

## **EVOLVING INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR CURBING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

This paper looked at the level of examination malpractice institutions of higher learning in the country. It discussed the meaning and origin of examination malpractice in school system. The dimensions and forms, causes and consequences of examination malpractice in our school system were highlighted. The paper concluded by suggesting innovative strategies which if religiously implemented will help to curb cheating in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

One of the goals of tertiary education as stipulated in the National Policy on Education is the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable its recipient, to be self-reliant and useful member of the society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). A major way to achieve this goal is through quality and effective educational programme. Effectiveness of an educational programme is determined by appropriate method of assessment which is an indicator of quality performance of the school system and the level of attainment of its product (Alutu and Ochuba 2008).

Nigeria is a country where performance in examination is used as a yard stick for placement in institutions of higher learning and in the world of work. Thus the struggle by students to obtain high grade as a means of meeting the demands by all means. This has resulted high incidences of examination malpractice. Examination malpractice is the conscious violation of the rules and regulations guiding a given examination by an individual, group of people or institution.

The rate at which examination malpractice has developed in our tertiary institution is alarming. The menace has even attained some sophistication with the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) using electronic equipment to cheat in examination. This to a large extent shows the true reflection of the level of corruption, moral decadence and a variance our country has attained.

Several attempts like suspension of lecturers who engage in exam misconduct, making offending students to repeat an academic session and deployment of law enforcement agents in examination halls have been made towards eradicating examination misconduct but to no avail. Thus the need to devise innovative strategies to curb this menace in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria.

### **Meaning and Origin of Examination Malpractice**

Olarewaji, Adeniyi, Inyang, Nweke and Ladon (2001) viewed examination malpractice as all unethical practice carried out to influence or enhance the performance of a candidate in examination giving the candidate an undue advantage over other examinees, Ikenga and Obieka (2010) asserted that examination malpractice is seen as any unaccepted act committed by any student single handedly

or in collaboration with others like fellow student, parents, teachers, supervisors, invigilators, printers and anybody or group of people before, during or after examination in order to obtain undeserved marks or grades.

Examination malpractice therefore is any unwanted practice that adversely affects the purpose and conduct of examination at all level. It is any examination conduct of a candidate which renders the assessment useless (i.e. when the score obtained by the candidate debases significant!) from die candidate true score).

Examination malpractice is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria and the whole world. It was first reported in 1914 as a result of leakage of question paper in the senior Cambridge local examination.

Another evidence of examination malpractice was traced to cancellation of Nigeria's candidate paper in 1948 (Soyele 1991 in Olushola 2006). This was followed by that of 1964, 1970, 1973, 1974, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1988, 1991.

Oladope (1997) in Olushola (2006) observed that since 1991 till date examination malpractice has taken a more advanced and sophisticated dimension.

Following the manifestation of examination malpractice in the country, a onetime president of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo asserted that if nothing is done to check the menace of the hydra headed monster called examination malpractice by re-orienting and re-channeling the youths to a more acceptable way of writing examination, the nation education standard is bound to rut in pains.

### **Dimensions and Forms of Examination Malpractice in Tertiary Institutions**

In recent times, undergraduates have devised sophisticated means of overcoming efforts of vigilant supervisors during examination. They are as follows:

1. Leakage of questions to students before examination: Students may get questions either through teachers, typist printers or other custodians of question papers.
2. Bringing in foreign materials into the examination hall, such as textbooks, note books, prepared key points or piece of paper, foot sole, slippers and handkerchief (Unigwe 2008).
3. Body writing or tattoo in which students draw diagrams and write on the parts of their bodies.
4. Rewriting examination on fresh examinations scripts under the aid of lecturers, in their offices or private homes.
5. Awarding of undeserved marks to students who bribe lecturers.
6. Impersonation which involves students writing exam on behalf of another.
7. Examination officers or secretaries aiding students by accepting scripts written outside die examination halls and inserting it in the package of other student's scripts,
8. Invigilators or supervisors supplying answers to students in the examination hall.
9. Exchange of question papers with written answers and communicating orally with one another while exam is going on.

### **Causes of Exam Malpractice in Tertiary Institutions**

Many contemporary researchers, educators and various stakeholders and even students themselves have adduced diverse reasons for sustained examination malpractice in school system. They include:

1. Low self confidence which lead students to get involved in exam malpractice (Alutu and Aluedo 2005, Bolarin 2006).
2. Poor child upbringing and family background: This has to do with some parents' inability to inculcate the right value and ethics in children during their early years. (Balogun 2001; Awanbor 2003; and Bolarin 2006)
3. Expansion of higher education which leads to public oversight at effort to evaluate and promote academic quality (Ochuba 2001).
4. Over population of students and shortage of physical facilities like classrooms, chairs and desks. There is no gain saying the fact that when examination halls are crowded, monitoring and controlling of students becomes difficult.
5. Insufficient invigilators; When the number of invigilators scheduled to invigilate an examination is not commensurate to number of students in a hall, students will be tempted to cheat.
6. Insufficient examination materials: Examination malpractice take place whenever question papers, scripts or materials for practicals are not enough. In a bid to share materials with one another, students usually avail themselves of the opportunity to indulge in cheating.
7. Abridge academic calendar clue to strike.
8. Poor handling of scripts by lecturers, thus encouraging smuggling of scripts and changing of scores.
9. Lack of sincerity, devotion to duty and moral laxity of lecturers (Afolabi and Loto 2005).
10. Over-emphasis on certificate acquisition and high grade intensiveness rather than skill acquisition for securing employment.
11. Parental negative interference and lobbying for unmerited marks for their wards as well as their inability to provide them necessary learning materials.
12. Lack of proper guidance and counselling programmes for students. Some students enroll in courses due to parental and peer group influence without ascertaining their cognitive, affective and psychomotor capacity. This act usually put such students under unnecessary pressure which result to exam malpractice.
13. Inadequate teaching and preparation of students for exam.
14. Lack of regular workshops and seminars for staff on exam ethics and conduct.

### **Consequences of Examination Malpractice on Student's and the Society**

Examination malpractice has some negative effect on our youths and the nation through the following:

1. It waters down the quality of certificate issued to our graduates. No wonder most countries like Europe and America look down on certificates of Nigerian graduates as compared with that of graduates from South Africa and Ghana, It is a known fact that employers of labour in Nigeria now prefer people who obtain their degree certificate from Europe, America and other countries which they acknowledge as being adequate.
2. Exam malpractice discourages hard work, good study habit and genuine learning thereby

- retarding students' intellectual capabilities and skill acquisition.
3. It lowers productivity: Products of examination malpractice who are not able to deliver the degree of services required of them when the need arises. For such caliber of graduates to go up in the ladder of administration they require some element of "god fatherism" and other malpractices which they are used to e.g. cultism, bribery etc. These vices no doubt lower the growth of the nation in line with the global trends.
4. Products of examination malpractice who turn out to be teachers lower the standard of teaching and learning in institutions of higher learning.
5. It denies innocent graduates opportunity of getting good jobs. It is a known fact that many products of examination malpractice (who have influential god fathers) are occupying positions which otherwise would have been occupied by competent and well- backed graduates in the labour market.
6. Examination malpractice tends to destroy the integrity of the society as those who are being prepared to be leaders of the future continue to indulge in examination malpractice. (Afokibi and Loto 2005).
7. It destroys the well orchestrated work ethics and moral decadence in the society (Ikenga, Ovri and Ohiekia 2010).

### **Strategies for Curbing Examination Malpractice in Tertiary Institution in Nigeria**

Examination malpractice is like a cog in the wheel of development of the country. Serious war should be waged against it to move the country forward. This should be done through the following ways:

Inculcating the right values and ethics in children during their early years just like the Holy Bible puts it "Train up a child in the way lie should go, even when he grow up, he will not depart from it"

Guidance counsellors should organize seminars for students on how to study effectively and prepare for exams. Talks concerning examination should be delivered to new student during orientation. Furthermore, lectures and seminars should be organized at faculty and departmental level for lecturers and other non academic staff (who have examination duty to perform) by way of acquainting them with correct attitude and responsibilities expected of them during exams.

Examination codes and conduct should be clearly reflected in the students' handbook and possession of a copy by every student should be made compulsory. This will act as a reminder to what they were taught during seminars and talks.

Government should enact law on examination malpractice with inbuilt sanction to punish defaulters. Such laws should include sack, withdrawal of certificate and imprisonment. In fact the writer is happy when recently the minister of education Professor Ruquatu Rufai pronounced a 5 years imprisonment for defaulters. The next strategy is identifying defaulters and ensuring that the law takes its course without which the government will be seen as a toothless bulldog.

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During teaching and learning emphasis should be placed on practical application of learning rather than recognition of facts and ideas. This will help in creating self confidence in the learners.

Time table officers should plan and schedule exam to accommodate intermixing of students from departments (offering different courses) during examination. In this scenario silting arrangement should be such that no two students offering the same course should be allowed to sit close to each other Furthermore students should be made to sit 2 ½ meters apart so as to inhibit chatting, peeping and exchange of one another question papers that contain answers to questions.

Provision of adequate infrastructure with closed circuit camera (CCC): This will help for monitoring exam and identifying those involved in cheating.

Parents should desist from corrupt practice of lobbying lecturers and other staff who engage in examination malpractice. In addition they should team up with counsellors to encourage their wards to enroll and study courses which they are capable and intrinsically motivated to study.

Adoption of online examination: We are now in Information and communication Technology (ICT) era. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria should be ICT driven in order not to be cut off from global trend. This therefore calls for constant power supply in our institutions of higher learning.

Adoption of conference marking of scripts: This requires appointment of coordinators whose duty is ensuring that lecturers use adequately prepared marking scheme for fair grading. Again, they should ensure that no alteration of marks recorded in lecturers' exam score sheet is made by secretarial staff or other mercenaries.

Finally, skill acquisition in relevant fields should form the major yard stick for employment not mere possession of certificate.

### **Conclusion**

No society can really develop without quality manpower development which is achieved through qualitative education. Unfortunately our youths in tertiary institution have continued to indulge in examination malpractice to the detriment of national development. All hands should therefore be on deck to stamp out this dreaded monster from our society by adopting holistically these aforementioned innovative strategies suggested In curb examination malpractice in our tertiary institutions hi Nigeria,

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