

Examination Malpractices in Nigeria Higher Institutions; Types, Causes, and Implications

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Among other problems bedeviling higher institutions of learning in Nigeria is the issue of examination malpractices. This seems to have negatively influence the quality of education in the country and appears to have affected the level of international recognition of Nigerians certificate in the outside world. The purpose of this study is to investigate and establish the types, causes and implications of examination malpractices in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. It indicates that the main types of Exam malpractices include: Leakage of Exam Questions, unauthorized writings, copying, impersonation among others. Some of the causes of exam malpractices include: poor preparation for exams, lack of integrity on the part of students, financial gain, etc. The study shows that the implications of exam malpractices are: undeserving students awarded degrees, which leads to poor job performance in the labour market, and in turn affects the overall economy of the country as a whole. The study concludes that action needs to be taken to save our institutions of higher learning from this vice. This study recommends the following to curb the problem: tough penalties for the culprits, moderation of exams, installation of CCTV cameras, and improvement on invigilation amongst others.

Keywords: Education, Higher Institution, Examination Malpractice

Word Count: 197

Introduction

Education is a right that should be provided to all human beings solely by reasons of being human. Education concerns the individual and society. It is the act of systematic development or training of the mind, capabilities or character through instruction or study. Education varies in its forms, philosophy, contents, and methods in different societies across the globe. It is a means of socializing people into the community, for upholding customs and traditions as well as for the modification or changing of same in conformity with existing ideologies, ideological expansion or reformation. Education is an instrument for effecting national development. C. O. Onyibe, & CO defined education as production and reproduction of knowledge of people's way of life (i.e. their culture) with the aim of preserving and maintaining the social structure that will be able to guarantee social order and changes in the society.

Education is the foundation upon which physical and technological developments rest. In Nigeria, Education has been adopted as an instrument for national development. According to

Alhassan, Ayanniyi, Anya, & Chidimma governments, Communities, private organizations and individuals have established educational institutions with a view of training the citizens for the development of the nation's physical and human resources. The vision for the education sector for 2030 is, to have globally competitive quality education, training and research for sustainable development (Government of Nigeria (GON), 2019). One of the objectives of education in Nigeria is to prepare the young ones to face future challenges and develop them to meet the nation's manpower requirements. In educational institutions, teaching and guidance activities are supposed to take place so that appropriate skills and knowledge can be acquired by the students. (Bunmi Bailey 2017)

History of Nigerian Education System

Methodist missionaries started the first primary school in Nigeria in 1843. Thankfully, they introduced formal education in Nigeria. A few years later, in 1854, some Christian missionaries started CMS grammar school in Lagos which became the first secondary school in Nigeria. Once Lord Laggard had amalgamated the northern and southern parts of Nigeria in 1914, there was a growing demand for schools in Nigeria. The rapid growth in education led to the establishment of the University of Ibadan in 1948, and this was the first Nigerian university (Eneh, A Eneh Onyenekenwa 2014). Individuals and groups in the private sector took the responsibility to establish private schools in addition to the public schools. The educational sector in Nigeria has both government and private schools across all levels of education.

The government and private stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations and private individuals manage educational facilities as stipulated by the national policy on education. The federal ministry of education regulates both public and private educational institutions. Nigeria has 3 government levels: Federal, State and Local. The federal government and state government manage public tertiary and secondary level institutions, while the local government oversees public pre-primary and primary level institutions (Akanni, &Odofin, 2015)

The Nigerian educational system was formerly structured using the 6-3-3-4 formula, which means 1 year pre-primary, 6 years primary, 3 years junior secondary, 3 years senior secondary and 4 years tertiary education. Tertiary education covers universities, polytechnics and educational colleges. However, in 2008, the federal government introduced the 9-year basic education curriculum to achieve the goals of the universal basic education program.

Thus, the Nigerian educational structure became 9-3-4, which means 9 years basic education, 3 years senior secondary school education and 4 years tertiary education (Tajudeen Adewumi Adebisi 2014).

The structure of the 9-year basic education curriculum is:

- Lower basic education curriculum- Primary 1-3
- Middle basic education curriculum- Primary 4-6
- Upper basic education curriculum- Junior secondary 1-3

Nigerian formal educational structure is divided into:

- Basic education (9yrs)
- Senior secondary school education (3)
- Higher/Tertiary education (4)

Higher Education

All over the world, three levels of education are generally recognized. They are primary/or elementary, secondary and higher education. As the name implies higher education is the highest of all the levels. It includes all levels of education above the secondary or high school cadres. For most higher education, the successful completion of the secondary level is a prerequisite for entry; there are several levels of higher education which includes colleges of education, Colleges of technology, polytechnics amongst others. Then, there is the university system which is the highest level of higher education. Each of these levels has its successful completion certificates awarded to students' (Nnam, M. U., & Inah, A. F. 2015).

Higher education is very closely connected to national economy especially as it serves as a source of training ground for well-educated manpower for all sectors of the economy.

The importance of higher education cannot be over-emphasized. The need for higher education is partly based on the fact that those with higher education qualifications have a better chance of securing job in a competitive economy compared to those without higher educational qualifications (Friday Oko Orji 2017).

History of Higher Education in Nigeria

The Nigerian higher educational system comprises of Universities, Polytechnic and Colleges of Education amongst others. The first higher educational institution in Nigeria is the Yaba Higher College, which was established in 1932. In 1948, the University College Ibadan was founded as an affiliate of the University of London. University College Ibadan continued as the only University Institution in Nigeria until 1960. In April 1959, the Nigerian government commissioned an inquiry (Ashby Commission) to advise it on the higher educational needs of the new nation for its first two decades of Independence. Before the submission of the report in 2nd September, 1960, the Eastern Region government established its own university at Nsukka. (University of Nigeria Nsukka in 1960).

In 1962, three autonomous universities sprang up simultaneously – the University of Ife at Ile-Ife – (now Obafemi Awolowo University) on June 30, 1962, the University of Lagos, first at Idi-Araba in

October in 1962 and the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria on October 4, 1962. The Ahmadu Bello University incorporated the Zaria branch of the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, the Ahmadu Bello College in Kano (later Bayero College), the Institute of Administration, Zaria, the Institute for Agricultural Research, Samaru, and the Veterinary Research Institute at Vom (Ampofo, J.A 2021). It was not until eight years after that a sixth university – the University of

Benin (formerly Midwest Institute of Management and Technology) was established in 1970. That is the genesis of higher education in Nigeria (Ngohi B. Umar, Naomi N. Adamu).

Examination

Examination is a formal test taken to show knowledge or ability in a particular subject or to obtain a qualification (Emmanuel Ejike 2018).

Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice simply means any form of misbehavior that leads to the alteration of or tempering with the prescribed ways of conducting examination in any given system. Examination malpractice is a punishable offence which is committed during the process of examination. Examination malpractice also means any wrong doing, misconduct, dishonesty or improper practices for personal gains or violation of set rules of conduct during examination².

Examination malpractice is a corrupt practice within the educational system in Nigeria. This practice is thriving strongly in our system, thus making it a real monster.

History of Examination Malpractice in Nigeria

Examination malpractice is as old as Nigeria itself. Long before 1960, students in the country have been cheating their way through. Examination malpractice was first recorded in the country in 1914. During that year, it was reported that the question papers of the Senior Cambridge Local Examinations were seen by candidates before the scheduled date of the exam. Ever since then, examinations and students have never remained the same again.

By 1970, the situation has gone out of the frying pan into the fire – not only students are now engaged in the act, their parents, uncles, brothers, sisters, cousins, and unfortunately, lecturers and examiners have become part of the cheating gang (Guardian Newspaper 2017).

Forms of Examination Malpractices

This study found out that the ways through which examination malpractices are perpetrated are almost the same and they cut across in all the higher institutions in the Country. The malpractices ranged from carrying unauthorized materials commonly known as expo or microchips, to the use of smart phones. This study established the following as the common types of examinations malpractice in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria:

❖Carrying of Unauthorized Materials

This is perhaps the most common form of malpractice. It involves carrying unauthorized material into the exam room and referring to them during exams. The unauthorized materials could be note books, crib notes, charts and answers that are carried into the examination hall in pants, shoes, hems and bras, socks, belts etc. Sometimes it involves carrying gadgets with photos of notes or material

related to the exams. This form of malpractice is practiced in almost all the higher institutions we have in Nigeria.

❖Leakage of Exam Questions

This means accessing exam questions before the exemption day. The content of examination questions or part of it is disclosed prior to taking the examination. Usually, it involves staff members in the examination office such as typists, printers, proof-readers, messengers, secretaries etc.

❖Impersonation

This involves an individual who is not registered as a candidate for the exam, taking the place of one that is registered. The impersonator is motivated with monetary reward to sit and write exams for the original candidate in the examination hall.

❖Use of smart phones and other electronic gadgets

Some students save important content on smart phones and other electronic gadgets such as electronic watches and access the materials during examinations without anyone suspecting them. This is among the most recent type of examination malpractice in higher institutions in the country. Sometimes the students use mobile phones with internet connectivity to quickly download important information related to the examinations.

❖Copying

This malpractice involves reproducing another student's work with or without their permission or consent. This sometimes happened in the examination halls and its called giraffing.

Causes of Examination Malpractices in Higher Institutions

Some of the most common causes of examination malpractices include the following:

1. Fear of failure:

Students' engagement in examination malpractice can be traced back to fear of failure. Selfconfidence in this context is when a student believes and has faith that he will make it in examination without cheating. Many students get involved in malpractice during examination because they doubt that their ability to have an excellent result without having a “microchip” attached to their body

2. Poor Preparations for examinations

Poor preparations make students not to be ready for the examinations therefore making them to want to cheat in the exams in order to pass and avoid sitting for special or supplementary examinations. Laziness and procrastination is a key factor amongst our students that leads to poor preparation for exams.

3. Bad Parenting

It is shameful that some parents do not perform their role. Some parents encourage examination malpractice by buying certificates for their wards' some even go the length of bribing lecturers so as to favor their wards. This in turn makes student feel reluctant and as a result, they do not take their studies seriously.

The Effects of Examination Malpractice on National Development

- a. Examination malpractice kills the country's academic reputation: It is a fact that at present, owing to the high rate of examination malpractice in Nigeria, most foreign countries no longer value academic certificate issued in Nigeria as they view them as being no more valuable than the piece of paper on which they are printed. This pose a big threat to Nigerian graduates when they go abroad.
- b. Examination malpractice kills the spirit of hard work and innovation as most students now depend on malpractice to cheat their way to success than their counterparts who wasted their time studying: This ultimately leads to low productivity as people get job in areas where they know little or nothing about, even with their excellent certificates.
- c. It leads to suspension or expulsion of student involved, which may lead to termination of the student's academic career, and for the lecturer, it can as well lead to suspension or outright dismissal from the school.
- d. The rate of collapse of building, economic sabotage, vandalism, kidnapping, drug trafficking, manufacturing of fake drugs, are practical effects of moral decadence, emanating from examination malpractice.
- e. The fight against corruption cannot be realized if examination malpractice continues unabated in our educational system. As future leaders who have pass through a school system characterized by academic fraud and dishonesty, it will certainly manifest into fraudulent behaviour in any organization they may find themselves. Those that cheat to pass examination will cheat to get employed, have spouse, and even to win election through electoral violence or other sharp practices (Monkey Phyta 2015).

Solutions to Examination Malpractice in Nigeria

Below are some tentative solutions to the problem of examination malpractice in Nigeria:

1. Good parental upbringing
2. Increase in the salary of lecturers
3. Incentives for those who report malpractice cases
4. Less emphasizes on Examination as a true test of knowledge in our society
5. Creation of more schools and learning facilities
6. Government should encourage education

1. Good parental upbringing:

From my discussion in the early part of this work, it is clear the parental upbringing contributes a lot to examination malpractice in Nigeria. The way a child is trained can increase or decrease the rate of examination malpractice in Nigeria. The reason is because, most people act the way they act in the public because, that is the way they were trained.

On that note, if parents can inculcate in their children that examination malpractice should be frowned upon at, there will be a drastic decline in the rate of examination malpractice in Nigeria. In 2017, my friend told me the story of a student who insisted that he will not engage in examination malpractice even when every other person was. The student told the invigilator that his mother warned him not to engage in examination malpractice and that he must obey his mother. When I heard of this, I was amazed. No doubt, good parental upbringing can really decrease the rate of examination malpractice in Nigeria.

2. Increase in the salary of lecturers:

I have come to realize that not every teacher/Lecturer actually likes encouraging students to engage in examination malpractice. Sometimes, lecturers engage in examination malpractice because their salary is not enough for them. Thus, in order to increase their salary, they will ask students to pay some amount of money so as to enable them pass the examination.

Trust me; if the government should increase the salary of lecturers in school by 30%, there will be less case of examination malpractice in Nigeria. To corroborate this, many lecturers have expressed the opinion that one of the tentative ways through which examination malpractice can be fought in Nigeria is by increasing the salaries of lecturers. It will really go a long way to curb examination malpractice in this country.

3. Incentives for those who report malpractice cases:

In 2011, the government of Nigeria devised a new way of catching corrupted persons in the country. The government made a public announcement that there will be incentives for anyone who reports any case of corruption to the government. That year, many corrupt public officers were exposed. In fact, some corrupt people who didn't want to get caught started to pressurize the government to stop the policy.

If that same tactic is deployed in fighting examination malpractice in Nigeria, there will be a rapid decrease in the rate of examination malpractice in Nigeria. If the government or any examination body in Nigeria starts giving incentives to people who report cases of examination malpractice, the rate of examination malpractice in Nigeria will decrease in a short time.

4. Less emphasis on Examination as a true test of knowledge in our society

Until less emphasis is placed on paper qualification in Nigeria, many students will not stop striving to get good grades in school through any means. I have stated in the early part of this work that one

of the reasons why many students engage in examination malpractice is for them to get the best grade while in school, as that will determine how fit they are in their profession.

Employers of labor must understand that grades don't really show that someone is fit for a job. What will show that someone is really fit for a job is the practical capacity of that person. It is possible for a student who had low grades while in school to work better than another student with good grades in the same area of specialty.

My point here is that for examination malpractice to reduce, it is necessary that lesser value be placed on the paper qualification of students.

5. Creation of more schools and learning facilities:

This is on the part of the government. By creating more schools in Nigeria, there will be less number of students in a particular classroom and that will discourage examination malpractice in any form. Evidently, students in schools where there are very low numbers of students perform better than those in over populated schools.

The reason is because, in those less populated schools, students are well monitored to ensure that they actually learn what is being taught in the classroom. However, no teacher/Lecturer in an overpopulated school has the time and strength to do that.

Providing learning facilities will also help to foster learning in school. It will help students to know what they are supposed to know at every level of their education. In my opinion, creating more schools and learning facilities will go a long way to solve the problem of examination malpractice in Nigeria.

6. Government should encourage education:

Trust me, if the government starts encouraging education there will be a drastic reduction in the number of examination malpractice recorded in the country every year. In the United States of America currently, students who are not able to completely pay for their education can be given loan by the US government.

This does not only show that their education is important. It also encourages students in the US to keep studying. Increasing the salary of every profession is also a good idea because when students are confident about what they can earn after graduating, they won't be looking for ways to make money or scam other people online.

From my discussion so far, it is evident that the problem of examination malpractice can be drastically reduced in Nigeria, even though it cannot be totally stopped. With the tentative solutions I have proffered, there is no doubt that Nigeria's education system can still come back to life.

However, for such thing to happen, our parents, government and teacher must also play their role effectively. The Nigerian society must see examination malpractice as an abominable act. This will help to deter many students from engaging in examination malpractice in the country (Ajogbeje Oke James 2022).

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

Institutions of higher learning should give tough penalties to culprits for example some universities expel such students unlike others which just cancel results or suspend the culprit for a maximum of Two years.

Staff involved in cheating should also be punished for example by sacking. Apart from those engaged in examination malpractices been dismissed from the universities they must be made to face the full rigors of the Law. This will help bring decency into our educational and examination system.

Institutions of higher learning should invest in Close Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras to curb the vice. All examination Rooms in the Universities should be installed with CCTV cameras to catch those involved in cheating and to discourage those who plan to be involved.

Universities should organize to teach students on the virtue of integrity right from first year. This can be done in the various courses which are taught at the university or through workshops and seminars for students

Universities should organize for workshops and seminars on administration of examinations for lecturers and university non-teaching staff who handle examinations

Students' class attendance should be monitored to ensure they attend classes and learn properly before sitting for exams. This will ensure students learn all that they are supposed and therefore be ready to do exams without copying

Lecturers and others who participate in supervision of exams should be paid a token of appreciation for the work so that they are motivated to do the work diligently

Students should be made aware of the negative consequences of examination malpractices. This should be done at the beginning of their studies in institutions of higher learning (Omotayo Esther 2013)

Conclusions

If something is not done to stop this terrible act that is eating into the vital part of our educational fabric then certificates awarded by Nigerian institutions of higher learning would not be recognized both in the local and international level. At the same time employers would no longer respect such certificates from universities. The worst is we cannot attain sustainable development and eradicate poverty if examination malpractices happen in our institutions of higher learning which are supposed to produce high level manpower with skills for development.

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