



Stakeholders' Role in Curbing Examination Malpractice in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study looked into the roles of some stakeholders in effectively curbing examination malpractices in Nigeria. Examination as an instrument for decision-making, always create fear and anxiety in the heart of the candidates and other stakeholders, a major reason, why some candidates and some other stakeholders engage in examination malpractices. To eradicate this menace in our examining system, all stakeholders must jointly fight against examination frauds. The suggested roles of the stakeholders eliminating this menace are: the government should introduce effective and comprehensive legislation, provide stringent penalties against the use of unfair means in examinations. The government should also ensure that anybody caught in the act of examination malpractices is adequately punished irrespective of his status or position in the society. The various examining bodies should collaborate to build large examination halls across the nation. They should also collaborate with communities, government, and corporate bodies in building large examination halls. Teachers should ensure that they adequately cover the syllabi, work to their conscience by ensuring that they attend school and classes regularly and endeavor to bring the content of the study to real life situation with the use of relevant teaching materials. Parents should provide all the necessary materials including textbooks that will help improve students' performances, pay unscheduled visits to their children to ascertain whether they are making progress or not. It was equally suggested that parents/guardians should establish a positive parent-child relationship with their children for the progress of their wards.

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Introduction

Examination is one of the major measure and most practical way of determining the extent to which students have achieved in a particular course of instruction or study. Any examination that will give a true measure of students' performance must be valid, reliable and void of examinations misconducts. It is unfortunate that the examination system most countries is plagued with examination misconducts or wrongdoing. Examination as an instrument for decision-making, always create fear and anxiety in the heart of the candidates and some other stakeholders. Fasasi (2006) opined that many candidates would want to pass examinations by all means. Also, many school authorities and parents would want to explore means of getting good grades for their students and children. Therefore, they resort to different forms of malpractices before, during and after examinations

Onuka and Durowoju (2010) asserted that the examination system has degenerated to an extent that its validity and reliability are being called to question because of the increasing incidence of malpractice. They also stressed that examination malpractice has become a 'tradition' at all levels of education in many African countries. Hence, examination malpractices have been on the increase both in internally and externally conducted examination all over the nations including Nigeria. Wilayat (2009) submitted that examination is no longer regarded as a test for evaluating the performance or judging the scholastic attainment of students. The reason being that there is a complete breakdown of the whole system of examination, almost all over the country, and at all level of education.

Concept of examination malpractices

Examination malpractice is 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 teachers, examination officials, supervisors, invigilators, printers, security officers and anybody or group of people before, during or after examination in order to obtain undeserved marks or grades (Onuka and Amusan, 2008). Examination malpractice has become a cancerous problem in our educational system and it comes in diverse forms or nature. Onuka and Durowoju (2011) stated that the nature of examination malpractice include lateness of invigilators and supervisors to exam halls, lateness of students to examination hall, cheating, undue favoritism from invigilators to students, leakage of question papers in the process of setting, printing, packaging, storing and distribution, impersonation, disclosing candidates identity on answer books, and bribing/influencing examination staff, invigilators, examiners.

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According to Onuka and Duwoju, other forms of examination malpractices are allotment of choice examination centres termed "unique" / "miracle" centres, appointment of supervisors demanding for particular centres, leaking information about question papers, identification of invigilating staff and paper, using of mobile phone during examination, smuggling answer books in or outside the examination centre, tearing of examination questions, tearing of examination answer sheets, writing of answers on the chalkboard during examination, and dictating of answers during examination. In addition, inflation or reduction of candidates' original score by those who mark/grade the scripts and buying of questions from corrupt officials and bank officials external assistance, coping another candidate's work, and inadequate spacing of candidates. Other methods of perpetrating examination malpractice include desktop publishing (writing on the desk), laptop publishing (writing on the lap), microchips (writing on sheets of paper), cell phone publishing (writing on the mobile phone) and cooperative cheating by students and staff. Adesina and Magaji in Fasasi (2006) cited in Onuka and Duwoju (2011) stated that other forms of examination misconduct include *girraffing*, deliberate extension of time by supervisors and invigilators, change of scores, buying and selling of examination grades, buying of prepared answers, trading sex for question papers, marks and grades, collusion between candidates, collusion between candidates and officials, assault and intimidation, spying, submission of multiple scripts, use of coded or sign language, and multiple entry for the same examination among others.

From the study conducted by Onuka and Duwoju, which investigated the perception of teachers and students causes of examination malpractice, it was discovered that examination malpractice rather than been abated is on the increase in the African education system especially in Nigeria. The nature of examination malpractices is becoming sophisticated by the day and the nature is perceived by the teachers and students in diverse ways to include undue favouritism from invigilators to students, bribing examination staff, invigilators and examiners, illegal special choice examination centres among others. More so, the methods of examination fraud include bringing chips-answers written on tiny papers, tearing of examination answer sheets and dictating answers during examination.

Agents of examination malpractices

Examination malpractice has a firm grip upon our educational system because of the various agents that are involved. These agents are not limited to the students; they include all educational stakeholders and those in governance. Wilayat (2009) identified the following groups of people as agents of examination malpractice: teachers, parents, examination supervisors and invigilators, and security men. Oredein (2006) stated that advocates or agents of examination malpractice are parents and guardians, students, schools' management and their staff, examination officer(s). It is worth noting that agents of examination malpractices are not limited to the students, parents/guardian, examination officers, school management or security men. Other agents are: teachers, lecturers, printers, typists, examination custodians, corrupt government officials, traditional institutions, host communities of examination centres, and mercenaries such as students' friends and family members. The annual report of WAEC 2009 stated that other prominent forms of examination malpractice and irregularity was collusion/assisted cheating involving teachers, invigilators, supervisors and even proprietors of schools. According to the report, in Nigeria for instance, 47.08% of the 100,428 candidates that were involved in various forms of examination malpractice in the May/June 2008 WASSCE were involved in collusion. This situation was not significantly different in the other countries. In Ghana, another emerging form of examination malpractice was the deliberate registration of unqualified candidates by school authorities.

Effect of examination malpractices

Examination malpractice has a significant negative effect on the students who involve in the act. Oredein (2006) stated that the effect of examination misconduct include inability of students not being able to defend the certificate ((failure in job performance) obtained through examination malpractice, perpetual condemnation of the students' conscience, possibility of unfulfilled dreams and vision, if the students are rusticated from school or terminated at the working place. Also, the culprit may be initiated into a system of dishonesty and corrupt practices by which they become hardened, students to lose the ability to study or work hard in their studies. When a candidate is caught and expelled, there will be no certificate to show for whatever year(s) they might have put into their educational career. It is important to mention that the spillover effect of this menace perpetrated by the students is also borne by parents and other relatives of culprits in that it tarnish the image of the parents as well as the family. It also leads into wastages of resources expended on the candidates

The negative effect of examination misconduct on the society and the nation at large cannot be overemphasized. Aminu (2006) affirmed that by that year, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) had had to cancel the results of 814, 699 candidates in its May/June Examinations alone. Jimoh (2009) submitted that examination malpractices render the goals of education invalid. According to him, the achievement of educational goals will continue to be an illusion if the plague of examination misconduct is not wiped out from the system. The end result is that the country will continue to produce graduates who lack the knowledge, skill and technical know-how to explore and develop all the resources of the nation. The truth is that students who involved in such menace lack the acceptable ethics and attitude needed for the continued existence of his society, nation and the world at large. It is pertinent to mention that a country who is noted for examination malpractice experience permanent loss of credibility among member countries and among countries across the globe. Another negative effect of examination malpractice is that candidates who engage in this shameful act, when given opportunities to hold leadership position either in the private or public sector exhibits dishonest and treacherous behaviours such as corruption, bribery, fraud and mischievous acts.

Suggested measures for eradicating examination malpractices

It is important to stress that the fight against examination malpractice is not a one man show, no single individual or stakeholder can kick out this corrupt act out of our educational system. Hence, to ensure total eradication of examination in the educational system of this nation, the onus lays on all stakeholders to jointly fight against this dishonest act. The government, security agents, examination body, examination officials, educationist, curriculum planners, head of schools, lecturers, teachers, parents, employers of labour, Media houses, religious leaders, traditional rulers, community heads and members should unanimously work together to combat this menace. The roles of the various stakeholders are hereby lighted below:

The government

One of the ways of dealing with the problem is to introduce effective and comprehensive legislation, providing for stringent penalties against the use of unfair means in examinations. The government should ensure that anybody caught in the act of examination malpractice should be adequately punished irrespective of this status or position in the society.

It is worth mentioning that it is highly imperative for government to adequately fund the educational system of this country by employing more qualified teachers, providing well- stocked school and public libraries, provision of well-equipment science laboratories, technical laboratories. It is apparent that the fall in the standard of education is largely due to inadequate funding of the system in term of inadequate classrooms, teaching-learning materials, infrastructure and qualified teachers (Olushola (undated). Most of our classrooms, libraries, and laboratories are eye saw. What we have in our schools today especially in the primary and secondary schools are dilapidated classrooms and classrooms without adequate chairs and tables. In most cases, three to four students seat on a bench that has no back rest while some sit on the widows or on the floor while large classroom has become a norm in our schools. In a situation whereby the classroom environment is not conducive for teaching-learning, students' academic performances will fall below expectation and in a bid to achieve success by all means students tend to engage in examination fraud. Hence, the government should adequately and promptly fund the educational system.

Teachers are nations' builders, they play important role in capacity building; they educate and training the students that form the workforce or labour of any nation, it is quite unfortunate that the negative attitude of the government, parents, students and the society at large towards the teaching profession and the teachers dampens the spirit of the teachers and this has negative effect on their job performance. Hence, the government needs to boost the morale of teachers who impart knowledge into the students by bring the teaching profession at par with other professions in terms of remunerations, allowances, leave bonus, promotion and recognition. It is needful for the government to also ensure prompt payment of teachers salaries and their promotion should be effected as at when due. The government should also encourage the teachers by giving them access to study leave with pay.

It is not a gainsaying to mention that there are lots of teachers both in the secondary school and primary school levels who possess Masters and Ph.D degrees in their respective field of studies, but is sad to state that the government does not recon with the degrees in terms remuneration of teachers. The effect of this is that these teachers are on the lookout for better and promising opportunities in higher institutions of learning or other organisations while those who are unable to get out of the school system are not satisfied doing the job. It is pertinent to stress that if the government is able to boost the morale of teachers, they will discharge their duties with enthusiasm, incessant strike will be a forgotten issue and there will be better improvement in students' performances.

The government should go back to what was obtainable in our school years back when a guidance counselor is attached to each school. Students are failing today in all sphere of life because are not well guided and properly informed. The significant roles that guidance counselors play within the school system cannot be underscored. Hence, the government should ensure that each school has a qualified guidance counselor who will not be burdened with class work.

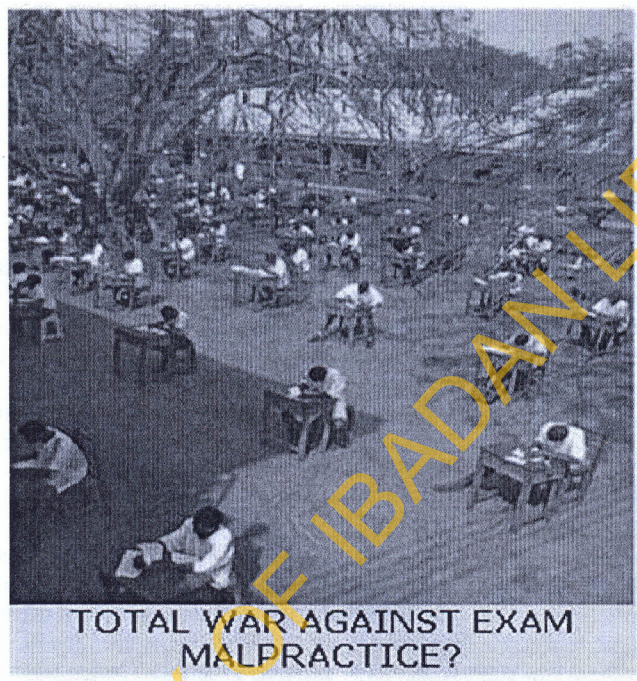
Excessive value placed on paper qualification or certificate is the major contributing factor for examination malpractices, that is why candidates would not spare any effort to ensure that they obtained whatever they needed to make a living, whether by a just or unjust way. The government should enact a law that premium should be placed on competence/performance rather than certificate alone. From experience, most graduates who obtained certificate through fictitious means could not prove the worth of their certificates. Thus, less emphasis should be placed on certificate; rather emphasis should be on the totality of learning outcomes. Each examinee should be able to prove their competence cognitively, affectively and psychomotor wise.

Examination bodies

To curb examination malpractice the various examining bodies have enormous role to play. The various examination bodies should collaborate to build large examination halls across the nation. One of the major reasons why examining malpractices are of the increase in our country is because there are no enough and spacious examination halls that can accommodate the large number of students enrolling for examination yearly. The examining bodies can also collaborate with communities, government, and corporate bodies in building large examination halls.

All examining bodies should ensure that the remuneration package for examiners should be encouraging. Examiners are beginning to lose interest in supervision, invigilation and marking exercise because the remuneration package does not commensurate with the rigour of the exercises. Moreso, highly qualified and dedicated teachers against the menace should be appropriately recognized and rewarded by the examining bodies as well as the government. Furthermore, examining bodies should ensure that invigilators and supervisors of proven integrity who are ready to ensure the conduct of free and fair conduct of examination are recruited and used. Any erring ad hoc and permanent staff caught abetting and aiding the committal of these crimes in the examination sub-sector of our economy should be sanctioned. Examining bodies should apply harsher punishment for examination fraud sponsors, syndicates and centers involved in both aiding and abetting examination fraud by students and whosoever profit from exam fraud.

It is high time examining bodies should look into the sitting arrangement during the conduct of examination. It is important that adequate sitting arrangement be provide during exams to discourage cheating. The diagram below is an example of an ideal sitting arrangement during examinations.



Source: mypenmypaper.wordpress.com

In 1999, WAEC started embossing candidates' photographs on their certificates as a means of checking the increasing cases of impersonation in its examinations. WAEC and other examining bodies should develop customized examination answer scripts for students. The customized examination answer scripts should contain the name and examination number of each candidate. Again the candidates' photographs emboss should be embossed on the customized examination answer scripts this will go a long way to curb examination malpractices.

Teachers/ and lecturers

The teachers/lecturers are principal factors in the school system; they play important roles in ensuring that the teaching-learning objectives are achieved. Without them teaching cannot take place and students would not be able to learn either. In curbing examination malpractices in our schools the roles of the teachers cannot be overstressed. The onus lies on the teachers to ensure that they adequately cover the syllabi. If they fail to cover the syllabi it will be detrimental to the students because they may not be able to answer questions on those topics not covered and this may be the beginning of students' failure.

It is important that teachers should work to their conscience by ensuring that they attend school and classes regularly. They should not just attending school or classes just to fulfill all righteousness but they should go to the classes to teach the students what they are supposed to teach as stated in the scheme of work. They should endeavour to bring the content of the study to real life situation with the use of relevant teaching materials. Teachers should also go an extra miles to re-teach difficult topics. He can assist the weaker students by adopting peer tutoring methods. This can be done by peering the weak student with another student who is knowledgeable in the particular topic or subject.

Teachers should understand and accept the fact that they are *loco parenthesis* for their students'; hence they should establish a positive teacher-relationship with them. They should have personal concern for the welfare and progress of the students. Some of these students are weak academically not because they do not have the potentials but because they are faced with personal or family problem which affect their academic performances. Therefore, it is imperative that as teachers teach their students they should also have personal rapport with them. They should try to identify their problems, show empathy, warmth, openness and built trust in the students.

It is pertinent to stress that teachers are expected to provide guidance service to the students. Students need to be guided in the choice of subject combination putting into consideration their career aspiration, capability and personality traits. Most students registered for subjects that do not align with their career aspiration, capability and personality traits and they end up performing poorly or having credit passes in subjects that are not in consonant with their ambition. Most importantly, teachers should equip themselves with relevant information on educational, vocational and health related issues so that they can be in better position to assist their students. Teachers should instill in the students good moral as well as the value and culture of their society. They should make students realise that there is value for truthfulness, honest and hardwork.

The use of continuous assessment for grading purpose should be discouraged. Continuous assessment for learning is meant to improve students' learning outcomes. Therefore, school heads and teachers should ensure that continuous assessment is conducted regularly using various continuous techniques such as individual assignment, peer assessment, quiz, group assessment, project, test, classroom observation, questionnaire, rating scales etc. Regular conduct of CA will help instill in student good study habit thereby promoting students preparation for examination as well as removal of examination phobia from students.

Parents

The role of parents in ensuring high level of students' academic performances cannot be overemphasized. Parents play significant role in determining the extent to which their children can achieve success in studies. There are some parents who care less about their students welfare and studies. Some parents/guardian do not visit their children for a term, years and even years while some sparing to so. Some parents/guardians do not provide necessary textbooks, writing materials and uniform for their wards. Their belief and expectation are that the government must provide all these essential elements (textbooks, writing materials and uniform) for their wards. In a situation whereby a student does not have textbooks for subjects such as English Language, Mathematics, Literature in English, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Accounting etc. how will he engaged in personal study of the topics taught by the subject teachers.

Hence, it is expedient that parents should provide all the necessary materials including textbooks that will help improve students' performances. Parents/guardians make it a point of duty to pay unscheduled visits to their children at to so as to ascertain whether they are making progress or not. It is also important that parents/guardians should establish a positive parent-child relationship with their children. They show warmth, openness, mutual truth, open communication, empathy to their children and also develop self-confidence them. Furthermore, parents should develop a positive parent-teacher relationship with the teachers. There have been cases whereby parents quarrel or fight with teachers or school management because their children were disciplined for a wrong act; this type of behavior is unbecoming. Therefore, parents should regard their children teachers as *loco parenthesis* with the school system.

In addition, parents/guidance should provide improved parental guidance, monitoring and evaluation of students' performances. The onus lies on parents/guardians to constant provide guidance to their children. They should try to identify their needs, aspiration and fears not only in their studies but all aspects of their lives especially emotion wise. Parents/guardians should also monitor and evaluate their children's academic progress to as to provide intervention program where and when necessary. For instance, parents/guardian can enroll their children in private coaching or lesson to supplement the effort of their school teachers. Parents can also help their children develop good study habits by encouraging them to spend more time studying and less time watching home videos, playing games, browsing on net or making night calls. Therefore, parents should be committed to their children education.

Finally, parents/guardians should endeavour to give moral upbringing to their children. Parents/guardians should ensure that all their children are brought up properly in accordance with God's standards. They should instill the fear and love of God in their heart because the bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Hence, wisdom is the beginning of success and progress in life. It is important that parents should make their children realise that there is value for truthfulness, honest and hardwork. They should not collaborate with their children to commit examination fraud.

Non-government organisations

It is important that non-governmental organisations should join the fight against examination menace in our country. Non-governmental organisations should collaborate various government efforts by organizing sensitization workshops, conferences and seminars to key players in the education system i.e teachers and school administrators as well as the examining bodies. They should also set up independent intelligent security bodies that will go round the examination centers to fish out culprit. These independent intelligent security bodies should be legalized so that they can perform their duties effectively.

Educationist and curriculum planners

Inspectorate division of various ministries of education should be encouraged to and also be made to do their work appropriately. The curriculum planners should ensure that curriculum developed represents the needs, value, aspiration, culture and language of the candidates and the society at large. It is important that the curriculum designed for each subject should not be overloaded. Educationist and curriculum planners should put into consideration candidates information processes capacity while designing the curriculum. If the curriculums are overloaded and candidates are expected to master all the contents in order to successfully pass an examination, it may result to memory failure, examination phobia or anxiety on the part of the students. Also, the maximum subjects that candidates should be allowed to register for should be six so as to give room for adequate preparation for examination. These six subjects must be directly related to the career aspiration of the candidate

Security agents

The judiciary and all the law enforcement agencies must summon courage to play their proper role. They should not aid examination malpractices and any culprit should be severely punished. Nobody should be above the law.

Media houses

The media houses should also join in the campaign against examination by organising seminars and jingles at various levels to sensitise people on the evils and effect of examination malpractice the candidates, parents and the nation at large. Print and electronic media should be used to promote school and campus campaigns against examination malpractice.

Employers of labour

Employer of labour should join the combat against examination menace by ensuring that the criteria for recruiting, selecting and employing workers/staff are competence in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains i.e. all round competence. Employers should verify and confirm the authenticity and genuineness of the certificate presented by employees from the examining bodies or school attended before they are employed.

Students

Students should improve their study habits. They should devote their time to serious study instead of wasting their time engaging in day and night browsing on facebook, making unnecessary and fruitless night calls and visits to friends. It is pertinent that students should realise that there is eternal reward for hard work and honest while laziness and dishonesty in examination and other aspects do lead to shame and disgrace. Students should not associate themselves with corrupt and dishonesty friends because evil communication corrupt good manner. Students should develop high self-efficacy; they should belief in their capability to achieve success in their examination and other life endeavors.

Religious leaders

Religious groups should campaign against examination malpractices on and off campus in their various place of worship. They should also motivate members to propagate the message against examination fraud so that the message would be spread all over the place that examination menace is evil and attracts God's anger and punishments. They should also preach the message of a change of heart to those involved in examination malpractice so that they can enjoy the mercy and blessing of God in all spheres of life. Religious bodies should guilty members who refused to discontinue from engaging in examination malpractice.

Traditional rulers

Host communities heads and members of examination centres should also join in the fight against examination fraudulent by sanctioning any member of the community who engage in examination malpractice. They should delegates who will participate in the supervision of examination in their various communities.

Conclusion

From the above discourse, it is apparent that the fight against examination malpractice is not a one man show, it involves all stakeholders. All stakeholders must perform their roles to ensure total eradication of these vices from our nation. Hence, all hands must be on deck to combat examination fraudulent.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- The government should ensure the educational system is well funded
- The government should ensure that teachers are well paid, their salary and promotions should be paid and effected as at when due
- The government should empower the judiciary sectors to promptly and adequately punish anybody guilty of examination malpractice.
- The judiciary should ensure that anybody caught in the act of examination fraud should be made to face the consequences irrespective of his/her position or personality.
- All stakeholders should endeavor to inculcate right values into our children.
- Those who are honesty in discharging their duties should be recognized and appreciated this will go a long way to reorientate our children that there is reward for being truthful and honest.
- Parents, teachers and religious leaders should teacher the younger ones morals.
- All stakeholders (government, parents, media houses, non-government organizations, etc) should mount up campaign programs against examination malpractices.
- There should be independent security agents who will be involve in monitory exercises during the conduct examinations.

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