

THE ROLES OF COMMUNITY LEADERS, PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN TACKLING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

It is glaring that the cases of examination malpractice have been on the increase in various institutions of learning across the nation, the consequence of which has put a serious dent on the image of our educational system nationally and internationally. Some measures have been put in place to curtail this menace but all to no avail. This study identified common forms of examination malpractice which include impersonation, smuggling of foreign materials, copying during examinations, and so on. Community leaders, parents and teachers are key stakeholder in the educational system with a major role to play in tackling this ugly trend. The paper largely employed literature review to examine the roles of stakeholders in tackling examinations malpractice in our Institutions. In conclusion, the study recommended government funding to our educational institutions, Community leaders should provide support for the schools and examination bodies and sensitize community on the effects of examination malpractice. School principals should be firm in making sure that all measures are taken during examinations and penalties impose on whoever is found wanting. Teachers should always sensitize the students on the consequence of exam malpractice by organizing seminar and workshop/conferences.

Keywords: The Role, Community Leaders, Parents, Teachers Examination Malpractice

Introduction

Is uncontestable that examination constitutes an important aspect of the education process, as it is the stage at which the learner's knowledge, skills, ability and competencies are assessed, and judgement made about them. The outcome of such judgement is used for diagnosing as well as placement of students based on their performances (Abdulkareem & Alabi, 2012). An attempt to subvert the due process of examinations eventually leads to examination malpractices. Examination malpractice is as old as examination itself. However, the rate at which examination malpractices occur in the Nigerian educational system is highly disturbing and, therefore, needs prompt attention by all stakeholders. Evidence has shown increasing incidents of examination malpractices by students at schools and colleges which conflict with the core purpose of education-the training of the mind and character for the practical and theoretical skills, knowledge and functional ideas for development (Aaron, 1992).

Meaning of Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice is an act or arrangement from which an examinee plans to derive illegal and illicit advantage over and above other candidates (students) in respect of some given examinations. Onokerhoraye (1993) and Maduabum (2001) defined it as an improper practice carried out before, during or after any examination by an examinee(s) or others with a view to obtaining good results. Malpractice therefore, is the use of unconventional behaviour or methods

before, during and after examination to aid, assist and attain underserved desired success in examination.

Oko and Adie (2016) defined Examination malpractice as any deliberate act of wrong doing, contrary to the rules of examinations designed to give a candidate an undue advantage. Examination malpractice also known as cheating is the illegal action that students take during their examinations to try to make good grades by cutting corners.

Forms of Exam Malpractice

The followings are the common forms of exam malpractice in our educational institutions;

1. **Impersonation:** This is one of the well-known forms of examination malpractice in Nigeria. Impersonation is simply the act of pretending to be another person for the purpose of helping that person writes an examination. The reason why this form of examination malpractice is rampant in Nigeria is because the country has not attained the kind of technological advancement that is needed to avoid any type of impersonation. Take for instance, before some examinations are taken in Nigeria, there is usually no scrutinizing of students before the examination starts. Thus, many engage in examination malpractice through Impersonation just to pass the examination.
2. **Smuggling of Foreign materials:** Another form of examination malpractice in Nigeria that is used by those engaging in it is the bringing of extraneous materials into examination hall. Nowadays, students who cannot pay the money required for impersonation, usually come into the examination hall with extraneous materials to aid themselves in the examination. This could be by bringing notebooks, papers, mobile phones or laptops into the examination hall to source for information. This is perhaps the most common form of malpractice. It relates to the introduction of unauthorized material such as; notebooks, "crib notes", charts, and answer booklets complete with answers) into the examination hall. Material is frequently smuggled in pants, shoes, hems, and bras, or information is written on parts of the body. Generally speaking, bringing extraneous materials into examination hall is prohibited in most of the examinations conducted in Nigeria. But even at that, many students still engage in this form of examination malpractice, not minding what will be the punishment or outcome of their actions.
3. **External assistance:** This form of examination malpractice is seen as normal in examinations like JAMB UTME, WAEC and NECO. In this form of examination malpractice, it is actually the exam officers that come to rescue students who did not prepare for the examination in return for some money. Sometimes, the exam officers can also threaten students to pay money so that they can be helped or else, they will fail. In this case, both students who prepare very well for the examination and those who did not must engage in examination malpractice since that is the only way they can pass the examination. This form of examination malpractice is rampant in Nigeria.
4. **Substitution of script:** Replacing answer sheets handed out during the course of the exam with ones written outside the center before, during or after the exam. This usually

involves examination office officials, invigilators and sometimes teachers working outside the examination room.

5. **Copying during examination:** This is a general form of examination malpractice common at primary, secondary and tertiary education levels in Nigeria. Students in Nigeria who did not prepare very well for their examination end up copying from their classmates or friends just to pass the examination. In Nigeria, the act of coping during examination. This is known to be done by smart students because it is only a smart student that can copy from his classmates without being caught by their teacher/lecturer.
6. **Collusion:** Unauthorized passing of information between candidates, usually by exchanging notes or scripts, or collusion with an officer of the examination setting body, allowing them to get a copy of the questions in advance.
7. **Magic Centers:** These are centers that are fully involved in aiding students pass Exams, either through writing the answers on the board or allowing the students to enter the examination halls with materials. These kinds of centers usually record high rate of passes at the end of the Examination.

Agents of Examination Malpractice

It was discovered 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, school Principals/proprietors of private schools and the government.

Parents: Some parents usually dictate what their children will do in life in term of academic pursuit, as such, they tend to facilitate that through whatever means just to make sure that their child/ward pass the exams and proceed with the career of interest. Parents tend to commit the following:

1. pay people to sit for examinations on behalf of their children/ward.
2. bribing supervisors/invigilators to write or solve on-going examinations; and
3. encouraging/buying leaked examination questions.

Teachers: some teachers tend to perform the following forms of malpractice during an examination:

1. serve as agents who always watch the arrival of examination monitoring team and alert his colleagues who are assisting the students.
2. solve questions/write on the board for students to copy.
3. allow students to copy from text/note books.

School Principals/Proprietors of private schools: Below are the various forms of exam malpractice carried out by some school proprietors/principals:

1. appointment of choice invigilators.
2. leaking information about question papers.
3. using subject teachers to assist in solving questions.
4. bribing external supervisors in order to have their ways.

Government: it has been observed 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. All these, with other factors, contributed to involvement of some stake holders in exam malpractices.

Causes of Examination Malpractice

1. **Poor Educational System:** In the past, Nigerian educational system was solid with qualified teachers who are committed to the success of their students, the required facilities for learning were readily available and all the necessary incentives are provided. Unfortunately, the situation has changed. The kind of schools we have now in our society and bad educational policies made by the government is affecting the standard of our educational system. Most of these schools are run by business men that are only interested in making money and not what their school can impact on the students. The kind of teachers employed by these schools is of low quality and Education Ministries that are supposed to check standards are compromising. These attitudes will definitely affect the performance of students in any exam.
2. **Much emphasis on Certificate:** One of the major causes of exams malpractice in Nigeria is the emphasis placed on school certification. The way Nigerian educational system lay emphasis on making good grades from school has actually caused many students to engage in examination malpractice just to make sure that they reach up to the required marks. For example, a student seeking admission into Nigerian Higher Institutions must have five credits including Maths and English even if that student is going to study Hausa/Igbo/Yoruba in the University. It is now a policy in most Nigerian Universities that whoever is seeking admission into Postgraduate Studies will have to produce O level credits in Maths and English.
3. **Over population in schools:** This can be found commonly in our public schools, a situation whereby over 100 students will be congested in classroom to write an examination. Obviously, the environment is already encouraging examination malpractice in the first place. You will discover five students sitting on a bench that is meant for two students and are writing the same examination. The overpopulation or overcrowding is a serious threat to successful examination in Nigeria.
4. **Lack of preparation for examination:** Majority of our students nowadays do not prepare for examination. Students that are expected to write an examination the next day

will be busy with their smartphones chatting through WhatsApp and other social media. You do not expect the students to pass when they do not even know what to write.

5. **Poor parental upbringing:** This is undoubtedly one of the causes contributing to examination malpractice in Nigeria. As it is rightly said, charity begins at home. Anything a person displays in the public is what he was taught at home. If a child uses any of the forms of examination malpractice just to pass an examination, it is apparent that his actions are as a result of the kind of morals built in him/her as a child. This is why poor parental upbringing is seen as one of the causes of examination malpractice in Nigeria today.

Effects of Examination Malpractice

The followings are the effects of examination malpractices on our educational system:

1. **Increase in corruption:** This is one of the biggest problems Nigeria is confronted with today. In fact, it can be opined that corruption is the major problem in Nigeria as it affects almost all sectors in the country. One of the likely consequences of examination malpractice in Nigeria is an increase in corruption rate. If students cheat in their exams, it is likely they will believe they can get away with any form of corruption afterwards.
2. **Underdevelopment:** One of the primary reasons why most underdeveloped countries find themselves in precarious situations is the lack of qualified personnel in various economic and other sectors. It is glaring that one of the reasons why Nigeria is still underdeveloped is because our education system has not been able to produce enough qualified people in different fields of study. It seems as if our education system is more concerned about producing people who can write examination and pass very well, than those who can actually put into practice what they have been taught.
3. **Lowering the Profession Standard:** Professions such as engineering, medicine, law, and teaching have standards, in attempt to compromise the standards, the end receivers will suffer the consequence. Imaging a quack Doctor, product of examination malpractice coming to handle a patient or an Engineer who cheats in examination and bagged his qualification coming to handle a construction, the end result will be disastrous.
4. **Affect Nation's Integrity:** In recent times, students prefer to study abroad than in Nigeria. The reason is because people who studied in Nigeria are valued less than those who study abroad. The funniest part of it is the fact that, Nigerian students now prefer to study in less developed countries like Ghana, South Africa and even Gambia. This point to the fact that Nigeria's education system is gradually declining and the nation's integrity is affected.

Stakeholders Roles in tackling examination malpractice

The followings are the stakeholders' roles in tackling examination malpractice in schools:

The Roles of Teachers

Commitment: To curtail exam malpractices in our schools, teachers need to be committed in their teaching, develop new skills and improve on the instructional process. This gives students/learners confidence to face examination as opposed to when they are discouraged as a result of not being properly taught by their teachers. It is a clear fact that the success of every examination starts from effective teaching. In addition, as the world is rapidly advancing technologically, teachers should be equipped and updated with the major advancement so that they can guide their students with the skills of contemporary world.

Honesty: A teacher is considered as a model as what he does serves as a reference point to the students. A teacher needs to be honest with his students, he needs to enlighten them on the consequence of exam malpractice and encourage them to be honest throughout their academic career.

Maintain and enforce the integrity of the examination process: The teachers are critical elements in the examination circle. They not only teach but are exam administrators, invigilators, and supervisors. It is therefore their professional role to maintain the integrity of examinations.

The Role of Parents

Periodic checks: Parents are expected to periodically check the learning progress of their children. They should make sure that their children's notes are up to date, so that they will have what to rely on during the period of an examination.

Provision of learning materials: It is the responsibilities of the parents to make sure that they provide all the needed Textbooks and other learning materials which will be helpful to their children during the examination period.

Moral training: Sociologically, family is said to be the first agent of socialization where the child learns all the positive attitudes that will make him a good and acceptable member of the society. A child that is morally trained from the family will not exhibit unusual character such as engaging in exam malpractice.

The Roles of Community Leaders

Sensitization: It is expected that at the period of examination. The community should organize sensitization campaigns on the dangers of engaging and aiding exam malpractice. This will help in discouraging parents and teachers who are inclined to support students' indecent act.

Identify School problems and proffer solution: The community leaders through school visitation can identify challenges such as lack of learning materials, inadequate learning environment which may be contributing factors to exam malpractice. Through communal efforts, they can proffer solutions to the identified problems.

Support punishment for offenders: Some communities may want to protect people caught in an act of exam malpractice, particularly when the offender hails from the community. This practice will always affect the integrity of the examinations. A community leader can play a

vital role in tackling exam malpractice by allowing the proper penalties impose on any offender caught on the act to be carried out.

Conclusions

Considering the importance of education as the bedrock of societal development, any factor or vice that tarnishes the outcome of the learning process must be fought by all stakeholders and well-meaning Nigerians. From the discussion so far, examination malpractice which has remained an issue in education sector requires a multidimensional approach for total eradication. Development of any nation relies solely on its human resources, and human resources are refined to be productive through education, hence eradicating examination malpractice which destroys human resources development should be taken seriously by stakeholders.

Recommendations

1. Government needs to provide the necessary funding to our educational institutions and make learning materials available so that teaching will becoming effective for our students which can be a sure way to reducing examination malpractice.
2. Community leaders should provide support for the schools and examination bodies and sensitize community on the effects of examination malpractice.
3. School principals should be firm in making sure that all measures are taken during examinations and penalties impose on whoever is found wanting.
4. Teachers should always sensitize the students on the consequence of exam malpractice by organizing seminar and workshop/conferences.

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