THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN CURBING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN NIGERIA EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

Examination malpractice is a nagging problem afflicting the education industry in Nigeria. This social ill appears to be endemic and intractable as it has permeated and percolated into the fabrics of the Nigeria education system. In this communication, we are going to examine the scope of examination malpractice in Nigeria education system and its devastating effects on the society. We shall underscore the role of teachers in curbing examination malpractice in Nigeria education system.

Resume

La fraude d'examen est un problème lancinant qui afflige le secteur éducatif Nigérian. Ce vice social semble bien endémique et intraitable car il a pénétré et percolé les tissus du système éducatif nigérian. Dans cette communication, nous allons examiner la portée de la fraude d'examen au système éducatif nigérian ainsi que ses effets dévastateurs sur la société. Nous allons souligner le rôle des enseignants dans la lutte contre la fraude d'examen dans le système éducatif du pays.

Introduction

Examination malpractice is a veritable cause for concern in Nigeria. It is a social ill that has eaten so deep into the fabrics of the Nigeria education system such that it has become ineluctable and inextricable. Examination malpractice has pervaded into all the domains of activities in Nigeria and it appears that everybody is a casualty.

Examination malpractice is a devastating ill-wind that has wreaked havoc in Nigeria; hence, the order of the day is poor reading culture, indolence, certificate, forgery, incompetence, impersonation, laisser-faire attitude, inferiority complex and loss of moral values and integrity.

Examination malpractice which is prevalent in all the levels of Nigeria Education system has enabling factors: parental support, inordinate quest for bright/excellent certificates as well as collaboration of the interest groups. That is why examination Malpractice in Nigeria has taken the shape of an organized crime.

Examination Malpractice should be discouraged and condemned in strong terms. Emphasis should be laid on actionable and functional education characterized by discipline, diligence, self-reliance and integrity which will solidify the base of education industry in particular and the Nigeria Society in general.

In this paper, we are going to discuss Examination Malpractice in Nigeria Education industry, as well as its effects and enabling factors. Most importantly, we are going to examine the role of teachers in curbing examination malpractice in Nigeria education system.

Definition of concepts

Examination: According to Longman Dictionary of contemporary English, examination is "a spoken or written test of knowledge." A.S. Hornby (2000) defines Examination as "a written, spoken or practical test at school or college to see how much you know about a subject or the one you do to get a certificate".

Harry Maddox (1979) postulates that "Examinations are intended to measure how effectively you have studied a subject".

Malpractice: The Advanced English Dictionary by Hornby defines Malpractice as "Wrong doing… dishonest use of a position of trust for personal gain".

Examination Malpractice: Could be defined as a wrong and dishonest action undertaken by unserious students to individually or collectively make unmerited high grades or marks in Examinations

organized by WAEC, NECO, NABTEB, Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics. Examination Malpractice is also referred to as "Cheating" or "Sorting".

Examination Malpractice is the most pervading form of moral decadence in the Nigeria Education industry. Ike Onyechere (2011) believes that "Examination Malpractice is any act of omission or commission which compromises the validity or reliability of Examination"(**Defending the Integrity of Education:** 26)

Ezeude J.I. (2013) Opines that Examination Malpractice is an "Act of deliberate wrong doings contrary to official examination rules and regulations designed to place some candidates at unfair advantages or disadvantages". It is "any illegal act committed by a student single-handedly or in collaboration with others like fellow students or teachers, invigilators, supervisors, parents … before, during or after an examination in order to obtain unmerited scores or grades…."

Examination Malpractice could be regarded as a gross act of indiscipline and academic dishonesty. In the light of the foregoing, Ike Onyechere (2011) signals that examination Malpractice is any action which "Compromises the validity, reliability and integrity of any examination." (**How to Excel in Exams**: 207)

Examination Malpractice has gone beyond indiscretion involving students. The perpetrators include all categories of stakeholders: Parents, Teachers, Lecturers, Examiners, Supervisors, Educational Administrators, agencies and institutions; hence, examination malpractice is a strong style reminiscent of an organized crime in Nigeria.

Scope of Examination Malpractice in Nigeria Education System

Examination Malpractice takes many shapes and forms: some of the most common forms in the Nigeria school system are as follows:

- *Impersonation*

- *Leakage of question papers*
- *Storing questions/answers using the mobile phone (Handset)*
- *Smuggling out the question papers*
- *Bringing extraneous or unauthorized materials into the examination halls.*
- *Project fee scam*
- *Collusion in the examination halls*
- *Sex for high marks and good grades*
- *Liquid cash for excellent scores in the exams.*

Of the above enumerated Examination Malpractice forms, one would wish to explain some of them thus:

1. **Impersonation**: This is a situation where exams are written by proxy. Here some candidates arrange for other people to write exams on their behalf. This practice cuts across almost all the levels of the education system in Nigeria since it is observed both in internal and external examinations.
2. **Storing questions/answers using mobile phone (handset**: The most current practice is that students use GSM Phones to cheat in examinations. At times they text out questions to their mercenaries who in turn text in already-made answers. They also use the phone to communicate with fellow candidates in the exam halls without being detected.
3. **Sex for marks/liquid cash for excellent scores in the exams**: It is a practice where some debased teachers or lecturers demand for sex from married or single female students before awarding good marks to them. The students who are in need of high scores will succumb to the illegal love advances. Sometimes, the frequency of the love affairs determines the range of the marks to be awarded. For the male students, they are expected to pay an agreed amount for an excellent grade.

4. **Project fee scam**: It is a situation where some unscrupulous lecturers in tertiary institutions make students pay exorbitantly before their project topics are approved, supervised, graded internally and submitted to the external examiners. Some lecturers even write projects for students and bind them at cut-throat charges. And this is really unfortunate!

Causes of Exam Malpractice

Many factors are responsible for the pervading examination malpractice in Nigeria today. They include the followings:

- ❖ Inadequate preparation for exams
- ❖ Unnecessary emphasis on paper qualification/certificates
- ❖ Indolence on the part of students
- ❖ Inadequate infrastructural development (e.g. Laboratories, Classrooms, Accommodation)
- ❖ Corruption and indiscipline
- ❖ Inadequate supply of instructional materials
- ❖ Poor reading culture
- ❖ Dearth of qualified and competent teachers
- ❖ Attitude of some parents
- ❖ Poor incentive and motivation.

We shall examine some of the factors as follows:

1. **Inadequate preparation for exams**:

Observations show that most students go in for the exams which they did not prepare for. This is occasioned by non-coverage of the syllabus. Lecturers often embark on strike actions to fight for their right and welfare. Promotion to the next class or level is desired by every student. Expectedly, the

students resort to all forms of exam malpractices to succeed in the summative evaluation. This is because they are afraid of failure or carry-over of courses or being tagged as "Overstayed students".

2. **Poor reading culture:**

The new generation of Nigerian students is no longer interested in buying books and reading them. This poor attitude to reading culture is the bane of the Nigerian education system. Most Nigerian students find it difficult to read text books related to their discipline. They are more interested in pornographic materials, GSM, Phone calls, text messages, watching movies, chatting on face-book or internet.

This degenerated generation of Nigerian youths can hardly burn the midnight oil. Instead, they sleep all night long with their radio sets or handsets spinning music and unserious talks into their ears. They hardly go to the library to look for useful information for research purposes. They prefer to plagiarize other people's articles or projects. This is because they lack patience, perseverance and diligence.

3. **Attitude of parents**:

Some parents encourage their children to indulge in examination malpractices. They want them to undertake courses for which they have no aptitude. In most cases parents pay highly for someone to impersonate for their children. At times, they bribe lecturers, supervisors and invigilators to overlook or cover up the excesses of their wards in the examination hall.

Some students are emboldened to indulge in exam malpractices with impunity because their parents or godfathers are influential members of the society.

Consequences of Examination Malpractice

The negative effects of examination malpractice are inexhaustible. However, a few would be highlighted in this paper as follows:

1. **It breeds half-baked professionals and brings about the collapse of professional ethics.** Secondary school leavers, NCE and HND as well as University degree graduates of today, in Nigeria, find it difficult to defend their excellent certificates. They are apparently incapable of imparting knowledge to the learners or practicalising what they have learnt. Since they passed through exam malpractice, they encourage the learners to do the same. It is in this consideration that examination malpractice promotes failures, professional incompetence and mediocrity.

2. **Examination malpractice promotes criminality among Nigerian youths.**

When students graduate from higher educational institutions through examination malpractice, they may not get jobs and even if they do, they will be square pegs in round holes. In most cases, they abandon their jobs (as a result of inferiority complex) and indulge in criminal activities such as Secret Cultism, Kidnapping, Armed Robbery, Child-Trafficking, Drug-Trafficking, Political Thuggery, Terrorism, Duping and a host of others.

3. **It casts doubts on the validity and reliability of certificates.**

If the examination evaluation machinery of any education system of a nation has a question mark tag or if it is fraught with malpractice, certificates from such country are deemed worthless. This is because it is difficult to determine the genuine ones. Even when the holders of such certificates are offered employment, the employers put them under strict scrutiny and close observation until they are able to prove their mettle.

4. **Examination malpractice promotes indolence and laziness.**

The present Nigerian youths are lazy, insensitive and unashamed of their bad behaviours. They wait on others for enjoyment without labour. They have turned the golden nugget of "work before pleasure" upside-down. Yet the society accepts the wrong behaviours. If students are taught the habit of reaping fruits without working hard, they will never imbibe the culture of hard-work nor will they discover their innate qualities. Such students may find it hard to survive in a competitive

situation. And the only alternative is to resort to opposition, aggression, crimes and deviant activities to boost their ego.

The Role of Teachers in Curbing Examination Malpractice in Nigerian Education System

Who is a teacher?

A teacher is someone whose job is to impart knowledge or give lessons to students or learners in a school, college or university. A teacher is called an instructor, a tutor or a lecturer. In French, a teacher is called '**le professeur.'**

A good teacher is not just anybody. He is well oriented and equipped with acceptable skills which enable him to impart knowledge to students. It is in this light that P.W. Musgrave (1979), just like C.O. Taiwo (1980), asserts that "To practice as a teacher assumes (necessitates) a core of specialized knowledge and skills and a relatively… high level of intelligence (and moral integrity)……"

A teacher is a person who is ready to uphold his moral integrity and to stick/adhere to the tenets and ethics of the teaching profession. He has an unlimited role to play in the development of the learner.

According to Glenn .M. Blair (1975) the teacher is expected to provide social experiences, adequate role models, corrective feedback and honest communication in an atmosphere of warmth and trust.

Qualities of a good teacher

According to Albert Oziji and Peter Canham (1978), a good teacher should possess the following qualities:

1. *Qualification and competence*
2. *Sympathy*
3. *Care*

4. *Patience*
5. *Orderliness*
6. *Willingness to learn*
7. *Ability to set a good example (Should be a role model).*

How do teachers contribute to curbing examination malpractices in Nigerian educational system?

Emmanuel Ogoigwe (2010) quoted Dam F. Ehinlaye as lamenting that: "The future of our younger generation is being endangered with the monumental disaster (Exam Malpractice) hitting higher schools on the face." In the light of the foregoing, teachers at all levels of the education system should intervene to save the education industry in Nigeria from total collapse as a result of examination malpractice.

One of the ways by which teachers can curb exam malpractice is through adequate preparation of lessons and clearly stated objectives. A mastery of the subject matter and delivery of the content, using scientific and pedagogical approaches, will ensure a positive change in the behaviour of students. Teachers should create interactive, communicative and practical situations in the class. This will make the children lively as it will create a lasting impression in the minds of the learners.

Teachers should also encourage over-learning to improve on the memory of the learners such that they internalize the content of the subject matter. This will help them to give correct answers to examination questions from any points of view without recourse to examination malpractices.

In addition, teachers should encourage hard-work and perseverance. They should give students continuous assessment through tests, class assignments, home-work and projects. They should give students a feedback so that they will take note of their mistakes and improve on their performance. All these point to totally occupying the students and making them more responsible and diligent.

Again, teachers should uphold the principle of moral integrity which characterizes the ethics of the teaching profession. Teachers should condemn, in strong terms, the practice of cash for high grades or sex for unmerited excellent marks which is prevailing among students and teachers or lecturers in secondary schools and tertiary institution in Nigeria.

Moreover, teachers are recruited as supervisors, invigilators, lecturers, centre custodians or examiners in WAEC, NECO and NABTEB examinations. In tertiary institutions, lecturers set questions, conduct and correct semester exams in their respective departments. Thus they should eschew collecting money or seeking for any other forms of gratification, (during or after exams), which will encourage sorting or cheating in the exam halls. If teachers should say "No" to exam malpractices, candidates cannot say "Yes" because teachers hold all the aces.

Teachers have an enormous role to play to promote ethics, integrity and acceptable social values just as the delivery of functional and transformational education is a collective responsibility. In his view, Ike Onyechere (op. cit) states that teachers should make frantic efforts to "plant the seed of ethical revolution (values) in the … minds of children (learners)".

Since teachers are role models, they should understand that the learners imitate them. In this light, teachers should be reliable, devoted and committed to their duty and God will surely reward them. That is why Ugwuanyi (1989), citing Peul V.N., leaves the following piece of advice:

> "A major key to success… is to be completely released, and throw all there is of yourself into your job or any project in which you are engaged… whatever you are doing, give it all you have got. Give every bit of yourself. Hold nothing back. Life cannot deny itself to other person who gives life his all…"

Again, there is a need for teaching profession organizations such as Nigerian Union of Teachers, (NUT), All Nigerian Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS), College of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU), Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP), as well as Academic

Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to condemn examination malpractice in its ramifications through public enlightenment campaign.

Teachers should also de-emphasize mere paper qualifications and sue for functional certificates/education which will foster self-reliance and transformation of the Nigerian Society.

Teachers should also stop embarking on frequent strike actions which disrupt academic programmes.

Teachers should equally be willing to learn new things. A good teacher is always learning to keep up-to-date in his particular subjects and he must remember that he is preparing his pupils for the future. Teachers should keep abreast of the new research finding and a variety of information which they will adopt in preparing learners for the challenges ahead.

Teachers should adhere to the ethics of the teaching profession which underscores diligence, competence, patience, discipline, industry, knowledge, service, compassion, moral sensibilization and fear of God.

Conclusion

The fight against examination malpractice in the Nigeria Education System is not an impossible dream. The prevailing examination malpractice and its associated problems pose a great threat and challenge to the Nigeria Education industry. The question is: will there be a time of nation-wide action to prevent and/or control this social malady for the future generation to struggle through? For Nigeria, it is not too late to look forward. What we need now is a change of attitude.

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