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Examination misconducts: A threat to sustainable national development

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Abstract

National development concerns all Nigerians, the nation continues development is threaten by the disturbing rate of continues abuse of the widely believed to be most convenient, cheap, reliable and consistent means of measuring the level of intelligence of students i.e. examination in various institutions of learning. These wrong acts (examination misconducts) is perpetrated by parents or guardians who buy papers or bribe examiners/invigilators, educators who collect money and turn a blind eye, lazy students who do not take their studies serious and still desire to get the best score, the examiners who set and mark the papers, typist of the questions papers, printer who supervise printing arrangements or transport printed questions, supervisors who supervise the conduct of the examinations, invigilator at the centers/halls, proprietors, school systems such as Colleges, Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Universities are all guilty of various examination misconducts. Societal misfits, low standard of education, unsustainable education and community, unproductive societies, Insularity of Nigeria school systems from the global academic world and others are the results. More effort is required to combat Examination misconducts for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable nation growth. The paper looks into current examination misconducts such as assault on examination officials, and offering money to examiner as inducements among others; factors encouraging it; its effects on nation building and challenges; and suggest ways of overcoming examination misconducts.

Keywords: National development, Examination, Examination misconducts

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1. Introduction

The encouragement of some persons to pander in cheating in order to achieve success is not new to humanity. It is part of life from creation (Graves and Stephen, 2008). Education, which is the process of providing information to persons to enable them develop in all areas of life, is one of the major routes to success in life (Offorma, 2009). Therefore, it has not been free of cheating and malpractices. It is the foundation upon which physical and technological developments rest. Thus, assessment is required to help determine students' class of certificate e.g. Distinction etc, standard and to ascertain the level of competence of students from the elementary school to the highest level of formal education. This in turn influences chances for job placement of people in different organizations across the globe. At a stage in some people's career, examination serves as the gateway to promotion.

There are now greater quests for knowledge, academic credentials and excellence at all levels of education. This has led to students devising different types of methods to pass examinations at all cost; thereby resulting in examination malpractices. Some of these methods are impersonation, exchange of answer scripts by students, writing relevant information on parts of the body and pieces of paper etc (Anan, 2005).

Examination malpractice has been defined as a deliberate act of contrary to official rules, and is designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage; it is a careless, illegal or unacceptable behavior by a candidate in a formal test of his knowledge or ability in a particular subject (Philemon, 2007). It has also been said to be an act of omission or commission, which compromises the validity and integrity of any examination (Okwu, 2006). Examination malpractice is counter-practice that is against ethics of examinations, an act that disrespects all rules and regulations guiding the good conduct of any examination or any evaluation process. Consequently, cases of examination misconduct have been increasing on the increase in various institutions of learning across the nation. Its growth has reached an alarming dimension in recent times (Olatunbosu, 2009). Even outside the formal school system, there is evidence of one form of sharp practice or the other in the country (Graves and Stephen 2008). This practice seems to have become a monster that defiled different measures put in place to curtail its growth. Parts of such measures are; Decree 21 of 1985. Examination Malpractice Act No. 33 of 1999. Examination Ethics Project of 2003 (EEP) led by Ike Onyechere, Public Relations Workshop Organized by the Lagos State Police Community Relations Committee-PCRC (Ijaiya, 2004) etc. This therefore should be a concern to stakeholders in education because if examination misconducts are well tackled and eradicated, Nigeria will become a better place where credibility and integrity is upheld.

2. Current forms of examination misconducts

The alarming rate of Examination misconducts is a global issue, it is neither a recent phenomenon nor is it peculiar to Nigeria or Africa alone (Awanbor, 2005). This alarming occurrence of examination misconducts than ever before in every public examinations, like the West African Examination Council (WAEC), Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), National Examination Council (NECO) and examinations

organized under various schools/institutions in Nigeria. These have lead to cancellation of results in public examinations and suspension/dismissal of students in schools/institutions.

Examination misconducts may come before, during or after the examination as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Forms of examination misconducts

S/N.	Forms of Examination Misconducts	Before Examination	During Examination	After Examination
1.	Buying/selling of question papers	✓		
2.	Offering money to examiners as inducements	✓		✓
3.	Offering money to invigilator/supervisors as inducement		✓	
4.	Impersonations (mercenaries)		✓	
5.	School systems encouraging cheating	✓	✓	✓
6.	Harassing/assaulting teacher/Examiners or Supervisors/Invigilators	✓	✓	
7.	Sneaking answer booklets, maps, chart, drawings, etc to examination Hall	✓	✓	
8.	Distorting and Creating Violence	✓	✓	
9.	Money extortion and requesting for gratification to allow cheating	✓	✓	
10.	Requesting for gratification to give marks	✓		✓
11.	Awarding marks to students without writing Exams			✓
12.	Reducing/deducting students' score for unjust reasons			✓
13.	Assisting students with answers		✓	
14.	Changing scored marks in favor of student			✓
15.	Student altering obtained scores (on Report Sheets)			✓
16.	Copying others works		✓	
17.	Taking notes/texts books into the Examination Hall (micro/macro chips)	✓	✓	
18.	Students seeking the assistance of examiner/invigilator		✓	

S/N.	Forms of Examination Misconducts	Before Examination	During Examination	After Examination
19.	Conniving with medical personals to obtain an excused medical certificate on grounds of illness.	✓		✓
20.	Parents/guardian Supporting/assisting in cheating	✓	✓	✓
21.	Failure to submitted answer scripts/booklets			✓
22.	Coming-in-and-out with ulterior motives	✓	✓	
23.	Teacher willingly giving marks to favorites			✓
24.	Failure to score right			✓
25.	Use of mobile phones/calculators to take notes/formulas into Exam Hall; and/or receive illegal information about examinations	✓	✓	
26.	Tearing of question paper or answer booklet		✓	
27.	Writing answer on part(s) of the body for the purpose of copying during examination	✓		

These various forms of misconducts are threatening the key (education) Nigeria requires to produce sound, vibrant and dynamic workforce that will make her Vision 3 : 2020 & beyond reality.

3. Factors influencing examination misconducts

Many factors have been identified as causes of examination misconducts among students, some of which are moral decadence, quest for material wealth, urge for credentials rather than education, poor teaching/learning habits, upbringing of the children, parents and family history, poverty/poor remuneration, frustration, pride, maladministration of schools heads and examiners, students' lack of self-confidence, poor condition of examination centre's/halls, unceasing staff strikes that often interrupt academic calendar, desire to be in business by proprietor of private learning institutions, inadequate guardian and counseling in our various learning institutions, inadequate laws/policies to tackle the menace, non enforcement of existing law on offenders, in most cases and in many schools, school management, lecturers/teaches, parents/guardians and the so called security agents are involved. Undoubtedly, we cannot continue like this..., Machineries need to be set in motion to identify all culprits and get them sanctioned. Though it sounds emotive, these reflect the truth of the matters in most of our various learning institutions. Schools' management, lecturers/teachers, proprietors, students and guardians, examiners and invigilators and even security men and women have buried their integrity.

4. Effects of examination misconducts on national development

Examination misconducts ruin the credibility, validity and reliability of examinations, which are necessities of examinations. The current trend of examination misconducts have diminished the standard of education, leading to the award of certificate to people who are not found worthy in learning and/or character, such occurrences discourage good students from studying hard as they see others get away with their corrupt acts. Best brains that could help in research and development via generation of data useful for promotion, certification, selection and prediction, instructional and motivational aid etc, are frustrated or thrown out in admission/job seeking process by the corrupt ones. The prevalent bank failures, collapse of buildings, economic sabotage, drug trafficking, fake drug manufacturing and sales are practical effects of moral decadence, emanating from examination malpractice (news2.onlinenigeria.com/.../5692-exam-malpractice). Fake impression of capabilities; waste of resources; failed and drop out candidates; inability to cope with challenges; hooliganism; cultism; half baked graduates; low standard of education; unsustainable education & community; forgery, political tugs and Area Boys; rogues; bad peer influence; Career ruins; Corruption; Fraud and activities leading to fraud; Unproductive society (and nation); abetting; poor community (national) image and others. These are chain effect of examination misconducts on the educational system and the nation will not ensure solid foundation for growth and sustainability.

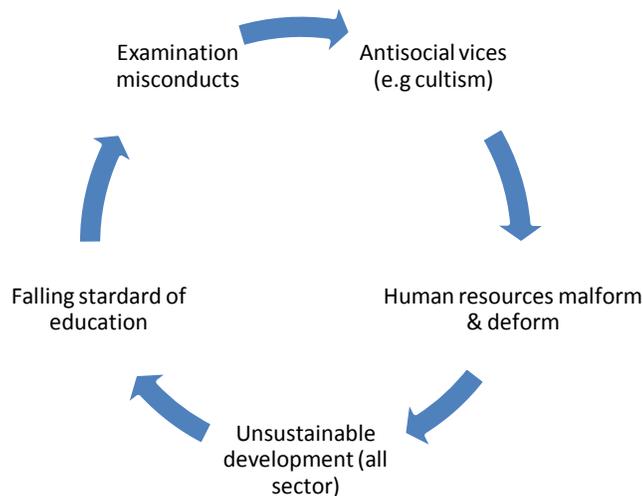


Figure 1. A Flowchart showing the effects of examination misconducts

5. Challenges of combating examination misconducts in Nigeria

The intensity and generality of this problem can be gauged from the fact that apart from the students, some parents/guardians/family relations positively intervene, help and facilitate their children in cheating adventures. If at the end, these students are withdrawn from the institution and then taken back to square

one. As a parent which is more expensive? For the students, it is unfortunate they cannot defend their certificates.

Furthermore the problems emanating from direct legal prosecution is great despite the increasing incident of misconduct, the culprits are hardly prosecuted by the law enforcement agents. Some examination bodies highlighted the challenges they encounter in prosecuting cases of examination malpractices in their examination. Uchechukwu Nnaike on This Day Education has quoted registrar of National Examination Council (NECO) Prof Promise Okpala, May 16, 2012. Vol.17. No. 6232 to have said at a recent stakeholders' summit organized by the Federal Ministry of Education, that the body is faced with difficulties in taking perpetrators of examination malpractices to court because of cultural belief and limitation of the courts that could hear the cases.

"Problems emanating from direct legal prosecution are enormous. We are not a culture that treats illegality the white man's way. We have the culture of 'go and beg him', or 'settle', or 'get elderly man to go with you and beg' when people do wrong. If a candidate is caught, and you tell the person who witnessed it to testify, you will not see them in court. They will say they don't want to party to another man's downfall".

He called for an amendment of the malpractice Act so that state high court and even magistrates courts could try the cases instead of only Federal High Courts as it is now. In addition, examination officials now face increasing risks to their lives and Property as they dare to stand up against examination malpractice. Other challenges are; Degradation of Moral Values, the challenges posed by ICT, Inadequate staffing in some learning institutions/examination bodies, poor funding and others.

6. Recommendations

The aspirations and efforts of the founding fathers can not be jeopardized; sound education with sound mind is keys that should not be played with; and the good reputations of the state and the nation at large should be upheld. The following therefore become necessary for Sustainable national development:

- Every level of government should invest massively in education to ensure trained and adequate human resources in schools and colleges and other high institutions of learning for effective teaching and learning in the classrooms, laboratories, studio, libraries, gardens, and entire premises are adequate and conducive for teaching and learning in every school system;
- All public and private schools system being it College, Monotechnic, Polytechnic or University that would not follow the rules and regulation for the conduct of examination should be sanctioned;
- Every level of our school systems, the syllabi for any examination should be completed and enough time made available for revision and practical's;
- Students should be given enough exposure to practical aspects of school subjects/courses such sciences oriented subjects/courses and technological courses and others.

- Public and private schools/colleges/tertiary institutions should employ only qualified , God-fearing and disciplined teachers/instructors/curators who might have been trained to give total education at each level;
- Any person/group of persons who is found to indulge him/her in examination misconduct should be indicted and made to face the wrath of his employee, ministry and associations of other stakeholders;
- Parents and guardians should imbibe sound moral attitude. This will help us get homes and the entire nation right because students cannot practice what they don't see;
- Parents and guardians need to spend quality time with their children and wards to enable them understand and imbibe the good virtue of the society and grow into responsible and morally upright citizens;
- Schools being private/public should be well funded and undue emphasis should not be placed on paper qualifications.
- To produce world Class Children and to prepare them for national and international challenges and compete favorably, anywhere, anytime, a blend of curricular with those of World Class international communities should be applied;
- More admission places should be open for candidates for University and others tertiary institutions placement.
- Genuine academic successes should be celebrated to encourage other to do more.
- There should be the employment of more trained, qualified and competent professionals who have the traits for counseling students. A situation where only one 'part time' counselor attends to over seven thousand students is not healthy, as she/he would not have the time to attend to each student individually (Ogu and Odimba, 2010).
- Organize seminars on 'examination ethics' at least once in each semester for students. Lecturers/teachers should also be trained in the area of guidance and counseling in education so as to complement the services and effort of professional counselors
- There is the need for existing laws to tighten the noose on examination misconducts.
- Examinations in all our learning institutions should be automated via the use computers (ICT)
- Since guidance and counseling is for all, parents and guardians of students should be aided to understand the danger involved in forcing the children and wards to study courses they have no interest in. They (parents) should rather encourage children to pursue their time and area of interest, so that they can achieve self-actualization and self-realization efforts of the professional counselors.
- Publications of religious journal at regular interval stressing religious ethics, morals and practices will definitely bring some sanity back to the system.

7. Conclusion

The potentials of Nigeria will be difficult to realize socially, economically, and technologically until all stakeholder put his or her hands on deck to eradicate it (news2.onlinenigeria.com/.../5692-exam-malpractice). The nation needs a drastic reform in the educational sector (Daily Sun, May 15, 2012) because if we continue this way, we may not be able to have competent and qualified people in our offices and Parastatals. Education “acknowledged as lasting path to prosperity and sustainable standard of living” (Fafunwa, 2005) will be left at the mercy of what will be taught by radio, television, bad peer groups, neighbors and internet (ICT). Examination misconducts with its disadvantages are affecting all the facets of the nation. Stiff measures have to be in place to ensure credibility and authenticity of the examinations at all levels. It is grossly unethical, immoral and in neither nonconformity with the standards inherited nor the aspirations of those that laid the foundation. Therefore, let’s not spent further time arguing, blaming and causing ourselves because very soon the bad seed we are planting, some will/have become Architects, Engineers or Doctors, they will design bridges you will ride over, houses to resides in and you or your child may fall into their hand to be treated, what would be your fate? Enough is enough.

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