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## **The Implications of Exam Malpractices on the Society and Development of Nigeria**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The educational system in Nigeria is currently facing innumerable challenges. The system can be said to be in a state of stress. The alarming and persistent increase in Examination malpractices has remained the bane of the progress of education in Nigeria over the years. Examination malpractice is one of the greatest social menace and cankerworms that has eaten deep into Nigerian educational system. The rate at which this academic dishonesty is growing is very alarming. Examination malpractices constitute one of the most debilitating problems facing our education institutions today and they are constantly manifested and reported in our schools, colleges and other higher institutions.

According to the Executive Chairman Exam Ethics Project (EEP), Mr. Ike Onyechere<sup>1</sup>, more than N1 billion is lost yearly to examination malpractices. According to him, exam malpractice is more serious than contract fraud, advanced fee fraud, bank fraud and election rigging because examination malpractice is the mother of all types of fraud and corruption. This is because exam malpractices plant the seed of fraud in the fertile minds of the youths. This crisis, as Coombs (1968) labelled the global phenomenon has been occasioned in the main by growing contradictions in Nigeria's social and educational system<sup>2</sup>.

Examination malpractices take place in both internal and external examinations and it is almost a routine to cheat in these examinations. Everyone continues to decry this cankerworm in the Nigerian education system and all penalties put in place to stop this trend remains almost ineffective.

### **AN OVERVIEW OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES**

The various forms or styles of examination malpractice are stealing, impersonation, disorderliness, cheating, conspiracy and aiding, forgery of result slip, giraffe, laptop, machinery, microchips, smuggling answer scripts into examination venues, and many others. The West African Examination Council

<sup>1</sup> Olasehinde, F.A.O. (1993). Cheating in Examinations in the University of Ilorin, Styles, Causes and Remedies. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Foundations* 4(1).

<sup>2</sup> Ajala, Y. (1998). Eradicating examination malpractices: a macro-theoretical framework option. *Nigerian Journal of Development Issues: Socio, Political and Economic Development* 2(2), pp. 72-85.

(WAEC) conducted a research in 2002 on various tricks employed by students to cheat during examinations and found 12 features that manifest in their answer scripts. Some of them are similar answers in a centre, the same mistakes, candidates' scripts were exceptionally neat or rough as if writing outside, out of range answer scripts, more than one handwriting, forgetting microchips of notes in answer booklets, providing answers that are above the age level of candidates.

There is an array of literature on the factors responsible for examination malpractice in Nigeria. They are students' lack of adequate preparation for examination, poor school facilities, poor sitting arrangement, socio-economic factors. Other factors identified are certificate syndrome, political-undertone, proliferation of private schools, poor invigilation procedure, supervisory role of school administrators. Another factor that has been identified why examination has not been reduced to its bearest minimum is the fact that the penalties for examination malpractice as stipulated in Act 33 of 1999 has not been fully applied. Ijaiya (2004) however felt strongly that just as jail term or public execution has not been able to deter armed robbery in Nigeria, a jail term stipulated in Act 33 of 1999 would not stop examination malpractice and so, Ijaiya (2004) advocated for the cut off of the link that exists among the perpetrators of examination malpractice<sup>3</sup>.

On the penalties for examination malpractice, Act 33 of 1999 stipulates cancellation of results, heavy fine as much as N100,000.00, to a jail term up to 21 years. This act remains a toothless-bulldog as many of this penalties have not been effected. The University of Ilorin (1998) stipulates a number of penalties such as rustication for not less than two semesters to expulsion. All these penalties are to serve as deterrent to students.

#### CAUSES OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

The causal factors of examination malpractices in Nigeria have been traced to several sources including, the students, the society, and forces within the school system, the Examining body and Government attitude to education. The students are the primary culprits in all matters of examination malpractice. Factors under student issues include:

##### A. Laziness and lack of interest in academic work

Most students are generally lazy, they do not attend classes as at when due, and so become ill-prepared for examinations. Students often think they will be helped during examinations; therefore they pay little or no attention to hard work. The inability of students to cope with school work (examinations expectations) as well as inadequate preparation for examination by the students is another major student factor that contributes to examination malpractice. Most students have very poor study habits and are unable to cover their syllabuses before examination. The desire to pass examination at all cost to please parents and themselves, even when they have little or no preparation before examination.

<sup>3</sup> Ijaiya, N.Y.S. (2004). Agents of Examination Malpractice in Nigerian public examinations: Who is the strongest link? Paper presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Conference of the National Association of Educational Researchers and Evaluators (NAERE) held at Umuahia 21<sup>st</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> June 2004.



It is also notable that students often suffer from poor self-respect/self-discipline and low self-esteem. They Most students lack self-confidence to face examination on their own self esteem and without being helped to pass<sup>4</sup>. Poor value orientation. The students in this 21st century have lost values like honesty, integrity and self-respect, hence cheating in examinations.

There is also the problem of wrong choice of subjects of study/career. Some students make wrong choices in school subjects due to ignorance, parental pressure and other personal reasons leading to poor performance in their academic work and ill-preparation for examinations. They resort to examination malpractice to survive in the school system.

Cheating in examinations is often motivated by the desperation to acquire certificate or get placed in a programme or be selected for a position. There is no doubt that with the gradual collapse of Nigeria's economy from the 1980s, unemployment among school leavers has risen. In the absence of reliable labour statistics, as high as half of the products of secondary schools and possibly 40 percent of university graduates could be in the category of educated but unemployed in Nigeria. A situation where graduates wait for three to upwards of six years to get employed is unsatisfactory and wasteful. The negative effect is that it has been observed that most of those who impersonate others in examinations do so on contract and as a source of income. Unemployed graduates over three years and above readily jump at opportunities to serve as "mercenary writers" without thinking of the moral and criminal implications of their actions. Of course the individual, it is believed must exist first, before moral or criminal issues could have relevance. It is the hope that when the society satisfies its duty of providing jobs to integrate youths into its fold, the social malaise of examination malpractice will substantially reduce in Nigeria

#### **B. The Factors of Teachers/School Administrators or Proprietors**

Some teachers, school administrators and proprietors of private schools are just dishonest and allow themselves to be involved in examination malpractice. The "my school scored 100%" syndrome, also contributes to examination malpractice by this group of stakeholders. Some teachers are lazy and unable to cover the stipulated syllabuses in subjects they teach, leading to the students being ill-prepared for examination, and therefore pushed into malpractices during examination<sup>5</sup>.

#### **C. Undue Emphasis on Certificate**

In Nigeria, there is undue emphasis placed on certificates, and this causes examination malpractice. The certificate mentality has made Nigerians to perceive education as being synonymous with obtaining certificate as the only means of getting a job. As a result of this trend and pressure, honesty in examination is no longer a cherished value. The economy in the country also causes examination malpractice. The officials who are responsible for conducting public examinations as

<sup>4</sup> Udogi and Iwawi (1995) identified inadequate preparation for the examination, peer influence, poor facilities in schools, societal influence, lack of self confidence due to laziness, poor academic performance as causes or factors that prompt examination malpractices.

<sup>5</sup> Fagbule A. M. (1991). The Junior Secondary School, the truth and false and the uncertain in the proceedings of the Nigerian Academy of Education

well as teachers, invigilators/supervisors have low income to meet their ever-growing human needs/wants, and so they often see examination malpractice as a quick way of getting money to meet these needs (Joshua, 2008).

#### **D. None Application of Sanctions by Government**

The relevant laws in the school system have prescribed different sanctions for different forms of examination malpractice. But often times, the government agencies (which include school administrators, Ministry of Education, University senates, governing boards, etc) do not have or display the willpower to enforce the relevant sanctions and punish the offenders. This nonchalance or impotence on the part of agencies/bodies to implement the laws encourages other people to perpetuate EM, as "nothing will happen, even when caught".

#### **THE SOCIETY AND EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES**

The Nigerian society is corrupt and decadent. It would be asking for the impossible to expect that the school as microcosm will be different. The school system mirrors the society. Hence the corrupt tendencies, sharp practices, 419 syndromes in the society have been replicated in the school as an organization within the societal supra-system. The hope is that when the society's ethics and value system improve, and then there could be a downward trend in the incidence of examination malpractices and ills in the school system.

#### **Effects of Examination malpractice**

Exam Malpractices discourage good candidates from studying hard. Good candidates are tempted to believe 'if u cannot beat them, join them' especially as they see other candidates get away with their corrupt behaviours. This behaviour may be contagious as more and more candidates tend to join in examination malpractice. They believe that even if they are caught, they will get away with it and the end will justify the means.

Some innocent students are denied opportunities for admission. Many good students have been denied admission by the corrupt ones who through examination malpractice have better scores and grades<sup>6</sup>. The best brains that could help in research and development are likely to be thrown out or frustrated while seeking admission.

It delays the processing of examination scores and grades. Every year, many students are caught for engaging in various examinations malpractices which needs to be investigated before results are released. Though some results are withheld pending the determination of the cases, some are decided before results are released. This extends processing time.

It dissatisfies candidates .Candidates who possess certificates they cannot defend are dissatisfied. They have psychological problems arising from the way they acquired their certificates. In some instances, they will not be bold to present the certificates because they can be presented with tasks that will require them to defend the certificates

It decreases job efficiency .This has a serious implication on the gross domestic product of the country. It also has effect on the general quality and

<sup>6</sup> Eckstein, M.A (2003). Combating academic fraud: Towards a culture of integrity. Retrieved from [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org).



standard. Imagine the havoc of a half backed medical doctor could wreck on human lives. What about teachers who cannot competently handle the subject they are trained to teach. There is a chain effect of examination malpractices on the educational system and the society as a whole.

The menace is a cause of worry for all stakeholders as well as adherents of moral and ethical uprightness in the Nigerian society. Sometime ago, a non-governmental organization known as Examination Ethics Project came up and conducted researches across the nation on issues of examination malpractice. For instance, in 2003, the Examination Ethics Project reported that out of 929,294 candidates that sat for the May/June WAEC O' level in Nigeria in that year, 111,969 representing 12.05 percent were caught cheating in the examination. The following year, 2004, the Examination Malpractice Index (EMI) had increased to 16.9 percent. This means, for every 100 candidates in the examination, 16-17 of them were caught cheating. Most cases are not even recorded and reported.

According to West African Examination Council Reports in DAILY SUN newspaper of August, 29, 2006, in Nigeria, between May/June 1996 and May/June 2005, a total of 14,408,336 candidates sat for WAEC and 1,367,726 of them, representing 9.4% over that period were involved in examination malpractice. This means for every 100 candidates that took examination, about 10 of them cheated. Of course, these were the ones reported.

These frightening figures show how presently, the menace of examination malpractice has eaten into the very fabric of the educational system, with its attendant negative effects. To magnify the malignant nature of the problem, in 2007, then Minister of Education in Nigeria, Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili announced to the nation, the 324 blacklisted schools barred from serving as centres for any examination conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examinations Council (NECO), Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB), due to their reported involvement in Examination Malpractices. The Minister said this as quoted by Edukugho (2007)<sup>7</sup>. "The schools through the proprietors, principals, teachers as well as compromised supervisors invigilators and community leaders work in concert to facilitate cheating by students. ". Evidence from such studies have listed, among others, ill-preparedness for examination leading to lack of confidence by the students, poor facilities especially sitting arrangement in examination halls, low morality, etc. as causes of examination malpractices in Nigerian institutions.

It has been observed that the Nigerian society has gradually shifted from traditional communal system to one characterised by socio-economic stratification. This has implications to examination problems in schools. Parents who belong to the upper classes (the haves) want to maintain this advantaged position for themselves and their generation. They go into ridiculous and unwholesome extent to ensure that their offspring pass examinations with high grades so that they too could be in the so called elite and professional disciplines. This is in spite of the fact that their children having been spoilt may naturally not make the required high grades in their examinations. Such parents have been found to aid/approve malpractices and sometimes directly influence the examination system to favour their wards. An influential parent in an attempt to secure admission for his child in a school once

<sup>7</sup> Vanguard newspaper of February, 22, 2007.



remarked before a highly placed university official: Don't worry Sir, I will bring another score from.... I had been warned to pay for a higher score. I did not know this will not reach the cut-off mark. That is, the kind of parents in the Nigerian society today who would perpetrate heinous crimes to get what they want.

#### EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Nigeria government must perceived education as a means of giving its citizens tools for effective functioning as individuals and social beings. Thus, education becomes a vital and crucial tool needed for the formation of minds from childhood to adulthood in a designed environment called school where learning and the acquisition of skills can take place for the total development of each individual, the society and the nation as a whole<sup>8</sup>. The overall aim of education is to shape the behaviour of an individual, so that he or she can perform most effectively within his social milieu.

Bearing in mind the role that education is suppose to play in nation building, a nation stands the risk of being underdeveloped in terms of accumulation of illiteracy, disease and poverty when its youths reject the honour of getting sound education and seems to opt for fraudulent activities and deceptive ways in making-ends meet as epitomized by examination malpractices thereby negating the philosophy of sound education. The products of such a system can only grow up to be cynics, unbelievers, insensible, dishonesty, ignorant, narrow-minded, myopic, unintelligent, deceptive, close-minded, one sided beings who would be indifferent to the issues of life and powerless to act, create and succeed<sup>9</sup>.

It was opined<sup>10</sup> that malpractices have a paralyzing effect on the developing nation. Its process makes void in our youth, future leaders and professionals a situation that leads to a future of social, political and economic insanity and bankruptcy. According to him, engaging in examination malpractice lead to cancellation of results which means great waste of resources to society and parents, and provides sources of great agony and injustice to innocent students.

#### LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON HOW TO CURB EXAM MALPRACTICES

Over the years, due to rampant of indiscipline in Nigeria, the Federal Military Government promulgated a Decree covering miscellaneous offences, including examination malpractice with stiff penalties. For instance, a punishment of twenty-one years of imprisonment is pronounced on any student found guilty on exam malpractice. Despite government efforts to put this measure in place, people still circumvent the law and the level of students' involvement has continued to increase. The percentage of those involved in exam malpractice in West Africa School Certificate examination grew from 1% in 1995 to about 14% of the total number of candidates in 1994. The incident is not limited to secondary school students. This cankerworm has reared his ugly head into the Nigerian Law School where the Director General vowed to institute an action against two lecturers who were recently involved in exam malpractices.

<sup>8</sup> Ekan, M. T. (1996). Promoting Examination ethics. Nigeria: An Examination ethics publication.

<sup>9</sup> Ogunyaju, S. A. (1999). *Examination malpractice? bone of the youths, Morib: Decency*.

<sup>10</sup> Ekan (1997).

The Registrar and Chief Executive of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, (JAMB), Dibu Ojerinde, on Wednesday, May, 16th, 2012, requested for assistance from the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in fighting malpractices plaguing the conduct of public examination in Nigeria. The Registrar made this request in Abuja during a visit to the EFCC Chairman, Ibrahim Lamorde in his office. Mr Ojerinde said that the most challenging issue confronting JAMB was the issue of examination malpractices. He said that though the mandate of JAMB was to conduct credible and valid examinations free of malpractices, the rising spate of sharp practices among students sitting for its examinations has become a cause for concern<sup>11</sup>.

"There is this particular case of a woman in Ikirun, Osun State. During the examination, a search was conducted on her and the scanner gave indication that there were foreign metal object in her body. All entreaties to her to bring out what was on her failed until a woman supervisor had to take her to a closet and undress her only to discover that a handset was prepared just like a pad in her private part. It was that bad. If we had not used the scanner, we couldn't have detected it. Even at that, I am sure there were people that still went away with it," said Mr Ojerinde.

Also in most of our high institutions this evil is the order of the day, where people employ various means of passing examinations, some through exporting extraneous materials to the examination hall, which is the old fashion, with the advent of GSM phones and other telecommunication gadgets. A lot of students in our various schools have developed a way of using these gadgets to cheat in an examination. Also other students have develop other means like getting the questions before the examination with the support of their lecturers, some by way of threatening the lecturers perhaps because they are cultists, while some ladies offer their bodies to gain favour from lecturers, this also is a sort of examination malpractice.

The government, given its lackadaisical attitude towards policy formulation and implementation in the sector, is also a major contributor to this scourge of examination malpractice. The Nigerian government has not made its stand known to the citizenry on how serious they are to combat the crime. Government itself has been the first enemy of progress towards this direction because it has failed to give enforcement to the existing law promulgated by its military brother who felt that the evil brought about by this exam malpractice could only be combated through sanction. According to the highest court of the land, the Supreme Court, in the case of University of Ilorin vs Oluwadare Idowu,<sup>12</sup> delivered in the year 2006, by Sylvester Umaru Onu, J.S.C. It was evident that exam malpractice is a criminal offence and should be left with the courts to determine and whoever is found guilty be made to pay the price. The agent being employed to deliver the JAMB from this cankerworm cannot do it because it is not as independent as courts, meaning that it can also be used as aiding and abetting agent in this regard. The followings suggestion can be useful in combating exam malpractice:

<sup>11</sup> Published by TV Channels, on Sun July, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> (SCJ (2003), 14/7/2006).



## **PENALTIES FOR EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE**

Exam Malpractice Act 33 of 1999 stipulates cancellation of results, heavy fine as much as N100,000.00, to a jail term up to 21 years. This Act remains a toothless bulldog as many of these penalties have not been invoked. The University of Ilorin<sup>13</sup> stipulates a number of penalties ranging from rustication for not less than two semesters to expulsion. All these penalties are to serve as deterrent to students.

Government should revitalise the existing law promulgated by its Military Brother to be meted out on culprit of the offence. Anybody found guilty of this be handed over to the law enforcement Agent who will in turn arraign the person before any court of law for appropriate sanction. Court should still be allowed to make pronouncement on the culprit of exam malpractice. The culprit while in the prison custody is made to re-write the exam after which he/she goes back to complete his/her studies.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on my findings, the followings are recommended to schools and Government to bring this cankerworm (examination malpractice) to the barest minimum.

- School facilities in term of sitting arrangement and halls have been a major cause of examination malpractice. The universities should guide against indiscriminate admission of students so as not to overstretch the facilities available. There should be good environment like good ventilation, good examination chairs and adequate spacing between students. A lot of temptations to cheat exist when they are too close to one another. The National Universities Commission (NUC) is waging war against over-population in the Nigerian universities. Universities should continue to admit students based on the facility available.
- The Federal and State Governments should continue to establish more universities to give opportunities to more candidates seeking admission. Many private universities are being established but these are for the children of the privileged as the average families cannot afford the cost of private universities.
- Many students who engage in examination malpractice have been found to be academically weak which are traceable to the faulty foundation in their educational ladder. It is recommended that there should be improvement in the delivery of instruction especially at the foundation i.e. primary level.
- The use of mobile phones as the new device for examination malpractice should be curtailed. The universities should ban the use of mobile phones in the examination halls.
- The integrity of the university lecturer is important in curbing examination malpractice. Undue familiarity which can make some students to have advanced knowledge of the examination should be totally discouraged. The invigilators should be very vigilant in their supervision of examination and

<sup>13</sup> University of Ilorin (1998), *Students Guide to Rules and Regulations*, Ilorin, University Press.  
West African Examination Council Forum (2003), *Students Tricks in Examination*, Lagos, WAEC.

should be fair to everyone. The question of double standard should not be mentioned.

Finally, examination malpractice is without any doubt, a part of our educational system. The Federal Government through the National Orientation Agency is working hard to change the value system of the society by mounting many campaigns against corruption, electric cable and pipeline vandalization, I salute the courage and the steps taken by University of Ilorin in mounting campaigns frequently on the ills and penalties of examination malpractices particularly at the beginning of every session so that students who are cut in the act will not claim ignorance of not being warned before penalty is meted out on them. The University Administration should continue doing this while other Universities should emulate University of Ilorin until this cankerworm is totally wiped out of our educational system.