 2015; Kwalombota, 2014; Oredein, 2006), the dimensions of examination malpractices are listed as:

1. Bringing of foreign materials into examination hall: This is a situation where students bring into the examination hall notes, textbooks, and other prepared materials. The method is nicknamed as hide and seeks microchips, tattoo and magic desk. Sometimes, students bring into the hall unauthorized materials like sophisticated and scientific calculators or four figure tables.

2. Assistance from educational stakeholders: Examination stakeholders include parents, teachers, lecturers, supervisors, security agents, printers and staff of examination bodies. Some parents go to any length in buying question papers for their children while some others even buy certificates for their children. Supervisors colluding with teachers, school principals or students and allowing teachers to come around to provide answers for the students at the examination hall; lecturers or teachers releasing question papers or giving underserved marks or allowing students to illegally re-take examination papers.

3. Irregular Activities inside and outside the examination halls: Students who had the mind to cheat exhibit strange and unwholesome behaviours. They use various methods such as: Stealing, converting, substituting or misappropriating the scripts of other candidates.

4. Impersonation: This is a situation where someone sits in an examination for another person, thereby pretending to be the real or original candidate.

5. Insult or Assault on Examination Officials: There are cases of students insulting or assaulting examination officials as they carry out their businesses.

6. Electronically assisted malpractices: In recent times, it has been discovered that students make use of electronic gadgets to cheat during examinations.

7. Collusion: This is a situation where two or more candidates agree to receive or give assistance to each other. If it is verbal, this is called ECOMOG or ECOWAS. Candidates in an examination hall at times are massively involved in one or some of the irregularities aforementioned.

8. Inscription: Students have now advanced to the level of inscribing materials or information on anything like parts of their body; for example palms, thighs, baby pampers; dresses, handkerchiefs, rulers, purses, chairs, tables, walls of examination halls and so on. Some student even code points and synthesize their notes in such a way that they will be the only one that could understand and use them for cheating.

9. Personality Connection: There are cases where some influential students make use of godfathers in politics, economic high towers, parents, and cult members to influence the outcome of examinations.

Causes of Examination Malpractice

Many reasons have been adduced to be the cause of the prevalent cases of examination malpractice. Fareo and Oladele (2018), Omemu (2015), Ejiogu and Virgy (2008) and Ajayi (2005) identify the causes to include the following:

1. The desire to pass at all cost: Nowadays, students are no longer hard working and dedicated towards their academic endeavours. They are characterized by a desire for success and wealth without a corresponding emphasis on legitimate means and avenues to be used positively in achieving success. The desire to pass at all cost is responsible for examination malpractice.

2. Emphasis on certificate: Nigeria's education system is largely certificate and good grades oriented. Students, parents, school management and others tend to push harder on wards to get the certificate and good grades by all means. As a result, much value and emphasis are placed on certificate instead of knowledge, skills and competence. Many school leavers and dropouts have certificates without knowledge, skills and the right attitude. This is why examination malpractices are increasing day after day for the rush to get paper qualification for jobs or good grades to secure employment.

3. The Students and their level of knowledge and skill acquisition: The levels of knowledge and skill acquisition of students determine their involvement in

examination malpractice. More importantly, the feeling of inferiority complex to which any student that fails exam is subjected in school, at home and in the society at large would make the student go to any length to pass examination.

4. Teachers and institutional procedures: The quality of teachers in an educational service determines, to a very large extent, the quality and standard of the educational system. Without good and efficient teachers, the school system would find it extremely difficult to assist the society in realizing its developmental goals as no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers. It is also true that well-motivated teachers tend to be more efficient than their poorly motivated counterparts. Teacher is the main focus of changes and the anchor in the teaching-learning process; indeed the main determinant of quality in the education system. The teacher therefore, has a crucial role to play in the success or otherwise of any educational system. Indeed, the quality of the teacher is perhaps the most important determinant of educational standards.

Good teaching makes learning more meaningful, interesting and understanding. Unfortunately however, the Nigerian teacher has been so relegated and neglected by governments and society. The result is teacher's nonchalance and lukewarmness. In this circumstance of teacher encourages truancy and exhibits poor teaching. Consequently, poor learning by students who must resort to examination malpractice to pass examinations. Also, the teacher easily falls prey to bribery and financial inducement. Thus, the poor economic and social status of the Nigerian teacher makes it even more difficult for him to uphold his professional integrity in a materialistic and capitalist society like Nigeria.

5. The school facilities and environment: The quantity and quality of physical facilities available in most of our educational institutions leave much to be desired. In most of our communities, the primary and secondary schools environment and buildings are often the poorest and ugliest. More often than not, we find classrooms without roofs, and without furniture for pupils/students and teachers. As a result, there is always much pressure on the few available buildings, classrooms, facilities, equipment and other necessary infrastructure. Consequently, between 50 and 100 students are crowded in a classroom during normal teaching and learning, and during examinations, in rooms meant for about 40 or 50. The poor school environment and infrastructure contribute immensely to poor teaching, poor academic performance and high rate of examination malpractice.

6. The role of government agencies: Government officials and agencies in charge of education and examination like the Ministry of Education, WAEC, supervisors and invigilators as well as the law enforcement agents contribute in different ways to examination malpractice. These agencies and bodies either by omission or commission connive, aid and abet while at the same time pretend to be against examination malpractice.

7. The value system of the society: Another factor which has greatly contributed to examination malpractice is the Nigerian value system and the rush to get rich quickly and earn everything with ease. The economic and social affairs of the nation are so organized to promote cut throat capitalism, commercialism and intense exhibition of materialism. Now, the value system in Nigeria is the acquisition of wealth; so much so that money has become the most important factor for status symbol. Most Nigerians believe that money is everything and so there is desperation to acquire it. Unfortunately, hard work and honesty have been dislodged from being the measure of success and achievement. The Machiavellian principle of “the end justifies the means” has thus become the guiding principle. In the circumstance, corrupt practices become the order of the day and the schools as a micro-society reflects the practices in the larger society.

8. Rising cost of education: Education, like other consumer goods, is becoming extremely expensive, even in institutions where fees are not charged. The costs of books, maintenance and other incidental costs are rising, particularly with the birth of private schools coupled with inflation. The financial consequence of failure is enormous and therefore, students and even parents will like their ward to pass at all cost.

9. The supervisory role of school administration: Generally, teachers and students are poorly supervised and poorly motivated by school authorities. School heads and the inspectorate division of the Ministry of Education seldom carry out their supervisory roles. More often than not, the inspectors visit schools mainly to collect “envelopes” and “kola” without necessarily executing their primary duties. In the same vein, school heads spend a greater part of the time each school day collecting one form of levy or the other. In the process, the provision of necessary learning or teaching materials such as chalk; marking of lesson notes and supervision of students and teachers become secondary assignments which may be delegated to disgruntled subordinates. Lack of proper supervision on the part of school heads and supervisors lead to truancy by teachers and students. These culminate in examination malpractice.

10. Political undertone and government insensitivity to educational needs: The Nigerian political system since independence has been characterized by inconsistency, instability and economic malpractice. Corruption has been the bane of the Nigerian polity. It has created a situation where people of no substance are being catapulted into positions of importance in the society because of their ill-gotten money. The flow of money automatically grants respect and honour to personalities in the society who probably do not deserve such honour. In this circumstance, the spirit of hard work and excellence becomes truncated or aborted. In addition, the government in its practices does not seem to see the greatness of the nation in the classroom as other countries do. The Nigerian governments continuously sacrifice her educational needs on the altar of politics, nepotism and ethnicity, and selfishness. Thus, like the government's policy on education, the society tends to see examination as one of the meaningless routine exercises in the educational system, which has no bearing on the future progress and development of the nation and of the child. Hence, the society appears not to recognize examination as playing a vital role in the educational and economic future of the child and so should be seriously conducted to ensure its validity and reliability. Emphasis is on oil economy and not knowledge economy.

11. Strikes/closure of institutions: Frequent strike actions and indiscriminate closure of institutions aid examination malpractice. When institutions are closed, semester and course work are condensed. Students panic as they begin to explore "the best means" to pass their examination. This is so because the teachers will want to cover the syllabus even as the time left is short. The work load will be much on the students, thereby making them to find unwholesome means to pass examination.

12. General economic ailment/level of income: In a nation like ours where there is a high inflationary trend due to the already battered economy, people seize every available opportunity to make both ends meet. People believe that without money, they cannot make it. The officials of examination bodies are no exception. For instance, some of them use their position to make money by selling examination question papers.

13. Admission requirements: In any institution of learning, there are specific admission policies on requirements. For instance, from secondary school to university level, prospective applicants are expected to possess some minimum qualifications before they could be considered for admission. In an attempt to satisfy these requirements, students know that they must possess the relevant subjects for the course of study. Therefore, some of them feel that something must be done to avoid failure in

such examination so as to guarantee the achievement of their career goals. The final consequence of this is that many of them resort to cheating during the prescribed examination(s) so as to achieve their academic ambition especially in key subject like Mathematics, English Language, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Economics.

14. Employment requirements: Qualifications are the major parameters used for employment or to fill vacancies in enterprises in the labour market. Therefore, getting the certificate is the most important goal for most prospective applicants. Once the connection is there in addition to obtaining the certificate, the job is secured. The effect of this is that securing a good job in Nigeria depends on a good certificate, hence students who are in pursuit of such good jobs but are weak academically resort to all sorts of means including cheating in examination.

Effects of examination malpractice on national development

1. In a society that examination malpractice is predominant, its impact are visibly seen in the type of human resources the education system has produced. Again, educational system strives to inculcate high level of discipline, diligence, moral love for others, etc to the recipients; where the examination is fraught with malpractice, all the important feedback mechanism becomes defective and the educational system becomes distorted (The CWO Voice, 2010).

2. Examination malpractice leads to irreversible loss of credibility. A country that becomes notorious in examination malpractice loses international credibility. The implication is that documents or certificates emanating from such country will be treated with suspicion as it is the case of Nigeria today. Such country's educational institutions are as good as dead as far as international cooperation in education is concerned (Jimoh, 2009).

3. Examination malpractice has grave consequences on the individuals and institutions of learning, communities and the country at large. Dismissal, termination, loss of position, and lack of self-confidence are effects and have caused a lot of embarrassment and suffering to individuals, families and the nation. The guilty ones who were not caught and punished cannot defend the certificates procured not to talk of delivering at their duty posts.

4. The prevalent rate of bank failures, collapse of buildings, economic sabotage, vandalism, kidnapping/hostage taking for ransom, drug trafficking, fake drug manufacturing and sales are practical effects of moral decadence emanating from examination malpractice. Effects of examination fraud are displayed in the filling stations, churches, homes, hospitals, markets and everywhere.

5. The fight against corruption cannot be realized if examination malpractice continues to be rampant in our educational system. This is because future leaders who have been equipped through a school system characterized by academic fraud and

dishonesty, will certainly manifest this fraudulent behaviour in any organization they may find themselves. Those that cheated to pass examination will cheat to get employed, have spouse, and even to win election through electoral violence or other sharp malpractices.

6. Other effects of examination malpractice includes discouragement of students from hard work, low productivity and poor job performances, bribery, corruption, and certificate racketeering. Examination malpractice with its disadvantages is affecting all the facets of the society negatively. The potentials of this nation will be difficult to be realized socially, economically, and technologically until the individuals, governments, and other stakeholders in the education sector collaborate to eradicate this malpractice.

Implications for Counselling

1. Societal re-engineering and re-orientation to revamp moral values: Good moral values should be properly inculcated into our youths and parents by counsellors to stop aiding their children to cheat in examinations.

2. School counsellors should assist students who lack confidence to build up their self confidence to shun any kind of examination malpractice.

3. School counsellors should organize seminars and talks on good study habits, time management, good virtues and academic excellence and these would sensitize the students in working hard to get their certificates.

4. School counsellors in collaboration with the school management and teachers should mount up campaign on the values of honesty and integrity which may help in combating leakage and other irregularities.

5. Guidance and counselling should be provided with counselling rooms to help in providing proactive and rehabilitative counselling services to the learners.

6. Learners should be given access to guidance and counselling services to help them prepare for examinations.

7. Principals should recognize the indispensable roles of counselling to school development and the counsellors should sit up and display appreciable levels of resourcefulness and competence in counselling students not only against “examination malpractices” but also against other vices in the school system and also help them on how to develop vocationally.

Conclusion

Examination malpractice has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the educational system in Nigeria. Apart from counselling students to shun all manners of malpractices, teachers have a major role to play. If the teachers are determined to stamp out examination malpractices, there will be no trace of

malpractices in all Nigerian schools. The teacher remains the pivot of curbing examination malpractices. If lessons are effectively and efficiently delivered and the students are adequately prepared, and are adequately monitored by teachers during examinations; then the issue of examination malpractices would face its gradual extinction. Since education is the bedrock of every nation, any factor that tarnishes the outcome process should be tackled by all stakeholders of education and well meaning Nigerians.

References

- Adekunle, S. (2003). *Preparing for examination*. Ilesa: Ilesanmi Press.
- Ajayi, I. (2005). *Easy way to success*. Igarra: Onaivi publishers.
- Ajibola, O. (2006). Advocates of Examination Malpractices. <http://ezinearticles/ed>
Retrieved on 12th August, 2011.
- Akaranga, S. I. & Ongong, J. J. (2013). The phenomenon of examination malpractice: An example of Nairobi and Kenyatta universities. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(18), 87 – 96.
- Egbo, A. C. (2015). Counselling strategies for curbing examination malpractices in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. *World Journal of Education*, 5(3), 91-98.
- Ejiogu, A. & Virgy, O. (2008). *Problems and prospects in Nigerian education: A historical overview in emergent issues in Nigerian education*. Lagos: Joja Press Limited.
- Emaikwu, S. O. (2012). Assessing the Impact of Examination malpractices on the measurement of ability in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Education*, 2(4), 748 – 757.
- Fareo, D. O. & Oladele, E. M. (2018). Roles of guidance counsellors in curbing examination malpractice in senior secondary schools in Ondo West Local Government, Ondo. *Babcock University Journal of Education (BUJED)*, 4(1), 157-172.
- George, I. N. & Ukpong, D. E. (2013). Contemporary social problems in Nigeria and its impact on national development: Implication for guidance and counselling services. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 3(2), 167 – 173.
- Jimoh, B. O. (2009). Examination malpractice in secondary schools in Nigeria: What sustains it? *European Journal of Educational Studies*, 1(3), 101 – 108.
- Kwalombota, M. (2014). An explanatory study of the roles of guidance counseling teachers in preventing examination malpractice in selected special schools in western province, Zambia. *Unpublished M.Ed Thesis*, University of Zambia, Lusaka.

- Nnabuikie, E. K. (2013). *Practical guide to effective teaching*. Enugu: Hallmark Publishers.
- Nnam, M. U., & Inah, A. F. (2015). Empirical investigation into the causes, forms and consequences of examination malpractice in Nigerian institutions of higher learning. *International Journal of Novel Research in Humanity and Social Sciences*, 2(1), 52 – 62.
- Obasi, E. (2009). *Certificate Syndrome*. Owerri: Stateman Publishers Ltd.
- Omemu, F. (2015), Causes of examination malpractice in Nigerian schools. *British Journal of Education*, 3(7), 34-41.
- Onuka, A. O. U. & Durowoju, E. O. (2013). Stakeholders' role in curbing examination malpractice in Nigeria. *International Journal of Economy, Management and Social Sciences*, 2(6), 342 – 348.
- Onyibe, C. O., Uma, U. M. & Ibina, E. (2015). Examination malpractice in Nigeria: Causes and effects on national development. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(2), 12-18.
- Oredein, A. O. (2006). Checking examination malpractice in Nigerian schools. Retrieved on November 26, 2018 from www.naere.org.ng/journal/checking_Examination_malpractice_nigerian_schools.pdf
- The CWO Voice (2010). Exam malpractice: Implications for national development. Retrieved on April 6, 2018 from <http://news2.onlinenigeria.com/news/General/5692-exam-malpractice-implication-for-national-development>