

Curbing Examination Malpractice in Secondary Schools in Nigeria through Moral Education

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Abstract:

The study was designed as a survey into the act of examination malpractice among secondary school students in Nigeria. Examination malpractice has been seen as a cankerworm which has eaten deep into the fabric of all examination in Nigeria. The researcher however, has designed the teaching of moral education as an effective means of curbing the menace hence the problem is a moral issue. The study therefore revealed various ways by which the teaching of moral education could solve the menace of examination malpractice in Nigeria.

Keywords: Curbing, Examination, Malpractice, Moral Education.

Introduction

The value and functionality of any educational system lie in its ability to actualize the goals of education. In Nigeria, the national educational aims and objectives as outlined in the National Policy on education (NPE) are:

1. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
2. The inculcation of the right values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around us; and
4. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (FRN, 2004:8) .

In educational systems, world over, the examination process makes the difference in the actualization of the goals of education, Nwadiani (2005:2) asserted that “the goals of national educational systems and indeed national development become like mirage if examination ethics is not encouraged and instituted”. Examination is one of the major means of assessing and evaluating students’ skills, knowledge and attitude in both general and specific areas of studies.

Olatunbosun (2009:101) noted that “till date, examinations still remain the best tool for an objective assessment and evaluation of what learners have achieved after a period of schooling”. Therefore, any action that undermines examinations poses a great threat to the validity and reliability of examination results and certification.

Unfortunately, the process of examination in Nigerian secondary schools has become a “contemporary shame” according to Nwadiani (2005:3). This of course is due to the phenomenon of examination malpractice that has become endemic in the educational system.

Examination malpractice is an act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of before, during or after any examination fraudulently secures any unfair advantage for himself or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulations to the extent of undermining the validity, reliability, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificates issued. (FRN, 1999:1)

Onah (2010:58) defined examination malpractice as anything done by an examination candidate that is likely to render the assessment useless. Ike (1996:5) stated that examination malpractice is any action done or committed which makes it impossible to use an examination in determining the level of competence of a candidate in absorbing, reproducing, and where appropriate, apply the knowledge. This means that any act of wrong doing or neglect that contravenes the rule or acceptable practice before, during and after examination by any body in any way is examination malpractice.

Moral education is the process through which an individual develops proper attitudes and behaviours toward others in the society, based on social and cultural norms, rules and laws. In other words it nurtures in a person those virtues and values that make him a good person, thus developing his thinking skills of moral judgment about what is right and wrong, and rational judgment about difficult matters. Iwenofu (2010:2) noted that moral education is an education of the will whereby the will of man is educated to embrace the good proposed by the right reason and avoid that which is detrimental to his becoming a noble man.

Some Nigerian students in general and secondary schools in particular are known to exhibit several unhealthy attitudes, which are reflections of a lack of moral integrity in the educational system. Such unhealthy attitudes include indiscipline, fraud and drug abuse. The most conspicuous and devastating of these social ills in the Nigeria secondary schools is examination malpractice. It has become a cankerworm in Nigeria education system over the years. It has graduated from being an educational issue to an educational crisis. Hence, Kpangban, Ajaja and Umudhe (2008) described it as a big scandal in Nigeria. Examination malpractice has many forms, causes and consequences, and should be eradicated. However, government and examination bodies have tried to curb examination malpractice but to no avail. Thus, Onah (2010) and Moses (2011) agreed that none of the strategies so far adopted in fighting examination malpractice has been able to yield the desired result. Therefore, there is the need to articulate a strategy that can successfully curb the menace. The thrust of the paper is to examine how examination malpractice can be curbed through Moral Education

Prevalence of Examination Malpractice

The history of examination malpractice in Nigeria is not recent. It dates back to the colonial era. According to Kpangban et al (2008), the first examination malpractice in Nigeria was reported in 1914, when there was a leakage of question paper in the Senior Cambridge examination. Since then, the incidence of examination malpractice has lasted long in the country. However, Onuka and Amoo (2011) noted that examination malpractice existed at minimal and in simple unsophisticated forms in the earlier years, but became more pervasive as from the 1970s. It must be noted that in the recent past, the incidence of examination malpractice was not limited to final examinations conducted by public examination bodies alone. It occurs in school assessment, and this is carried over to external examinations especially the ones conducted for certificates or for admission purposes.

The incidences of examination malpractice are common every where and every examination season witnesses the emergence of new and ingenious ways of cheating. The alarming rate of examination malpractice in secondary schools is witnessed in public examinations such as the Senior School Certificate examination (SSCE). Thus Oneychere (2004) noted that it is almost a routine for students to cheat in both internal and external examinations.

Examination malpractice in secondary schools also cuts across schools in all the geo-political zones of the country. In 2006, the Federal Ministry of education blacklisted and derecognized 324 secondary schools across the nation as centres for conducting public examinations from 2007 to 2010, due to their involvement in examination malpractice. The distribution of the schools that were involved according to Olatunbosun (2009:102) is shown below:

Zone	No. of Schools involved	%
North-Central	54	16.6
North-East	08	2.5
North-West	12	3.6
South-East	48	14.8
South-South	116	36.0
South-West	86	26.6
Total	324	100.00

This shows that examination malpractice occurs in all geographical zones in the country, with the south-south zone having the highest number of schools (116) involved, followed by the South-West zone with 86 schools. The North East zone has 8 schools which is the least in the six zones.

Agents of Examination Malpractice

Students who cheat, especially in public examinations do not do it alone. It is clear that many people are involved in examination malpractice. Accusing fingers have been pointed at teachers, principals, parents, invigilators and students as being agents of examination malpractice. According to Ijaiya (2011) examination malpractice involves students, parents, teachers, school heads, examination officials and supervisors. These groups of persons have been identified earlier as agents of examination malpractice by Sooze (2004), Onyechere (2004), and Alutu and Aluede (2006).

However, Ijaiya (2011) in her research identified the students, peer group and fathers as the strongest agents of examination malpractice. Students succumb to temptation either from themselves or from other sources. They devise different methods of examination malpractice ranging from crude methods of grafting to such sophisticated ones as the use of electronic calculators capable of storing information and the cell phones. Other forms of examination malpractice by students according to Ugwuoke (2010) include smuggling of written examination scripts into examination halls, direct copying from textbooks, oral communication between candidates and the use of small pieces of paper which contain point usually related to particular examinations and tests.

On the part of the peer groups, they can supply information to each other on leaked question papers, source for mercenaries to assist them, and supply the amount to pay in cash or sometimes in kind. The group members can also allay each others' fears of being caught and or assist each other inside the examination hall. The parents' role is that they may wittingly or unwittingly through the usual pocket money supply the money for mercenaries or purchase of leaked papers or pay fees for special centres where leakage of papers is expected. Kpangban et al (2008: 224) summarized the roles played by different groups in aiding and abetting examination malpractice in the following words:

Parents provide the resources, school heads create the enabling environment, teachers do the solving and assist in creating enabling environment, ministry officers and examination body /officers cover the cheats and write that all is well in centres of their interest, students copy freely while supervisors collect gratifications and all forms of inducement.

Forms of Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice takes different forms and can take place before, during and after the examination. Hence, Adewale (2011:4) categorized examination malpractice into three-Pre-examination, examination and post-examination malpractice.

Pre-examination malpractice takes place before the actual examination. Examination malpractice that happens before an examination which is the most serious and undermines completely the integrity of the examination and also the entire purpose of the examination is the leakage of questions. This involves the granting of privy access to the content of an examination either directly to a candidate or a number of them or their agents. This is most serious in the sense that it renders all efforts irredeemably futile. In this age of Information Communication Technology (ICT), this type of malpractice can be pervasive, covering a very wide scope of examination. This kind of question leakages does not give room for rescue intervention, because live questions are usually targeted by dishonest syndicates. It completely erodes, the basis of certification, which is learning and character. It also confers honour on those that are not due for such honour.

Leakages of examination questions can occur from a number of sources. In public examinations, the staff at the production site, who are responsible for the printing of examination questions, those who package examination materials and those who convey the questions from the press to the centres have become sources of concern, because according to Anwabor (2006) many of them have been implicated in matters of question leakages. In school examinations, examiners, typists and messengers constitute a major source, as questions may be shared with favourable candidates for one kind of gratification or the other. Thus Adewala (2011) noted that candidates knowing their ability offer to give something (cash or kind) to somebody (examiner, messenger or typist) so that examination materials could be released to them before hand, they then study the materials with the view to

memorize answers to the questions raised in the examination they had access to". The preparation of answers, which candidates bring to the examination hall, is mainly caused by the leakage of questions.

Malpractice during Examination

During examinations, materials which candidates feel could assist them answer the questions could be brought into the examination hall. This form of examination malpractice involves copying something in a small sheet of paper which could be tucked into shoes or mathematical sets. The information could be written on unexposed parts of the body like tattoo on girls' thighs. Materials could also be written on palms and other parts of the body. Another method of bringing in foreign materials into the examination hall is through courier or contractor. The courier or contractor may be junior students, examination assistants etc.

The introduction of the Global System of Mobile Telephones (GSM) in the country has revolutionized examination malpractice in the school system. The emergence of such technological devices has spawned new and more sophisticated approaches to dishonest conduct during examinations. A lot of academic information is stored in handsets for direct use in examination halls or for onward transfer via Short Message System (SMS) to other students anywhere in the country. Candidates could also collude by discussing or passing materials among themselves with a view of copying from each other. Another form of examination malpractice during examination is impersonation, where somebody writes an examination for another.

Post-Examination Malpractice

Post examination malpractice include activities after examination such as, a supervisor leaving the envelope containing examination scripts open on previous arrangement, so that script(s) written outside the has could be included in the envelope before sealing and submitting it to the examination body. This method of malpractice according to Adewale (2011) is known as "substitution". In this case, a candidate submits his/her script and later, another script (already prepared for him/her is brought in under special arrangement and the supervisor is supposed to remove the first one submitted and substitute it with the one brought from outside.

Another form of post examination malpractice is candidates tracing their scripts to the point of the marker and seeking and/or successfully influencing their grades. This is common with school examination where cash and kind can be exchanged for marks or grades. However, it also occurs in public examinations. For instance, according to Ojerinde (2004), there was a case of a candidate who traced his paper from Enugu to Kano and another from Kano traced his to Ibadan.

Effects of Examination Malpractice

The consequences of examination malpractice are many and enormous as both the nation and the individual have direct share of them. Examination malpractice is a social evil that can damage society. This is because according to Ogunkola (2011:4)

The quality of a nation's manpower development is in direct proportion to the quality of its educational system. So a country with shaky and porous examination system will have very poor manpower, as the value of certificates obtained through malpractice in examinations will be worthless.

Examination malpractice therefore renders the goals of education invalid. The actualization of the goals of education will continue to be a mirage if the scourge of examination malpractice is not eradicated from the system. The country will end up producing graduates who lack the knowledge, skill and competence to exploit the resources of the nation. Besides, the graduates will lack the right type of values and attitude needed for survival in a globalized economy.

Examination malpractice also has some economic consequence. This is because, cancellation of results due to examination malpractice amounts to economic waste. For instance, Aminu (2006) noted that within a space of ten years alone, the West African examinations Council (WAEC) cancelled the result of 814,699 candidates in its May/June Examinations. Considering the cost of buying examination forms alone, this amounts to a waste of billions of Naira.

Examination malpractice leads to irreversible loss of credibility. A country that is noted for examination malpractice losses its international credibility. The implication is that documents emanating from such country

will be treated with suspicion. Consequently, certificates awarded by such country's educational institutions are disbelieved. Such country's educational institutions are as good as dead as far as international cooperation in education is concerned.

The fight against corruption cannot succeed if examination malpractice is not eradicated in the educational system. As leaders of tomorrow who have gone through a school system characterized by academic fraud and dishonesty, the youths of the country will sow and nurture this fraudulent behaviour in any organization they find themselves. They are likely to continue to live a life of crime, fraud and corrupt practices. Since the consequences of examination malpractice are grave, it should be tackled with all seriousness.

Efforts so far in curbing Examination Malpractice in Nigeria

There are different approaches adopted by different examination bodies, governments and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Examination bodies such as the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) have been trying to fight examination malpractice. Fagbemi (2001) cited by Olatoye (2011:7) reported efforts by WAEC to include public enlightenment campaigns, information to students on rules and regulations guiding examinations, punitive actions on candidates and WAEC staff involved in malpractice, and creation of a whole department headed by a Deputy Registrar to handle cases of malpractice. NECO has also conducted workshops, seminars and public enlightenment campaigns. An NGO known as Examination Ethics Project has worked tirelessly on examination malpractice.

The Nigerian government, in order to curtail the trends of examination malpractice in schools has made some laws. One of such laws is the Act 33 of 1999. The decree spelt out the types of examination malpractice and punishment. Offences enumerated by the Act include;

- Cheating at examinations
- Stealing of question papers
- Impersonating
- Disorderliness at examinations
- Disturbance at examinations
- Misconduct at examination
- Obstruction of supervisor in carry' out his duties during examinations.
- Breach of duty during examinations.
- Conspiracy to cheat.
- Aiding and abetting examinees to cheat and other related offences.

The Act stipulates that for any of the offences committed by a person of 18 years of age and above, a fine up to ₦100, 000 or imprisonment of a term up to 3 years or more would be applied. However, part II (Miscellaneous schedule) provides that when the person charged for any of the listed offences above is below the age of seventeen he/she shall be dealt with under the provisions of Children and Young Persons Act. If the accused is a school principal, invigilator, supervisor, agent, custodian or employee of an examination body, he/she will be liable to imprisonment for a term of 4 or 5 years with an option of fine, or in another case, liable to imprisonment of a term of 4 years without option of fine.

It has been observed that all the efforts by the government, examination bodies, institutions, individuals and concerned groups towards eradicating examination malpractice have not yielded meaningful results. Rather the situation has become worse in recent times (Olatunbosun 2009:104).For instance, Jekayinfa (2006:35) observed that all the penal codes made by the government have not been implemented. No offender on record is known to have been tried under any of the decrees. According to him, the decrees/laws are too draconian un-reformative and hence unenforceable. Therefore, there is the need to curb examination malpractice through some other ways like teaching of moral Education in Nigeria schools.

Moral Decadence and Examination Malpractice

The phenomenon of examination malpractice is influenced by many factors. According to Ivowi (1997), lack of confidence as a result of inadequate preparation, peer influence, societal influence, parental support and poor facilities in school are some of the factors responsible for examination malpractice. Writing in the same vein,

Badmus (2006:4), Nwadiani (2005), Okafor (2006) and Ayua (2006) identified school programmes, teaching learning environment, the teacher, the students, overvalue of certificate and parental support as some factors responsible for examination malpractice in Nigerian educational system.

This writer holds that the central factor responsible for examination malpractice in the country is the high level of moral decadence in the Nigerian society. Examination malpractice is one of the features of a society that nurtures cheats and mediocre and turns them into celebrities. Contemporary Nigeria society places great emphasis on success goals without equivalent emphasis on institutional means of attaining these goals. The society is characterized by a heavy emphasis on success and wealth without a corresponding emphasis on legitimate means and avenues to be used in achieving success. Hence according to Ndibe, cited by Ojerinde, (2004:5):

The country is bedeviled with social and economic ills such cultism, Embezzlement, social injustice, corruption, and has become a society where the custom is to decorate miscreant, naves, scam artists and violators of national trust with nation Honours and appoint them to exalted public offices.

The social vices bedeviling the society have permeated the entire segments of the education sector. The manifestations are cultism, indiscipline and examination malpractice, which have become endemic in the education system of the country. The moral decadence in the society has made both students, parents, teachers and others to be involved in examination malpractice. Students and parents are involved because they want good grades; teachers and other are involved because of the financial, material and other intangible gains derivable from involvement in examination malpractice.

Examination malpractice is a variety of corruption. It is sustained by whatever sustains corruption in the country; capitalism has eroded the moral values of the Nigeria society. Social, economic, political, religious and educational vices are celebrated and rewarded in the country while virtue is relegated to the background. How can students, teachers and others shun examination malpractice when they “see criminals being set free through legalisms and court room gymnastics or worse, through wretched and criminal influence peddling” (Aminu 2006:8). Hence, Jibril (1991) noted that examination malpractice is a reflection of the moral decadence of our country. Agha (2004:59) summarized the moral decadence in Nigeria thus;

Today in Nigeria, deception seems to be the order of the day. Banks are robbed, offices set ablaze to cover up crimes of embezzlement, people are assassinated to make way for another politicians and to conceal crime... Examination results, question papers and admission into institutions are sold.

Therefore, any attempt to curb examination malpractice devoid of dealing with the problem of moral decadence in the society will likely be a failure. To ensure a more comprehensive approach to the attempt in curbing examination malpractice moral Education should be at the forefront.

An Overview of Moral Education

Moral Education is the teaching of respect, responsibility and other values to citizens for good character development and for the health of the nation. Moral Education influences an individual on how he thinks feels and act regarding issues of right and wrong. It is very important to gradually tutor children on how to make the right choices from the beginning of their live, and help them to exercise their freedom in a responsible manner. Moral Education also helps them to begin to appreciate common values such as honesty, liberty, justice, fairness and respect for others. When children imbibe these virtues they will be able to live good lives and at the same time become productive to the nation.

Moral Education aims at developing in children and youth a strong convention of the worthiness of moral behaviour and a sense of moral responsibility. It influences them to take moral obligation seriously and caring deeply about doing them and at the same time to possess the will power to execute moral judgment into effective moral action. Above all, moral education is about conscience formation. Okwueze (2003) noted that conscience can be viewed as the application of the principles of the moral order to our actions. Man created in God’s image cannot be properly formed without reference to God. God endows man with a conscience so that he can easily know the general principle (good must be done and evil avoided), and to be able to determine what is good or evil in concrete situations. To be able to achieve this, the conscience needs continuous formation.

At home, the parents serve as the moral educators. According to Oladipo (2009) parents are vital in the moral development of the child because they are the first moral teachers and role models that young people have. This they do by providing the necessary affective relationships and extensive interactions that facilitate moral

development. Ezeanya (1998) noted that the home is more appropriate for education in the virtues. It is the natural environment for initiating human beings into solidarity and communal responsibilities.

In the school, the shortcomings of the home should be taken care of. Teaching moral education in the school also basically reinforces the values practiced at home and in society. Ukeje (1979) cited by Eneogwe (2005:20) noted that schools are generally called upon to assist in the development and perpetuation of the acceptable national character, that is, those attitudes, habits and ideals considered necessary and desirable for national survival. That is to say if we want to develop a morally sound citizens, moral Education should be intensified in schools. Moral Education is therefore the bedrock of any society that wants to move forward in socio-economic and infrastructural development. Hence, Chijioke (1981:2) opined that every child should be taught moral instruction from the first day in school to the last days of his higher degrees.

Curbing Examination Malpractice through moral Education

Examination malpractice especially at the secondary school level is a hydra headed problem facing the educational system in Nigeria. Since previous efforts geared towards curbing this problem seem to have yielded no dividends, there is need to adopt the strategy of moral Education. This is so because; examination malpractice is a reflection of the moral decadence in the society. Moral education is essential for bringing up morally sound children. Good character is required for a crime-free society to be instilled in the people at an early stage. Moral education ensures that the people know what is good, desire what is good; and do what is good. This attitude should be instilled in the youth right from the primary schools to secondary schools.

Quality education recognizes the whole persons and promotes education that involves the affective domain as well as the cognitive. Values such as peace, honesty, forth rightness and dedication; diligence are cherished and aspired by the world all over. Such values are the sustaining force of human society and progress. What children and youths learn is inter woven into the fabric of the society. So, positive values should be passed on to the school children. This will produce a generation of citizens who will not only shun examination malpractice because of the fear of the punishment but because of the internalized values through moral education. It is clear that the students are the basic agents of examination malpractice and if we catch them young they can stop examination malpractice.

For a successful moral values to be achieved teachers can employ fascinating ways such as story telling, to convey the required values. According to Oladip (2009) stories could convey moral vales and children of every age love to hear a good story. Story books with stories of characters that through simple righteous acts, become heroes worthy of emulation are good for moral education of the child. We should also create and utilize music for the teaching of moral lessons. Some religious and non-religious groups alike have produced excellent recordings, which employ catchy tunes, and repetitive lyrics that keep moral values on the lips of children's tongues. This should be further explored and employed to teach moral education to the younger generation. Teaching moral education to curb examination malpractice is catching the children young. It can solve the problem of examination malpractice from the root. This is because, if students cultivate the habit of doing the right and avoiding the wrong no matter the situation, examination malpractice will be a solved problem. This attitude can be cultivated through moral education.

Conclusion

Examination malpractice is a social problem that has become a hard nut to crack. It is a hydra-headed problem that has defied all efforts geared towards its solution. Thus, any effort aimed at resolving the problem must deal with the root causes of the problem. Examination malpractice has been identified as a reflection of the high moral decadence in the Nigerian society. It is therefore advocated that sound moral values and development of right attitudes through effective teaching of moral education in schools be adopted.

Recommendations

Since other robust measures put in place have failed to reduce the incidence of examination malpractice in our secondary schools the following recommendations are made:

1. Moral education school be made compulsory in schools at all levels.
2. Students should be counseled to have faith in their own ability. They should be made to believe that if other students can pass their examinations genuinely, they too can pass theirs.

3. Teachers should help students form the attitude that nothing good comes easy and thereby encourage hard working.
4. Students should be assisted by parents/guardian to form positive study habits to be able to succeed in schools.
5. Teachers need to acquire and display sound moral values of integrity and moral probity in order to resist stoutly their students wanting to bribe them so that they can aid them in cheating during examinations.
6. Teachers need to imbibe and display the right attitude of hard work and creativity and inculcate same in their students by giving regular assignments, projects and laboratory and workshop practical.
7. Teachers, vice principals and principals also need to acquire and display in their work in school sound moral values of equality, honesty, honour, respect, self control responsibility, social justice, and respect for authority etc.
8. Parents should strive to socialize their children properly by teaching them basic moral values. They should also monitor the behaviour of their children.
9. Parents should also strive to live out what they teach their children. This is because, if a child is growing amidst unfairness, vulgarity, cheating and lying and is taught moral values at school, he cannot see its relevance in his life.
10. Religious leaders should condemn examination malpractice and preach against it.

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