

# IMPROVEMENT OF EXAMINATION ETHICS IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

One of the most dreadful tasks facing a classroom teacher in today's school system is how to conduct a hitch Tree examination he it internal or external. However, examination skill remains a valid method of evaluation which a classroom teacher has to adopt to assess the students, the curriculum, the policy and the teacher himself. In the course of examinations today, teachers and examiners are exposed to great danger ranging through verbal abuse to physical torture and most recently the use of guns inside the examination halls. This paper discussed factors responsible for the door-die approach to both internal an external examinations resulting to various degrees of examination irregularities and some probable ways of combating this ugly trend.

## **Introduction**

Teachers have an obligation to provide their students with the best instruction possible. This implies that they must have some procedures whereby they can reliably and validly evaluate how effectively their students have been taught (William, 1975). Today, one of the most popular themes in the educational press is a steady assault on both internal and public examinations. At a point, the attack was on the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). Apart from attacks on leakage of examination papers, there are those on the entire concept of examination which is often considered rigid, unfair or restricting upon teachers' freedom to plan. Today, the attack has shifted to so many spheres. The level of examination malpractices within the internally conducted examination are at alarming rate. Right from the primary school to the tertiary levels, our present education system is bedevilled by a myriad of examination malpractice devices. In the primary school for instance, we the parents wittingly or unwittingly sponsor examination malpractices. For instance during the so-called common entrance examination and first school leaving certificate examination, we pay through our wards some amount of money for the entertainment of the invigilators. The main essence of entertaining the invigilators at the primary school is to allow the headteachers and class teachers to write for their pupils in order to score hundred percent in these public examinations. What happens at the secondary school level is therefore a carry-over of the primary school experience. Pupils keenly observe the practice at the primary level and on entering the secondary, what they do is to perfect the strategies.

The continuous assessment provided by the National Policy on Education as a way of improving the evaluation process has been relegated to the background by the teachers who have no lime for the exercise. For instance, Nzewi (1988) appraised the use of continuous assessment in three local government areas in the then Anambra State eight years after the introduction. He observed that at that period, the teachers were only aware of the programme but lacked the commitment to implement it. He concluded that the programme cannot be said to be functional in the schools where his study was conducted. Today the situation is worse, the ratio of continuous assessment marks and final examination marks vary from one school to the another ranging from 10: 90 through 30: 70 to 50: 50 respectively. In some schools, there is nothing like continuous assessment rather teachers have resorted to the one-short, end-of-course examination which have been criticised for having repressive and restricting effects on both the teachers and the students (Okunrotifa, 1975) and which in recent lime has high degree of examination malpractices.

## **Teachers And Examination Ethics**

Whenever examination malpractices is discussed, it is always important for teachers to do some self-appraisal because teaching is a delicate and fragile profession. This is because examination still remains the teachers' major tool for measurement. A teacher in the educational process refers to the person who instructs and evaluates to promote the teaching-learning processes. According to Ukeje (1990) cited in *Teacher and Parents Quarterly* (2000) what the teacher knows and can do make a great difference and what he cannot do, can be an irreparable loss not only to the child but also to K nation and indeed in the posterity. As Ukeje further stressed, it is a good teacher thai can impart good education. This preposition presumes the Nigerian teacher to be upright, dedicated, well-informed, knowledgeable, inspiring and positively oriented at all levels of learning.

Examinations have remained (he major way by which educational objectives are evaluated. Conducting a hitchfree examination should therefore, be a major task for every teacher. But conversely, a disturbing aspect of the Nigerian teacher recently discovered, is his involvement in examination malpractices. According to Ilodubae/e (1971).

Apart from unfortunately leaking the questions they pick and drop copied materials at appropriate points during examination according to plans. They help students exchange their question papers with answers jotted on them. They smuggle question papers out of the hall to mercenaries to answer for the students.

Recently, the WAEC terminated the services of thirty-two examiners on the issue of examination malpractices. The subject teachers are not alone in this shameful act. As Ilodubaeze further stated, some principals of secondary schools have also aided and abetted cheating during the 1990 SSSC Examinations. Most of these principals act as agents between the students and the invigilators. They collect monies from the students which they offer to the invigilators/examiners who in return allow the students to cheat during examinations. In the most extreme case, these principals hire mercenaries for the sons and daughters of the well to do members of the parents teachers-association.

These situation is more worrisome in the private schools. Here, the proprietors believe that the only way to attract students to their schools is by registering hundred percent success especially in public examinations. For this reason, success must be achieved and all sorts of foul means must be adopted to achieve this. In these private schools, any teacher who is not ready to "cooperate" in this act of aiding and abetting students in this ugly act is shown the way out. In such schools, the target of education from day one is the adoption of methods of outwitting the examiners, which is the surest way of survival.

### **Detection Of Examination Malpractices From Candidates' Scripts**

Scrutinising students'/candidates' scripts during the marking and scoring is among the desirable skills which-'the teachers must acquire. This should form a quality control procedure for detecting irregularities and malpractices. According to WAEC (1999), reports of irregularities and malpractices are received before, during and after the conduct of the examinations. These reports include information from public-spirited individuals, candidates etc. before the examination on the game plan for cheating. There are also reports of poor supervision and invigilators and the activities of touts, which render supervision ineffective at the examination centres resulting in mass cheating or collusion among candidates.

Some of these irregularities and malpractices found on the scripts of candidates, which also highlighted by WAEC in 1999 are: i Identical answers - some candidates' scripts contain word for word answers even in wrong

answers and cancellations.

ii A candidate's script containing more than one type of handwriting, iii

Cribs, pages of printed textbooks found in candidates' scripts, iv

Submission of more than one script by a candidate in a subject/papers, v

Mutilated names and/or Index Number on candidate's script, vi Creases

or rumpling or evidence of folding scripts, vii Tampering with the stapling

pins of the scripts/answer booklet, viii Tampering or replacement of cover page.

ix Unusually longer or shorter scripts and/or cover pages or inner sheet different, x Scripts consisting of mainly continuation sheets or loose inner sheets not stapled to the cover page.

xi Scripts without cover page or submission of cover page only, xii Scripts with the-serial numbers out of range with the others used at the centre, xiii String scripts found in wrong subjects or examination centre.

xiv Objective answers sheets of a new candidate at a centre found enclosed in a script packet or envelops.

In all of the following situations, the teacher/examiner must scrutinize the extent of malpractices within the range of the examination numbers around the main script in question. All examination bodies and school authorities should take all reports of examination written on the candidates' script serious and all candidates involved must be brought to book to serve as a deterrent to others.

## **Improving Examination Ethics in Nigeria**

The implementation guidelines of the Universal Basic Education programme in number thirty-two, under the sub-heading "enriched curricular" emphasises a complete re-conceptualization of examination to press hard the point that education does not mean examination. (Federal Ministry of Education (FME), 2000). This document while emphasising functional education calls for a more realistic evaluation procedure which will build in quality assurance into the teaching and learning environment.

In the course of improving examination ethics under the new programme, much is expected of the teachers. The exercise calls for a total change of both attitude and perception towards the teaching profession. According to Ukeje (1995) without good teachers, we cannot have good education and without good education, we cannot meet successfully the challenges of ever-changing Nigerian world (And) without good teachers and good education, we cannot achieve satisfactory national development.

In addition to being morally upright teachers should think intelligently about other methods of assessment that will reduce examination irregularities. Two of these methods are suggested namely Open book examination and Interview-type assessment.

### **1. Open Book Examination**

Lack of commitment to duties on the part of teachers in the recent time have caused them to set questions that have no content validity (Okpala, 1989, Okafor, 1990). Some promotion examination questions are set inside the bus on the teacher's way to school, of course, these must be questions that will be easy to score. Most of these easy-to-score questions are also easy-to-copy questions in the examination hall. Therefore, the Open book examination calls for more commitment on the side of the teachers. It requires setting more of application questions that are not directly treated in the students' text and before the teacher does this, he must be abreast with the current trends and issues on his subject. The use of aids during examination whenever practicable is an idea which in recent years is earning the consideration of examination boards. Such aids in geography might include maps, atlases and textbooks. The use of sources of references in examination could be supported in the belief that it would provide students with opportunities to discuss and reason intelligently instead of pouring onto paper as much as he could recall of his reading (Okunrotifa, 1975). The system will also restore the forgotten reading culture in our school system.

### **2. Interview-Type Assessment**

If questions are asked orally in a face-to-face situation, we are carrying out an interview. Even though interview has been a perennial favourite as a way of finding out about the effective and cognitive functioning of students, its procedures are basically subjective, variable and heavily-dependent upon the skill of the interviewer. One of the approaches that undertakes to reduce subjectivity and variability of interview procedures while still maintaining flexibility and vividness of direct personal contact is the structured interview (Sada, 1975). The procedure of a structured interview may fall into the following three separate but related parts namely the content, the technique and the analysis.

The content is necessary to decide upon the topics or concepts that the interview will cover. The technique deals with the sorts of questions which should occur. These are questions that introduce the topic or theme that is to be discussed, those that prompt the students to think, those that direct the students to a topic-not spontaneously mentioned by him and those which allow the interviewer to explore potentially complex reasoning about relationships and encourage the student to explore verbally the reasons for the things he has found out. The analysis is the section the record of the

interview is used to make judgement about whether a subject is developing a conceptual group of the things he has studied or whether he perceives his work as unrelated facts and information. It is also possible to make judgement about the relative success or failure of the students' enquiry method. This is an area of learning that is too often taken for granted by teachers. The major disadvantages of this method of assessment is its relative difficulty to operate for a large number of students but it is a method that is very likely to yield successful result especially when combined with other methods such as the one discussed earlier on.

## **Recommendations/ Conclusion**

Examination situation in our school system today calls for more commitment on the part of the Nigerian teachers. The teacher must therefore, demonstrate to his students and the public that he is ready

to move Nigeria forward in the new millennium. The 21<sup>st</sup> century requires Nigerian teachers to be morally upright, intelligently knowledgeable, mentally balanced and emotionally stable. Teachers are strongly advised to instill in their students right from primary school the proper examination ethics to avoid pitfalls when sitting for examinations.

The present system of evaluation in vogue in our school system should be revisited. A close look at the continuous assessment provided in the National Policy on Education, reveals that what actually goes on where it exists at all is 'continuous testing'. Of course, many schools have abandoned the method in favour of the one-shot, end-of-course examination, which had been criticised, for its repressive and restricting effects on teaching and learning. These effects are due, in large part to the fact that the examination is content determined; that it cannot reflect the examination emphasis and patterns of teaching and that of examination. Therefore, in order to cultivate sound examination ethics, all forms of examination in our school system must encourage independence of thought and judgement in students and as well, increase the freedom of teachers and students. To achieve this, changes are necessary in the style and mode of examining students. Nigerian teachers are, therefore, challenged into exploring greater variety of methods of assessment, which will provide wider scope for pursuing a wider range of teaching and learning objectives required for nation building.

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