

TEACHER'S STRATEGIES FOR CURBING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Examination malpractice is as old as examination itself, however, the rate at which examination malpractices occur in the Nigerian educational system is highly disturbing. It therefore needs prompt attention by all stakeholders. The phenomenon has both moral and legal dimensions. It is considered as a hydra headed problem that has pervaded the entire educational system in Nigeria. Its resultant effect is a gradual loss of confidence in the products of the system and gradual de-recognition of certificates issued by Nigerian schools. This paper discusses the concept of examination malpractice, dimension, effects, causes of examination malpractice and strategies for managing the menace were emphasized.

Keywords: Teacher's strategies, curbing examination malpractice, tertiary institutions, Nigeria

Introduction

Examination is an important aspect of the education process. This is the stage at which the learner's knowledge, skills, ability and competencies are assessed, and judgment made about such performance. The outcome of such judgment is used for diagnosing as well as placement of students. Beating the due process of examinations leads to malpractices. Hence, 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. In fact, the phenomenon has both moral and legal implications. Examination malpractice was described as a cankerworm that has eroded the educational system of Nigeria. This prompted the Federal Military Government to promulgate "Examination Malpractices Decree 20" in 1984. The decree prescribes heavy punishment for offenders. In spite of stiff penalties, examination malpractice is growing in leaps and bounds at all levels of the Nigerian educational system. Pupils/students, teachers, school administrators, parents, examination invigilators and supervisors, custodians of examination materials, officials of examination bodies and law enforcement agents are involved. Hence, Decree 20 was amended copiously by "Examination Malpractices Decree 33 of 1999", which lists twelve various offences as examination malpractices.

Examination malpractice, as an antisocial behaviour, has in recent times attracted the attention of stakeholders in the education industry (WAEC, 2021; Adamolekun, 1998). The phenomenon has been defined in various ways by teachers, sociologists, philosophers, psychologists and educational administrators. Nyandwi (2017) defines examination malpractice as all forms of cheating which directly or indirectly falsify the ability of the students. Offences regarded as forms of examination malpractice during examinations include:

- i. Using phone and other related electronic devices
- ii. Using of tip note written on tiny piece of paper
- iii. By writing the tip or note on their body part like hands, laps, arms etc. before stipulated time of paper.
- iv. Writing tip on fingernails before going into the examination hall
- v. By paying outsiders to sit for the candidate examination.
- vi. Using another person to sit for an examination on behalf of a candidate
- vii. Bringing in prepared answers/copying from textbooks, notebooks, laboratory specimens or any other instructional aids smuggled into the examination hall

- viii. Collaborating with an invigilator to cheat in the examination hall
- ix. Communicating or attempting to communicate between/among examinees
- x. Copying or attempting to/ copy other student's work/answers in examinations
- xi. Submitting or attempting to submit a new prepared answer script as a substitute for the original script after an examination
- xii. Non-submission of answer script at the end of an examination
- xiii. Illegal removal of answer scripts from the examination hall. Forms of examination malpractice before or after examinations include:
- xiv. Using another person's work without appropriate acknowledgement both in the text or in the references list
- xv. Copying laboratory and fieldwork reports and/or term papers of others
- xvi. Obtaining set questions or answers beforehand
- xvii. Modifying student's score cards, answer scripts and/or mark sheets
- xviii. Submitting project, laboratory and/or field report not prepared or written by the students themselves
- xix. Breaking into staff or departmental offices in order to obtain question papers, answer scripts or mark sheets, or substituting a fresh answer script for the original scripts
- xx. Soliciting for examiner's help in order to pass examination.

Dimensions of Examination Malpractices

Year-in-year-out, students come up with new dimensions of examination malpractices. This is the more reason why drastic steps must be taken. The instances of examination malpractices vary. They range from impersonation, leakage of questions, tampering with results and computer fraud to fraudulent practices by invigilators, officials and security personnel charged with supervising examinations. Parents are not left out of the business. Some of these dimensions are discussed below:

1. **Bringing of foreign materials into examination hall:** This is a situation where students bring into the examination hall notes, textbooks, and other prepared materials. The method is nicknamed as hide and seek, microchips, tattoo and magic desk. Sometimes, students bring into the hall unauthorized materials like sophisticated and scientific calculators or four figure tables. Nnam and Inah (2018) identified some methods like giraffing, contraband, bullet, super print, escort, missiles, pregnant biros and so on.
2. **Assistance from educational stakeholders:** Examination stakeholders include parents, teachers, lecturers, supervisors, security agents, printers and staff of examination bodies. Some parents go to any length in buying question papers for their children while some others even buy certificates for their children. Supervisors colluding with teachers, school principals or students by allowing teachers to come around to teach the students during the examination period; lecturers or teachers releasing question papers or giving underserved marks or allowing students to illegally re-take examination papers. Security agents, printers and staff of examination bodies also sell question papers. Otoo (2018) stated that: leakage is one problem which appear to defy all solutions. Its persistence, despite methods of blocking loopholes, is an indication of the malaise and corruption in society
3. **Irregular Activities inside and outside the examination halls:** Students who had the mind to cheat exhibit strange and unwholesome behaviours. They use various such methods as:
 - (i) Stealing, converting, substituting or misappropriating the scripts of other candidates.
 - (ii) Substituting worked scripts during or after an examination.
 - (iii) Tearing part of the question paper or answer booklet during the examination to enhance cheating.

- (iv) Seeking and receiving helps from other candidates.
4. **Impersonation:** This is a situation where a candidate sits in an examination for another candidate, thereby pretending to be the real or original candidate. Impersonation is becoming very rampant, even among school candidates. Nnam and Inah (2018) listed various methods that have been devised by students and these include:
 - (a) Posing as a bona-fide candidate: impersonators write the examination on behalf of the candidate they are impersonating. Undergraduates and graduate youth Corpers engage in this type of cheating.
 - (b) Entry for similar subjects: the plot is hatched right from the entry stage by making the impersonator to enter for the same subjects and sit for the examinations in the hail with the candidate; he writes the candidate's name and number on his booklet while the candidate writes the impersonator's and they exchange scripts before submitting.
 - (c) Multiple entries: that is candidates entering for the same examination in several parts of the locality.

It has also been observed that several candidates struggle unnecessarily for live question papers at the beginning of a paper which are then passed to touts for assistance. Also, candidates deliberately come into the hail with the sole aim of smuggling the question paper out as soon as the paper starts and bringing the solution inside later.

5. **Insult or Assault on Examination Officials:** There are cases of students insulting examination officials as they carry out their businesses. The aim is to distract them from effective supervision, so that they can have a way out. Sometimes students disturb the conduct of examinations due to poor preparation.
6. **Electronically assisted malpractices:** In recent times, it has been discovered that students make use of electronic gadgets to cheat during examinations. Such things as unauthorized scientific calculators, organizers, compact disc (the smallest size) and mobile phones (GSM) to take advantage of others.
7. **Collusion:** This is a situation where two or more candidates agree to receive or give assistance to each other. If it is verbal, this is called ECOMOG or ECOWAS. Otoo (2018) identified the use of terms like 'laya', Ecornog, and so on, which are also common among students. Nnam and Inah (2018) said that collusion involves exchange of scripts, passing notes for help from outside and inside the hail; delaying commencement of examination in one centre to obtain question paper from nearby centre which has started, collusion, arising from bribes or threat to the lives and/or property of supervisors.
8. **Mass cheating:** Candidates in an examination hail at times are massively involved in one or some of the irregularities aforementioned.
9. **Inscription:** Students have now advanced to the level of inscribing materials or information on anything like parts of their body, for example palms, thighs, baby pampers; dresses, handkerchiefs, rulers, purses, chairs, tables, walls of examination halls and so on. Some student even code points and synthesize their notes in such a way that they will be the only one that could understand and use them for cheating.
10. **Personality Connection:** There are cases where some influential students make use of godfathers in politics, economic high towers, parents, and cult members to influence the outcome of examinations.

Effects of Examination Malpractices

Some of the dangers of examination malpractices include:

- a. Not being able to defend the certificate (failure in job performance).
- b. Perpetual condemnation of the conscience.
- c. Possibility of unfulfilled dreams and vision, if the student is rusticated from school or terminated at the working place.

- d. Spillover effect borne by parents and other relatives of culprits.
- e. The culprit may be initiated into a system of dishonesty and corrupt practices by which they become hardened.
- f. It makes nonsense of the educational system and it militates against the country's goal of technological advancement.
- g. It discredits certificates issued by national examination bodies and institutions of higher learning and the nation as a whole.
- i. It makes students to loose the ability to study or work hard in their studies.
- j. 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.

Causes of Examination Malpractice

A number of factors responsible for examination malpractices in the Nigerian school system have been identified by Otoo (2018). These factors could be regarded as immediate and remote causes of examination malpractices, taking source from the society, the home and the school. Among others, these causes are:

- i. Moral decadence
- ii. Undue emphasis on examination results and certificates
- iii. Quest for material wealth
- iv. Poor teaching/learning habits
- v. Poor conditions under which examinations are conducted
- vi. Maladministration of school heads and examiners
- vii. Poor logistics for examinations
- viii. The desire to satisfy parents' ambition
- ix. Unpreparedness of students for examinations
- x. Students' lack of self-confidence
- xi. Peer/group influence
- xii. Benefits derived by vendors of examination papers
- xiii. Injustice in the punishment of culprit/insincerity in tackling the problem
- xiv. Incessant staff strikes that often interrupt the school programme and
- xv. Teacher's threat to fail students.

Curbing Examination Malpractice in the Tertiary Institutions

Examination malpractice occurs both within and outside the examination halls. It is perpetrated by students, staff and other external agents before, during and even after examinations. Many strategies applied to curb examination malpractices within the Tertiary Institutions tend to be ineffective. In fact, new devices for perpetrating examination malpractices grow by leaps and bounds on campuses, making such strategies look as if they are addressing the symptoms rather than the root causes. This situation might not be unconnected with the fact that student culprits are usually targeted by these strategies, brushing aside the contributory roles of other Tertiary Institutions members in the ultimate act. The timeliness and effectiveness of the disciplinary measures meted out to culprits have also been faulted (Olaseinde-Williams, 2004).

Strategic management here refers to the setting of goals and actions towards academic honesty coupled with provision of an enabling environment by Tertiary administration and compliance with expected behaviours by Tertiary staff and students. In this case, every member of the Tertiary community would therefore have a common vision and would be governed by such written documents as mission and policy statement and standard organizational behaviours to achieve the mission.

The achievement of this vision would definitely require abolition of all acts of academic dishonesty, examination malpractice inclusive. In addition, dedication would be

expected of the Tertiary Institution, staff and students in the performance of their obligations and functions. Specifically, college administration would have to set achievable goals and objectives and provide the necessary enabling environment for achieving them. The different categories of staff and students would equally have to effectively and efficiently perform their expected roles and functions. It is under the resultant academic integrity climate, which according to Olaseinde- Williams (2004), is a behavioural issue having to do with transparency and self-discipline in all academic transactions including examination matters in the Tertiary system, that effective teaching and learning would take place and all acts of academic dishonesty abolished.

Expectations and Obligation in Strategic Management Policy

Under the strategic management policy, all categories of people within the university community must have specific obligations to perform towards goal achievement. Expected obligations of college administration, different categories of staff and students must be made clear to each of these parties in the school commodity

College Administration: The basic obligation of the college administration is the provision of a conducive working and learning environment for staff and students. This obligation involves, among others:

- i. Formulation of concrete and achievable goals,
- ii. Provision of necessary human (lectures and support staff); material and physical resources to work with,
- iii. Setting up monitoring devices for detecting non-compliance with goal attainment activities, and,
- iv. Provision and application of a fair and free policy framework for dealing with non-compliance to set standards.

Academic Staff: Academic staff in college are expected to teach and engage in research and community service (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998). The most basic among these functions is teaching. In fact, the other two functions (research and community service) are expected to assist teaching. Effective teaching is therefore necessary to ensure malpractice-free examinations. For teaching to be effective, the teachers must be proficient in the principles and practice of education. There is thus the need for college of education lecturers to have teaching qualifications such as Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE).

In relation to effective teaching, academic staff would be expected to:

- i. Attend lectures punctually and be well prepared;
- ii. Be accessible to students;
- iv. Give and grade tests and assignments objectively and provide prompt feedback to students on their performances;
- iv. Avoid taking undue advantage of students; and
- v. Relate well to other members of the university community.

Different categories of academic and non-academic staff are involved in examination matters. These officers, including the Heads of Department (Chief Examiners). Course Lecturers, Examination Coordinators/Officers, Typists, Chief Invigilators and Invigilators must be acquainted with their duties as stipulated in Academic Programmes and must carry them out.

College Students: College students are obliged to respect and obey constituted authority. In this regard. Students should be acquainted with the Information Handbook and or Code of Conduct Manual relating to dos and don'ts on campuses. Students should be provided with information on issues such as:

- i. General behaviours on campus
- ii. Lecture attendance and eligibility for examinations

iii. Procedures for continuous assessment of courses

- a. Use of such university facilities as library, counselling centre and recreational facilities.

Under the expected open environment where each group knows the obligations of the other groups, accountability is enshrined in the system and students become so self-disciplined that they abhor acts of dishonesty and report violators (co-students and even staff). Other ways to eradicate examination malpractice is to sanction of schools for examination malpractices. For example, The West African Examination Council, WAEC (2022) has barred and delisted two schools in Imo State for a period of 5 years, derecognized 28 schools for examination malpractices. See list of the school below.

Conclusion

Examination malpractice has become a hydra-headed problem that pervades the entire educational system in Nigeria. It is perpetrated by students and staff alike both within and outside the examination rooms using different techniques that grow by the day. The resultant effect is gradual loss of confidence in Nigerian certificates. Strategic management policy, in which specific obligations of Tertiary/Colleges administration, staff and students are clearly stated, is advocated. Though strategic management make for long term achievement of goals is targeted, it also stresses the provision of adaptive measures in the short term. Therefore, the following recommendations are made to curb examination malpractices pending the time that the policy would inculcate permanent ethical reorientation in university members.

Recommendations

1. Moral/religious counselling should be used as a strategy to reduce involvement of students and staff in examination malpractice. Such counselling could be given during orientation programmes for new students and staff during registration for courses by level advisers, during lectures and workshops and seminars. At such for a, the consequence of examination malpractice should be explained to both students and staff. Staff members are also counselled on the moral implications of using intimidation and threats to extort sex, money and other favours from students in exchange for grades.
2. Pending the provision of adequate hall and seats for examinations, adequate number of invigilators should be assigned to examination room (the policy of a chief invigilator and at least one invigilator to every 40 students should be adhered to).
3. All activities relating to examinations such as question paper production, invigilation, marking and result collation as well as computation should be handled with a high sense of responsibility by those concerned.
4. Concerted efforts should be made to properly acquaint staff and students with regulations governing examination conduct in the colleges. Towards this end, workshops and orientation programmes should be carried out periodically to acquaint staff with their duties as examiners and invigilators and students of their expected preparation for, and conduct at examinations.
5. For the many examination offenders now and the few that would still violate even after self-discipline has been enshrined in the long run, appropriate sanctions should be applied.

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