

Menace of Examination Malpractice in Nigerian Educational Institutions: Implications for National Productivity and Economy

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Abstract The study focused on the menace of examination malpractice in Nigerian educational institutions and its implications for national productivity and economy. Examination malpractice is a cankerworm that is posing a serious problem in the Nigerian educational system. The paper not only defined the concept of examination malpractice but also identified the types or forms, the causes or reasons, the effects as well as the ways to eradicate it. This paper also explicates the implications of examination malpractice on national productivity and economy which are majorly negative. Based on the implications, recommendations, were made which inter alia include: proper counselling of students, intensified public enlightenment campaigns, strict interviews to be conducted for candidates seeking admission into schools and applicants seeking employment, emphasis should be on practical performance in lieu of reliance on certificates (paper qualifications).

Keywords: examination malpractice, Nigerian

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1. Introduction

Education can be said to be as old as man. This is because human beings continue to learn in order to improve and make progress in life affairs. Education over the years has become institutionalized by the society at large considering the vital role it plays in individual persons and the society at large. It is based on this premise that Eze in Oforika ([1]: 96) posits that "education is recognized as the vital transformational tool and formidable instrument for socio-economic empowerment". In the same vein, Anyikwa and Igwe ([2]: 5) maintain that "education is the sure way of raising the consciousness of individual members of any society in order to achieve peace, harmony and national development". Furthermore, Okoh ([3]: 13) posits that "there are three ways of using the term education, namely: education as a process; education as a product; and education as a discipline". Explaining education as a process, Okoh [3] asserts that

Education as a process is the activity of preserving, developing, and transmitting the culture of a people from one generation to another. As a process, education is an activity rather than a concept. It is the activity of continuous all-round development of the individual for life in society. Pp13

The excerpt above reveals education as a process and as such an activity rather than a concept which means that it

is a process of imparting knowledge. Impartation of knowledge is a pedagogical process that requires evaluation. In teaching and learning process evaluation is inherent and it is done at the end of the lesson. Meanwhile, a more serious assessment (examination) is conducted periodically especially at the end of each term, semester or session, which is used for placement. The placement here means to be promoted to a higher class, to achieve high grade, to earn a good certificate that can enhance employment etc.

From the above explanation, examination seems to be a window or door that enhances acquisition of statuses. It is for this all-important reasons that most candidates for examination tend to do everything humanly possible to pass their examinations without minding the consequences. This paper therefore explicates the concept of examination malpractice, reasons/causes, forms and effects of examination malpractice. It also discusses its implications on national productivity and economy.

2. The Concept of Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice refers to any fraudulent or illegal means used by an examinee to become successful in an examination. According to Asuka [4] examination malpractice is any deviant act that is perpetrated by a student, candidate or person (aiding a candidate) before

during and after an examination to be declared successful. Also Asuru [5] posits that the 'mal' in the practice is a Latin word for bad so examination malpractice means a 'bad' practice applied in an examination in order to make the examinee earn an unmerited grade. Oke and Jakayinfa (cited in [6]: 74) posits that "examination malpractice refers to fraudulent illegal or crooked way of obtaining success or high grades in examinations, assessment or evaluation of students".

One may ask, when did examination malpractice started? In response the history of examination malpractice could be traced to 1914 when the senior Cambridge local examination leaked, and in 1948 when a Nigerian had his paper on History cancelled for coming to the examination hall with foreign paper that was related to the examination in question, Oke and Jakanyinfa (cited in Yahaya [6]). Furthermore, Ajere ([7]: 192-193) asserts that "in 1977 mass leakage of examination questions occurred during the May/June West African School Certificate Examination. According to him, the magnitude of the leakage was so terrible that destitutes have access to live question papers. Infact, Onyechere in Agabi and Egbezor ([8]: 216) posit that "in Nigeria the issue of examination malpractice has become a monster almost defying every solution. It has intimidated Nigeria to submission and to a state of hopelessness". Examination malpractice is a deviant act punishable by not only the school but also by the Federal Government of Nigeria. For an act to be regarded as malpractice is a deviant act punishable by not only the school but also by the Federal Government of Nigeria. For an act to be regarded as malpractice, it must contravene the rules and regulations governing its conduct. On this consideration, it therefore becomes a truism that where an examiner deliberately awards a lower grade to an examinee to put him in a disadvantage, he is also guilty of examination malpractice ([9]: 45).

An expanded definition has been put forward by, Ajere ([10]: 193) as he submits that "examination malpractice can be regarded as intellectual crime, intellectual fraud, intellectual disrepute or intellectual dishonor that involves parents, students, school administrators, teachers, security agents, clerks, typists, computer programmers and virtually almost all facets of the entire society because of get-rich syndrome".

3. Classes/Types/Forms of Examination Malpractice

There are several types, classes or forms of examination malpractice. According to Agabi and Egbezor ([8]: 216), West African Examination Council in 1992 classified examination malpractice into the following:

1. Bringing in of foreign or unauthorized material into the examination hall.
2. Irregular activities inside or outside the examination hall.
3. Collusion
4. Impersonation
5. Assault/insult on supervisors or invigilators.
6. Mass cheating.
7. Special cases.

Inspite of the above, Ajere ([7]: 193-194) outlined the following forms of examination malpractice:

- Falsification of examination result either by examinees or even examiners.
- Storage of questions and answers inside mobile phones.
- Creation of examination centers outside the coverage of internet detections.
- Accessing examination questions through the internet on the eve of the examination for discussion over-night.
- Conniving with examination body unfaithful staff to access live questions through the internet.
- Giving or receiving assistance of varied kinds from parents and other allied groups.
- Causing confusion and distraction to enable prepared answers come into the examination hall.
- Teachers or lecturers soliciting and wooing colleagues for the award of unmerited grades to their favourite student or students or even parents acting at the same capacity.
- Examinee having foreknowledge of the questions before the actual examination time (leakage).
- Verbal exchange of ideas and giraffing due to proximity of test-mates and overcrowdedness.
- Bribing invigilators and supervisors so as to turn 'blind eyes' to malpractice or giving examination contractors and impersonators the questions to take away so as to prepare answers outside the examination hall.
- Awarding inflated marks to students by teachers.
- Examinees issuing threat to examiners.

Certainly, the above forms or classes of examination malpractice being indulged by the perpetrators were caused by one thing or another. Hence we turn to the next sub-topic.

4. Causes or Reasons for Examination Malpractice

Several reasons have been advanced as the factors of examination malpractice. They include:

- Moral decadence: The standard of moral virtues among the youths is falling.
- The value system: There is loss in the dignity of labour rather achievement is judged in terms of material wealth.
- Economic factor: The low income or poor remuneration of teachers in Nigeria has made some of the teachers to be vulnerable to undignified forms of making money.
- Diploma disease: Undue emphasis on certificate has made everyone to aspire for it hence encouraging examination malpractice.
- Psychological factor: Some students are expressing fear and lack of confidence in their own capability, hence they indulge in malpractice to avoid being stigmatized as failures.
- Poor teaching and learning environment: Most of the schools in Nigeria lack adequate infrastructure for proper learning to take place. Since students are

ill-equipped, they resort to examination malpractice to pass.

- Wrong admission policies/unqualified candidates: Proper examination and interviews are no longer used as criteria for gaining admission into schools. Worse still is the issue of mass promotion.
- Lack of proper supervision during the administration of examination.
- Teachers and school status: The reputation of most schools is hinged on the success of the students in public examinations. This therefore lures all members of staff, students and even invigilators to become involved in the malpractice.
- Parental pressure and expectations on children: Some parents are willing to resort to various corrupt tactics to enhance their children's success in public examinations.
- Lack of proper guidance and counseling for students in schools: This has led some students to offer courses that they do not have talent for.

5. Effects of Examination Malpractice

Examination is used as a means of testing the knowledge or competence of an examinee. But if some of the examinees indulge in examination malpractice, the result of that examination cannot be relied upon. It becomes a waste of time and resources on the part of the examining body and the society at large because the reliability of scores of most students are in doubt. This of course has a negative effect on the nation's image. Meanwhile the effects of examination malpractice could be summarized as follows:

- It discredits the entire educational system.
- It leads to production of quacks as professionals who cannot perform or defend their certificates.
- It can bring about total collapse of the society when its products can no longer sustain the society due to non-performance.
- Nigeria's image abroad could be at stake.
- Hard working students could be discouraged and also leads to low self-esteem as students are no longer sure of their abilities.
- Hard working students are demoralized and disillusioned as they see dull students make better grades.
- Many good students have been denied admission by corrupt ones who through examination malpractice have better scores and grades.
- Huge sums of money are spent by examination bodies trying to combat examination malpractice.

6. Strategies to Eradicate Examination Malpractices in Schools

Techniques to eradicate the menace of examination malpractice abound. Such techniques or strategies include:

- Need for both the government and school administrators to organize workshops, seminars and conferences at regular intervals to teach students,

teachers, parents and even school administrators on the aftermath of examination malpractice.

- The government and every institution of the society should rise up to the challenge of instilling discipline in the citizenry.
- Mass campaign should be made especially by Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like National Orientation Agency (NOA) to enlighten people on the consequences of examination malpractice.
- Schools should be adequately provided with infrastructural facilities so that teaching and learning can be enhanced.
- Qualified teachers should be employed so that impartation of knowledge would be done by only professionals.
- The government should de-emphasize paper (certificate) qualifications as this is not healthy for the society.
- Adequate remuneration of staff in educational institutions would enhance their commitment to duties.
- There is need to promote honesty and integrity in the society and punish perpetrators of bribery, malpractice etc.
- Schools should only admit pupils or students based on the availability of infrastructure and personnel. Over population has an inherent supervision problem.
- Law enforcement agencies as well as organs responsible for the promotion of ethics in the society should be drafted to combat examination malpractice in schools.

In spite of the above outlines, one of the good strategies adopted by some tertiary institutions is expulsion of students who do not meet up a stipulated minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). For instance, University of Port Harcourt has such policy of expelling any student whose CGPA is below 1.00 at the end of the first session (100 level).

Similarly, the senate of University of Ibadan on 24th April, 2018 asked 408 students of the institution to withdraw due to their inability to meet the minimum academic requirement in their courses of study. The advice to withdraw was sequel to the admission of some students who did not write the Post – Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations screening examinations following the opposition raised against it by many parents. The academic performance affected three-quarters of the 3,483 students admitted in 100 level for the 2016/2017 session ([10]: 31).

7. Examination Malpractice and its Implications for National Productivity and Economy

According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria ([11]: 4), "Education in Nigeria is an instrument 'par excellence' for affecting national development". It is on this basis that huge chunk of the nation's resources is invested in education sector. It is believed that if the citizens are properly educated, it would translate to national development. The reason being that it is the educated person that would bring about infrastructural development as well as every other aspect of development such as national productivity and economy.

Ordinarily, there is much expectations from those who are said to have undergone learning in an educational institution. Such expectation is that they would be tested in the form of examination to prove that they have learnt well. At this point, it is rather unfortunate that some examinees resort to malpractice to pass examinations. This attitude has implications for both the educational system and national productivity.

One of such implications is that examinations malpractice results in the production of quacks as professionals who cannot perform to support their assumed qualification e. g. quack medical doctors, ill-equipped accountants, poor administrators, quality teachers who cannot competently handle the subject they are trained to teach.

The above is supported by Ogbada [12] as he states that *Examination malpractice is capable of not only ruining our educational system but also impairing the efficiency of our labour force. He added that people who are mentally and normally defective are smuggled into public offices that they cannot competently handle. Thus, the wrong people are placed on the helm of affairs of the nation* pp23.

The excerpt above identifies the effect of examination malpractice on the efficiency of labour force. It therefore stands to reason that whatever affects the labour force has invariably affected national productivity and the economy. This is because the country's sustenance is dependent on the working population especially the skilled manpower. In support of the above, findings released by the financial derivatives company limited, FDC on the comparative assessment between the minimum wage in Nigeria and five selected countries, namely; Norway, Luxemburg, the United States, Belgium and the Netherlands, has revealed that low pay in Nigeria affects productivity of the country's workforce negatively ([13]: 17).

It is therefore not surprising that the World Bank's World Development Report 2018 has shown that only about 20% of young Nigerian adults who have completed primary education can read. The report said that when primary four, pupils in Nigeria were asked to complete a simple two-digit subtraction problem, more than three-quarters of those asked could not solve it. It warned that a learning crisis loomed in education, pointing out that schooling without learning was not just a wasted development opportunity, but also a great injustice to children and young people. The report further stated that children who, after several years in school, cannot read, write or do basic mathematics are likely to reach adulthood without the most basic skills of life. They may therefore not be effectively integrated into the political and community life of the society ([14]: 13).

Apart from the effect on national productivity, examination malpractice also affects the economy negatively because examination bodies spend large sums of money trying to combat malpractice. This money ought to have been used for other meaningful ventures that would boost the nation's economy.

8. Conclusion

Examination malpractice is known to be an evil act and a such unacceptable everywhere in the world. Indulging in

it portends negative signal on both the national productivity and the economy. This is because mediocrities would dominate the labour force and the consequence would be production of goods that are sub-standard. The economy can be affected also if much of the resources would be concentrated on tackling examination malpractice.

9. Recommendations

- i. Examination officials should be motivated in cash so that they cannot be vulnerable to temptation.
- ii. Disciplinary action on perpetrators of examination malpractice should be taken immediately without fear or favour.
- iii. Proper counselling of pupils and students can go a longer to changing their mind set about examination malpractice.
- iv. Public enlightenment campaign on the consequences of examination malpractice can be done by such bodies as National Orientation Agency (NOA) as well as other Non-Governmental Organizations, NGOs.
- v. Movement should be restricted to examination venues during examination period.
- vi. Strict interviews should be conducted for employment into any position for efficiency of labour force.
- vii. Practical performances should be preferred to certificates or paper qualification.

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