

Moving Towards Mastery: The Need to Eradicate Examination Malpractices in Nigerian Education System

By

ONABANJO, COMFORT FOLAKE Ph.D

*Primary Education Department, School of Education
Federal College of Education, Abeokuta.*

and

AMUSAN, MOSUNMOLA ADEBUNMI Ph.D

*General Studies Department, School of Education
Federal College of Education, Abeokuta.*

and

IYAWÉ, OMORUYI PEDRO

*Primary Education Department, School of Education
Federal College of Education, Abeokuta.*

Abstract

Melancholically speaking, examination malpractices have become a constant feature, a recurring decimal in Nigerian education system. In spite of the individual and collective efforts of stakeholders in the public school system, the current dimension of examination malpractices is alarmingly high. This study determines the causes and feasible solutions to examination malpractices in Nigerian education system, using West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination and tertiary institutions' internal examinations. A total of one hundred and twenty (120) people made up of sixty students, thirty teachers and thirty parents was used to carry out the study. These three groups, tagged STP were asked to generate the present causes and feasible solutions to this menace. Data was collected and analysed using simple percentage and correlation methods. The findings include social media, lack of facilities, ineffective and inefficient management, negligence of parents, inadequate coverage of school syllabuses, habitual lazy learning culture of students, indolence of teachers/lecturers, over-population, unfavourable examination environments, among others. The feasible solutions identified include provision of good facilities, employment of competent teachers/lecturers, availability of counselling unit in each school, among others.

Keywords: Examination, Examination malpractices, Mastery, Education, Nigerian Education System.

Introduction

Examination malpractices have become a constant feature in Nigerian education system because there is hardly any examination conducted either by Public Examination Bodies or individual institutions in the country that have not been characterised by examination malpractices. This has been adversely affecting the view of certificates obtained in Nigeria internationally.

Examination malpractices according to Onabanjo, Famuyiwa & Odunuga (2003) can be described as academic fraud, dishonesty, cheating, unfaithfulness and lack of trust in one's own work during the examination process. This refers to both staff and students. According to Adedokun (2003) in Amusan (2004) examination malpractices is defined as a misconduct or improper practice before, during or after any examination by the examinee or others with a view to obtaining good results by fraudulent means. They are conducts contrary to the rules and regulations of examination. Hence, illegal ways which students device to pass examinations.

Examination malpractices according to Asimolowo (1977) and Souze (2004), are not a new phenomenon except that the current dimension is alarmingly high. Students according to research, identified factors responsible for examination malpractice to include poor concern to students' welfare by stakeholders in education, parents, peers, siblings, etc. (Akinrefon, et al, 2016). Bitrus (2013) added other causes thus: poor teaching and learning habits, poor self-confidence students, poor conditions of examination centres, loopholes in the laws preventing malpractices, etc. Examination malpractices in Nigeria come in various forms. Onyibe, Uma & Ibina (2015) enumerated these to include collusion, impersonation, copying, inscription, bribery, gratification, grade trading, use of electronic devices, etc.

Examination malpractices in Nigeria is traced to the first leakage of the Cambridge examination in 1914 (Adesina, 2000; Omemu, 2015). Consequently, the government has since made some attempts to check this plague in the national educational system. For instance, the military government enacted Decree No. 21 in 1985 (Ojo&Olumuyiwa, 2011). The civilian government also enacted Act No. 33 of the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (as Amended) prescribing punishment for examination offenders ranging from cancellation of results to 21 years imprisonment (Oduwaiye, 2014; Oko& Adie, 2016). In 2007, the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) introduced the Community Action and Transparency Initiative (CATI) and Examination Malpractice Blacklist Initiative (EMBI) (Enah&Enah, 2014). However, government does not seem to sustain the effort to stem the tide of examination malpractice in Nigeria's educational system. The case of examination malpractices keeps recurring like a decimal.

However, Asimolowo (1977) states that sources and avenues of leakage include:

- * the handlers of question papers
- * printing of questions
- * trailing of questions

- * custodians of question papers
- * invigilators and supervisors.

Thus, examination malpractices perpetrators parade all facets of the society.

In quest to let the nation know that this evil act must not persist, the nation must get out of it, the researchers are of the opinion that something has to be done repeatedly. This is because every child, in a normal situation is educable and has the opportunity of attaining mastery though the rates may differ.

This study therefore determines both present causes and feasible solutions to eradicate examination malpractices in Nigerian education system.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised in order to address the study:

1. What are the present causes of examination malpractices in Nigerian education system?
2. What are the feasible solutions to eradicate examination malpractices in Nigerian education system?

Methodology

Three different groups of people, namely: Students, Teachers and Parents (STP) were used in the study. These were purposively selected in both Senior School Certificate and tertiary institutions. A total of one hundred and twenty persons made up of sixty students, thirty teachers and thirty parents were used. The three groups were asked to generate the present causes and feasible solutions of examination malpractices in writing. Their submissions were collected and compared by fifteen members of panel group on writing, using checklist. The lists were later given to another fifteen members called discussion group panel for their results. Both results were correlated and a coefficient of equivalence of 0.75 was obtained. The final items of twenty-three causes and ten feasible solutions were selected.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1:

The following are the present causes of examination malpractices in Nigerian education system as perceived by Students, Teachers and Parents (stakeholders).

Persistent Examination Leakages

Examination documents are meant to be kept intact till the days of examining but alas! Some officials in charge of these in private and public examining have been found to reveal them to students, friends, parents, etc for favour, fee or sex.

Unfavourable Examination Environment

The examination environment in most cases is not conducive. For examples, no ventilation, poor illumination, bad seating arrangement, dirty environment, no enough tables and chairs, noisy environment, to mention but few. Students can easily cheat in this kind of environment.

Lack of Adequate School Supervision and Monitoring

During examinations, whether internal or external, supervision and monitoring in some schools at all levels of education are inadequate. Schools are highly populated nowadays. A school presenting thousands of students for examinations for instance may have just few supervisors and invigilators while there may not even be any monitoring in some cases. All these lapses give room for cheating.

Inadequate Facilities

Good facilities are an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Where good facilities are lacking or not adequate, the teaching learning process is hindered thereby disturb the objectives and goals of the educational system. Looking into all the levels of education in Nigeria, we have situations where students sit on the floor to learn. At tertiary level, students stand by the windows or sit on the platform to receive lectures. All these conditions do give room to ill-preparation for examinations. The students want to pass by all means, so they result in cheating.

Indolence of Teachers

Teachers are very important stakeholders in any nation's educational system. Teachers are expected to prepare lecture notes, do a lot of research, bring in innovations and teach students properly while employing different methods of teachings to impart knowledge. But some teachers/lecturers nowadays embrace laziness. They bring articles to school for sale. They don't come to class regularly. Some don't even cover their syllabuses and students must sit for examinations. Why will students not cheat? They will want to pass at all cost.

Habitual Lazy Learning Culture of Students

Learning is a culture that is cultivated. Some students nowadays are so lazy to study hard and to put more efforts into serious learning. They have nothing to do with inputs but outputs, that is certificates. Some are even owning certificates they cannot defend. Learning entails hearing/listening, reading, studying, meditating, diligence at carrying out assignments, regular class attendance, participating in class and school activities, punctuality to schools, obedience to school authorities, among others. Where students are unable to carry out these effectively, result in failure because they have to reap what they sow. As a result of wanting to make good grades during examinations, these categories of students resort to cheating and all sorts of examination malpractices.

Inadequate Coverage of School Syllabuses

Some subject teachers are not helping the matter. When they do not cover syllabuses, they create a sense of inadequacy and insecurity in the psyche of students. They try to manipulate examination process to favour them. Some indolent teachers also try to engage in malpractice by aiding students during examinations mercenaries. Once a vacuum is created, cheating is resorted to fill it.

Negligence of Parents

Due to the economy of Nigeria these days, some parents have left their role of taking care and monitoring their children for pursuance of money. All these to the detriment of their children. Some parents are even desperate that their children must pass certain examination, therefore they bribe school officials, buy examination question papers for their children, etc. Some parents have even been known to arrange for people to impersonate their children during examinations, just to ensure their children's success at all costs. As if that is not enough, some parents have handed the upbringing of their children to teachers, maids, and boarding house masters/mistresses. They have no quality time for the welfare of their children. The result is that these neglected children fall into wrong companies who have nothing to do with examination honesty. So when others cheat to pass, they too join them.

Over Population

The standard examination procedure requires that there should be enough space between one candidate and the other during examination. But due to so many students these days, this is no longer possible. In some tertiary institutions, they do mix students of different subjects. But this does not stop them from cheating. In some examination halls, the invigilators are so few, with one or two supervisors. One should know that where students sit close together, there is room for cheating.

Instability in School Calendar and Time Table

There are problems of instability in Nigerian education system due to government policies, continuity of inherited policies, union leaders actions like strike, among others. This used to create anxiety as well as disrupting the teaching learning process. This anxiety force some students to cheat in examination because of lack of adequate preparation for their examinations.

Ineffective and Inefficient Management

Effective and efficient management of a school would ensure that teachers/lecturers discharge their duties and responsibilities effectively. Management of Nigerian institutions is grossly ineffective and inefficient. When teachers and students are not effectively and efficiently managed, it reduces the quality of learning. Students can connive with some teachers to cheat during examinations. Sometimes, examination question papers are wrongly packed

which will be discovered during distribution. Some students would have seen it and thereby spread as they collect them back. Also, in some cases the question papers may not go round the examinees, while waiting for those in-charge to bring the remaining, others who got theirs will be discussing answers. This is purely wrong.

Lack of Funding

The supervisors and invigilators are not well taken care of. The management reward them poorly. So they too do not bother to do the work with all their heart. This also allows students to cheat in examinations.

Peer Influence

When examination cheats are accommodated and they see that there is no punishment for it, bad groups do join thinking that it is a thing of joy. It is easy to pick up bad habits.

Desperate Desire for Promotion to Next Level

Every student wants to be promoted to the next class or level. The unscrupulous, lazy ones are so desperate to be promoted. They try to do all sorts of manipulations, writing on the palms, laps, papers, etc., smuggling these to exam halls, even when they do not even know the tone of questions they will come across.

Desperate Desire for Awards

Some examining bodies do reward students that excel in examinations as well as the schools who produce them. As a result of this, some unreasonable teachers, Principals and heads of departments do manipulate examination processes to favour their students. Teachers and students tend to cheat for their promotion.

Lack of Counselling and Counselling Unit

Students have no proper counsel on the evils of examination malpractices. Some schools do not have counsellors to guide these students. Some students are pursuing careers they cannot cope with, and there is no counsellor to guide. When they are examined, they cheat because they want to pass at all cost. No one wants to fail. So, the solution is cheating.

Use of Relevant Textbooks

Some students don't bother to have textbooks these days. Some prefer to read on handset, through Google, not knowing that hard copy is still much relevant. There are so many exercises to be done after series of examples would have been given. These students are so lazy to read and study their textbooks. They know that the last thing to do to pass is cheating. Parents too are not helping the situation. Some parents do not care whether their children have books or not. It's a very sad attitude.

Unemployment

The rate of unemployment in Nigeria now is very high. Some youths who have nothing to do with morals and integrity have trained themselves to become mercenaries and impersonators for students during examinations and collect a lot of money. They see it as a business.

Weakness of the Law

There is existence of law so that man can live in peace and improved the state of his nature. Nobody is above the law and law is no respecter of persons. The reverse is the case in Nigeria. Virtually every examination in the country these days has at least a cheat. We hear the news of examination cheats being caught but we hardly hear them facing the penalties prescribed by the law. In Nigeria, there are laws but no enforcement.

Emphasis on Paper Qualifications

In Nigeria today, there is much emphasis on certificates and this has led to proliferation of sandwich, part-time programmes, and sundry school touting certificates. A man is assessed, employed and promoted based on the number of certificates he can present. This has forced a lot of people who are not cut out for academics to enrol for programmes that would lead to the award of certificates. In most cases, they cannot defend such certificates by academic performance. They have cheated to obtain the certificates. Such could hardly perform if they are employed too.

Lack of Confidence

Some students do not have the confidence that they can perform well in examinations. Some do not prepare well, therefore fear examinations. Since they do not want to fail, they resort to cheating in order to make up.

Inadequate Security Apparatus

In any examination environment, if we want things to go on smoothly, good and adequate security apparatus must be provided. Here in Nigerian society, our security officials are not equipped at all for this task. Two or one security operative may be assigned to an examination centre with thousands of candidates who have arrived with dangerous elements just because they are desperate to pass and get certificates. This type of situation is dangerous to the operative, who have nothing for protection, as well as other innocent candidates.

Social Media

Social media has a lot of advantages but Nigerian students are misusing it. Majority are on the negative side. Some students spend hours on this, playing games, chatting, especially on Whatsapp, sending useless messages, receiving jargons, opening and recording unprofitable texts and videos among others. The hours they will spend on studying their books will be wasted on social media.

Research Question 2:

What are the feasible solutions to Examination malpractices in Nigerian education system?

The feasible solutions identified, as agreed upon are as follows:

Having Good School Management

Good management entails discipline, honesty, loyalty, integrity, hardworking, etc. When good management is in place, staff, both academic and non-academic will sit up, students have no choice than to comply. Then cheating will be eliminated like unwanted variable.

Adequate Provision of Security Apparatus

There should be adequate provision of security operatives with good apparatus in all schools and examination centres at all time. This will scare away the so called mercenaries and impersonators. This can totally wipe off the possibility of cheating.

Promoting Good Learning Culture

Good culture can be possibly cultivated. School and government and other calibres of individuals can work together to inculcate good learning culture in students across the country. When students are used to studying and learning on their own, cheating in examination will be erased.

Provision of Quality Facilities

Government should try to furnish schools with lasting and quality facilities. If students know that they will have seats with tables to write and will be comfortable, they will all be attending schools and prepare for examinations. Cheating will go away.

Paying Attention to Students Individually

Paying personal attention to each student will enable teacher to become close to the students and knows their strengths, weaknesses and aspirations. As a result of this, help will come and students will forget about cheating during examinations.

Availability of Textbooks

Schools should make textbooks compulsory for students and give them assignments from them. Schools and teachers should strategize on how to ensure that individual students study from their textbooks. This provision of textbooks will reduce cheating during examinations.

Adequate Funding of Education

If Nigerian educational system is to survive, funding must be considered to be very crucial. If government can fund all aspects of education adequately,

facilities will be provided, learning will take place in a conducive atmosphere, students will be cool and calm. Teachers will also be empowered. Supervisors and invigilators will be remunerated. This will chase cheating away.

Establishment of Guidance and Counselling Unit

Some students, as weak as they are, want to study medicine because their fathers want it that way. So also, other disciplines like Law, Engineering, etc. Some are even ignorant of subject combinations. Proper counselling of students would assist them in career choice. Guidance and Counselling Unit will also impress it on them that examination malpractices is wrong, and has bad consequences for individual students, their families, schools and society at large.

Applying Appropriate Sanctions to Culprits

If both school and government can really apply appropriate sanctions to whosoever offends not minding where the offender comes from, it will inculcate fear into the heart of others. So, erring students should be sanctioned no matter how highly their parents are placed.

Adequate Preparation

This include provision of learning materials for students, to make sure that they learn in good atmosphere, neat environment, well ventilated halls, illumination, chairs and table fully provided and crowned these with quality teachers. Examination malpractices will be greatly reduced. Each student will work to achieving the level of mastery in all their subjects.

Use of Electronic Detector

The appliance of the use of electronic detector may be necessary at the points of entrance into the examination from halls to detect fraudulent students.

Conclusion

Examination malpractices of any form are very inimical to the integrity of this country, Nigeria and it can be completely wiped out if there is cooperation among the stakeholders. This cooperation will guide and help them to achieve the above points stated. It is possible for Nigeria to join the league of examination malpractice – free societies while individual students will desire to have good masteries of the subjects offered which is very possible.

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