

CAUSES OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN NIGERIA SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT: *This research study was carried out to investigate the cause of examination malpractice in Nigeria schools. The paper highlighted factors responsible for examination malpractice, students and their level of knowledge and skill acquisition, school facilities and environment, role of government agencies, supervisory role of school administration, political undertone and government insensitivity to educational needs, solution to examination malpractice in schools.*

KEYWORDS: Examination Malpractices, School, Nigeria, Education.

INTRODUCTION

Examination has been generally accepted as the best means of assessment. It is a formal test of knowledge or ability. Infact, in a school setting, examination is a means of evaluating the quantity of knowledge a student has acquired within a specific period of time. Adekunle (2003) sees examination as an instrument used for the assessment of individual skills and knowledge-content, both in general and specific area of study. 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.

Unfortunately, this all important means of assessing students has become ineffective as all forms of malpractice has been introduced into the system. Adesina (2000) traced the history of examination malpractice in Nigeria to 1914. When there was a leakage of the Cambridge examination. Cheating became widespread in schools hence in 1967, the Alexander Commission was set up as a special commission of inquiry to investigate the incidences of malpractice in Nigeria. In 1977, there was a widespread leakage of the West Africa School Certificate Examination questions. Government took it as a challenge to address issues of examination malpractice. A special conference was held in that regard at Ibadan in 1986. Decrees were promulgated, schools were sanctioned, results cancelled and invigilators arrested all in a bid to curb malpractice.

The irony of it all is that despite the several attempts made by school authorities, government agencies, parents and church leaders in trying to concentise the Nigerian students on the evils of examination malpractice, this menace is still in its increase in the various schools. There is the need to find out the causes of examination malpractice in Nigerian schools.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

The Desire to Pass at All Cost

Paul (2012) agreed on the fact that students nowadays 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 (Ajibola 2006).

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 they possess or good grades to secure employment.

Societal Factor

Itedjere (2006) sees it from the moral tone of the society; that it is a statement of truth that the school, like any other social institution, does not exist in a vacuum, rather it exists within a geopolitical and socio-milieu. Hence, behaviours are expected to conform and reflect the acceptable societal norms and ethos as regards various functional roles and the executions of duties and services.

Also, Okafor (1990) blamed the society for examination malpractice. He said:

In a country where dishonesty has been enshrined by the adult sector as an idol of worship, children have learnt to steal with impunity, examination malpractice (in all shades and forms) has become the order of the day among our students at all level of the educational arrangement. In Nigeria today, people value money more than any other thing thereby reminding one of a saying that "the end justifies the means".

In the circumstance, corrupt practices become the order of the day and the school as a micro-society must reflect the practices in the wider society. Itedjere (2006) clearly expressed that, examination malpractice is a product of a society that nurture cheats and mediocrity and turns them into celebrities. It is a reflection of the moral decadence of our country where we have pen robbers, armed robbers, smugglers and drug barons who are glorified by the grace of their ill-gotten wealth.

Parent the theory propounded by Sooze (2004) of vocational choice states that:

In making a vocational choice, individuals are expressing their self-concept or understanding of self, which evolves over time, people seeks career satisfaction through work roles in which they can express themselves and further implement and develop their self-concept.

In Nigeria, students do not understand their self-concept any longer. This is as a result of parents or guardians who want to choose a course of study for their wards and not minding what that child is capable of doing in terms of ability and intelligence. If the parents choose a wrong course for their wards, they will probably not do well academically because that is not their area of interest. Furthermore, the parents will want their wards to pass that chosen course by all means. On the part of the wards, they will want to pass by all means so that they will not look as failures to their parent. This situation propels them into examination malpractices to satisfy the needs of their parents.

The level of knowledge and skill acquisition of students determine their involvement in examination malpractice. Majority of Nigerian students no longer consider knowledge and skills acquisition as necessary any more. The orientation they have received from their predecessors, parents and adult members of society is that of “success” without hard work. Thus, the students generally have a poor attitude toward their studies. They engage themselves in all sorts of crime, riots, secret cults and other forms of social activities and anti-social activities with little or no time devoted to serious academic pursuit. In the process, the students end up losing confidence in themselves as being unable to succeed through the legitimate means and hence regard examination malpractice as much easier and faster means of achieving academic success.

Teacher

The teacher is the main focus of change and the anchor in the teaching-learning process. Paul (2012) opined that teachers are like parents to children while they are in schools, but are they ought to engage the students in dynamic learning that is active, interactive and creative on sound moral foundation and academic foundation. Teachers are out to produce students who are relevant, efficient, productive, competitive and excel in every endeavor in life positively. When the teachers abandon their responsibilities in the academic field and if the teacher fail to implement the school curriculum as required, the students engage themselves in examination malpractices in order to pass their examination. Many teachers encourage examination malpractices because they lack the zeal to work but want to be praised for job not done.

Teachers are the main determinants of quality in the educational system. They therefore, have an important role to the success 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 teachers have not been so well catered for by government and society. The result is teacher’s development of nonchalant attitude and lukewarmness. The poor teaching and poor learning in our schools thus result in examination malpractices to pass examination. Again, the teacher who is poorly paid and undernourished, easily fall prey to bribery and financial inducement.

All these factors according to Denga (1993) can be summarized reduce into factors of psychological factors: environmental factor and intelligence factor.

- a. **Psychological Factor:** This include all the stress, which is often, induced by parents, the peer groups, and students; thus they experience enormous stress and anxiety in trying to meet the various demands of subjects. That stress and anxiety experienced

by students during examination are conspicuous; Students tend to develop undesirable habits, as a result of stress which normally lead them to poorly preparation for examination and consequently expose them to engaging in examination malpractice and misconduct. It should also be noted that psychological fear of failure or scoring low grades prompt their involvement in examination malpractice and misconduct. These psychological factors also bring to bear Maslow's motivational theories; which emphasize the basic needs, that is, physiological needs of man. He argued that these needs motivate and enhance learning, that if students' physiological needs are not physically met, it will affect their concentration in a teaching and learning situation, thereby preparing the students' cognition at a very low level and encourage students to engage in all sorts of misconducts and malpractice during examination.

- b. **Environmental Factors:** This is another factor stated by Denga (1983) that basically lead students to examination malpractice and misconduct. The environmental factors include the crowded nature of our classrooms, theatres as well as examination halls with few invigilators during examination. Teachers' or lecturers' inability to cover up the stipulated syllabus, for the period before an internal or external examination, like promotional examination, obsolete instructional materials which are inadequate in the schools; may force some students to cheat even if they do not want to during an examination.
- c. **Intelligence Factor:** Ajibola (2006) states that the concept of individual difference must be borne in mind when comparing academic competence, ability and comprehension between one student and another. The failure of student to recognize the fact that IQ (intelligent quotient) differs and cannot be compared is another factor; thus, academically weak students will at a time try to compare themselves with naturally gifted students who are brilliant. When the weak-academic students are not able to cope with the challenges, they opt for the missing links with crisps or external help to pass their examination. These missing links are associated with misconceptions and malpractices. Again on the psychological point; that being intelligent and smart are two different concepts from being academically gifted. Being smart means sly, ability to be able to handle situation with what is physically available within the limited time while intelligence involves your cognition and reaction to stimulus. A smart student may not be intelligent but can easily pass his or her examination than an intelligent student.

The Students and their Level of Knowledge and Skill Acquisition

- The level 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.

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 (Ajayi, 2005). It is also true that well-motivated teachers tend to be more efficient than their poorly motivated counterparts (Ejiogu, 2007).

(2006) noted that the 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 and 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 ours.

The School Facilities and Environment

The quantity and quality of physical facilities available in most of our educational institutions leaves 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, learning times 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.

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.

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.

Today, 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 Nigeria's believe that money is

every thing and so there is a “rat race” 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. Jibril (1991) had argued that:

Examination malpractice is the product of a society that nurtures cheats and mediocres and turn them into celebrities.... It is a reflection of the moral decadence of our country.

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 to their ward pass at all cost.

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.

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 naira power. The flow of naira 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 Japan and America 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.

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 up the syllabus and because the time left is short, the work load will be much on the students. Thereby making the students to find all possible means to pass examination.

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 life examination question papers.

Admission Requirements

In any institution of learning, there are specific admission policy 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.

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.

CONCLUSION

Examination malpractices has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the educational system in Nigeria. Apart from concentrating the students to shun all manners of malpractices, the teachers have a major role to play. The teachers, if 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, the student is adequately prepared for the examination, the teacher ensures that examination is conducted in the right way, there is no form of assistance and students are adequately monitored by the teacher during examinations, then the issue of examination malpractices is half solved. The government, parent, churches etc may need to

only play complementary roles. The gospel or examination malpractices should be preached more to the teachers than even the students. Students in any public examination look unto the teacher or schools for assistance and where such help do not exist, malpractices will be minimized.

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