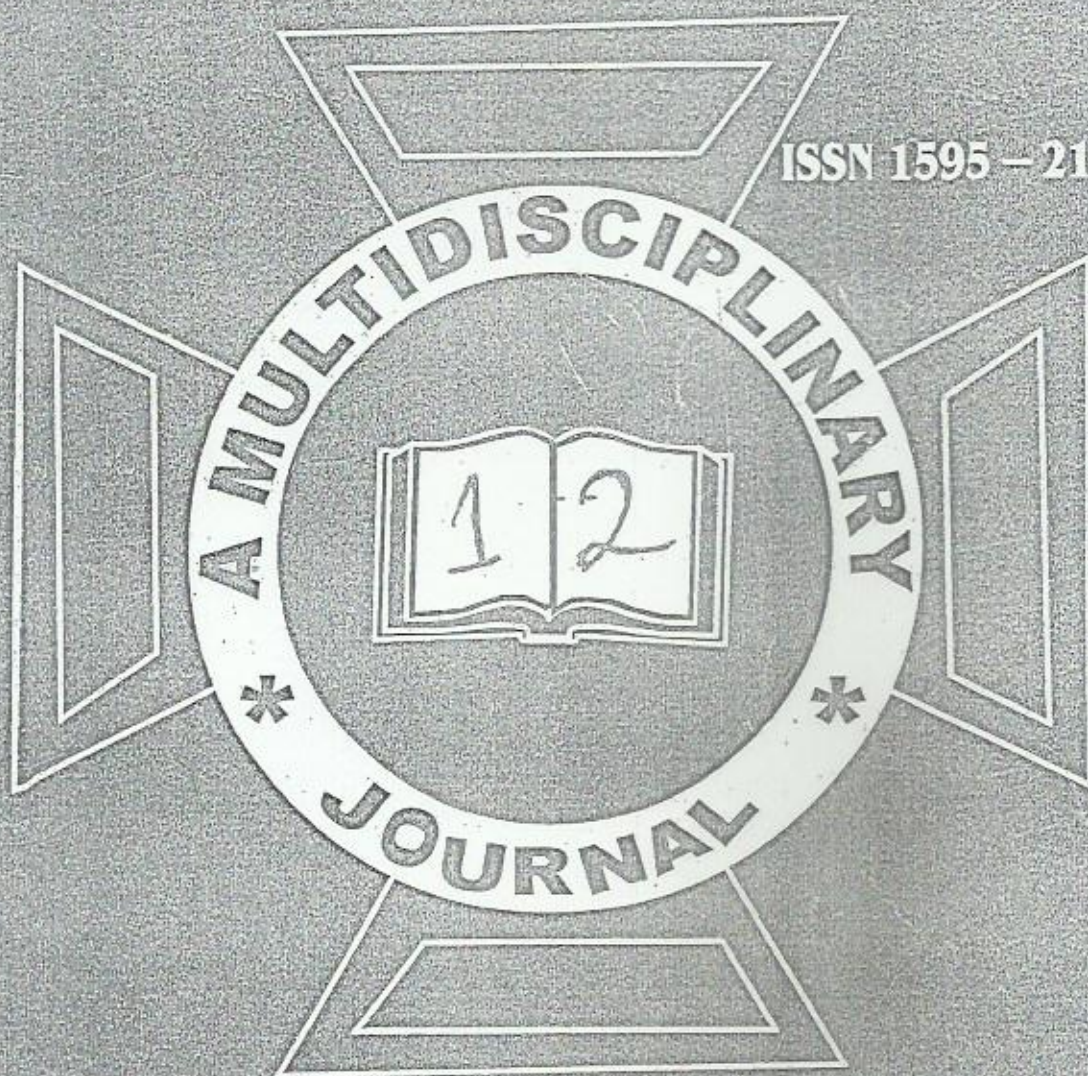


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# TOWARDS ERADICATING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

*Prof. (Mrs) T. A. Bolarin and Pemedede, Oluwatobi*

## Abstract

This study highlights the incidence of examination malpractice in Nigerian schools. It also explains how Nigerian students as well as other perpetrators, such as parents, officers of various examination bodies encourage examination malpractice. In all, the study provides some useful recommendations for total eradication of examination malpractice in Nigerian schools.

## Introduction

Formal education is the spring – board to socio – economic growth and development of every nation (Awoyele, 2001:109). That is, through formal education, developmental objectives of training the citizenry in skills and attitudes are imperative. To acquire the aforementioned attributes, examination must come to play. In Nigeria, examination has been bastardized in such a way that examination malpractice has become the order of the day. It is absurd to observe that students devise new tricks as a daily routine. It suffices to note that such a gullible act has a symbolic interpretation locally and internationally. In other words, examination malpractice has taken its root from primary to tertiary levels of education; a cancer in the veins of students and an epitome of disgrace to the nation. It is important to note that the widespread of examination malpractice, symbolically, depicts most our experts who claim technical knowledge to be no more than fake (Nduka, 1993:1).

## Concept of Examination / Examination Malpractice

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995:398) defines examination as a formal test of somebody's knowledge or ability in a particular subject, especially by means of written questions or practical exercise. In other words, examination in the academic context includes the use of one or more varieties of test to discover the quality of knowledge possessed by candidates.

Similarly, the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995:711) sees malpractice as a professional misconduct or those acts contrary to the principles guiding the conduct of examination in the mechanism used to ascertain, test and measure the extent to which a learner has assimilated and acquired specific skills and knowledge. That is, malpractice means careless, illegal or unacceptable behaviours by somebody in a profession or official position. In the same vein, the West African Examinations Council (Oluyeba and Daramola, 1993:17) defined examination malpractice as:

Any irregular behaviour exhibited by candidates or anybody charged with the conduct of examination, in or outside the examination hall before or during or after such examination, such behaviour must be a sort of contravention of the rules and regulations governing the conduct of such examination. Such examination malpractices will include any of the following: examination leakage, impersonation, cheating, collusion and swapping of scripts, smuggling of answer scripts into examination halls, results/certificate forgery, verbal/physical assault on examination administrators.

In the same vein, Ugodulunwa (2000:125) describes Examination Malpractice as an improper practice in any examination with the intention of obtaining good results through fraudulent means. To the moralist, those who indulge in an examination malpractice are stealing and cheating (Maduka, 1993:4).

Furtherance of this, it denotes that cheating at examination is the highest degree of immorality which cuts across all levels of education and as such, it is an epitome of godlessness, disregard for the individual as well as the nation at large (Badmos, 1997:4). However, it is imperative to note that many students do not engage in examination malpractice without the support of other perpetrators in the society. For instance, the former minister for education once lamented:



Almost all our examinations, both internal and external and at virtually every level, are riddled with brazen acts of irregularity and malpractice. What is particularly worrisome is the deep involvement of individuals and groups, who traditionally would be expected to constitute the army fighting against the vice. It is completely indefensible to find the school principals, teachers, examination officials, supervisors, invigilators, law enforcement agents, parents and even whole communities deeply involved in or aiding and abetting examination malpractice (Umeh, 2001 cited in Odewumi 2002.)

The above excerpt illustrates that examination has been abused in Nigeria. It is however, worrisome and of great concern to Nigerians as well as every part of the world. To this end, one continues to ask, for instance, how did Japan achieve her industrial and technological height? Chudi (2000:32) argues that this could be as a result of her patriotism and nationalism. He buttresses the point that after the Meiji restoration in 1868, Japan reformed and restructured her education system, inculcating in her citizens 'filial piety' and the spirit of nationalism and national identity. The point of argument is that Nigeria has not in actual fact instilled or inculcated the spirit of patriotism into her citizens having considered other social vices, which have culminated in all public sectors. In other words, the cultural pursuits for effective examination are clearly eroded.

### **Causes of Examination Malpractice**

Oluyeba et al (1993:17) reported that cases of examination malpractice occurred in 1914 when there was leakage of question paper in the Senior Cambridge Local Examination. Since then examination malpractice cases reported occurred 1963, 1967, 1970, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1987, 1991, 1998 as it were, a continuous process since 1998 within West African Examinations Council (WAEC), Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), National Teachers' Institute (NTI), professional bodies as well as tertiary institutions.

However, a sociological question worth asking is, Why examination malpractice? The answer to this is simple. As a member of examination malpractice committee in the Lagos State University, Faculty of Education; it clearly shows that it could be as a result of fear of failure, poor study habits inadequacy of good teaching method and equipment.

Secondly, acquiring academic certificate as a sine – qua – non to future progress.

Thirdly, pressure by some parents to force their children to read particular courses, which they have, little or no aptitude for.

### **Devices of Examination Malpractice**

Bolarin (2002:8) and Odewumi (2002:7) outlined some basic methods of examination malpractice which include giraffing, standing fan, micro chips, body tattoo, swapping, smuggling, proxy, arrangee, contracting, taking prepared answer scripts to the examination hall, impersonation, writing relevant information on pieces of paper and hiding them in private parts and wrappers, writing relevant information on the thighs and palms, dictating correct answers to students by unscrupulous invigilators, using certain options in objective tests such as the thumb for "A" and the smallest finger for "E", illegally extending the period allotted to each examination paper by invigilators, male teachers showing examination questions to their female students as well as messengers, clerks, typists, storekeepers who sell photocopies of examination question papers and even live question papers to students.

Also some parents assist their children to purchase question papers and eager enough to collaborate with supervisors. In doing this, they hire impersonators to assist their children to sit for their papers. Interestingly, it shows that the culprits or perpetrators include the learners, teachers, typists and custodians of examination papers, law enforcement agents as well as parents.

In the same manner Pemedé (2001:20) discovers a way of examination malpractice through the use of graffiti (to inscribe formulae on the desks). In all, it is glaring to notice that the desire towards cheating in examination is as a result of the emphasis placed on certificate as the ultimate goal for future progress in the society. As it were, writing every examination becomes a do or die affair. At the end, it undermines the integrity of a nation, breeds criminals, lazy and pleasure – seeking



### *Towards Eradicating Examination Malpractice In Nigerian Schools*

individuals who adversely tarnish the image of the nation. In other words, any nation where examination becomes a crisis from primary to tertiary institution as the case in Nigeria, such citizenry who claims technical knowledge in any field will be no more than fake and the western societies will discredit institutions of learning on its credibility of certificates issued by various examination bodies (Itotoh, 1993:5). In furtherance of this, the available data below indicate meanings and interpretations of crisis (examination malpractice) in Nigeria's educational system.

**Table 1: Rank Order of the Number of Schools Involved in May/June 1977 SC/GCE (O/L) WAEC Examination Leakage in Each State**

State Code	State	No. of Schools
06	Bendel	65
09	Cross River	39
11	Imo	39
15	Lagos	36
04	Anambra	19
19	Oyo	18
21	Rivers	13
17	Ogun	13
18	Ondo	4
10	Gongola	3
07	Benue	1
14	Kwara	1
20	Plateau	1
	Total	252

*Source: H.M. Omotoso (1998)*

**Table 2: Rank Order of The Number of Schools Involved in May/ June 1981 SC / GCE (O/L) WAEC Examination Leakag in Each State. (Ordinary Level)**

Sta te Code	State	No. Of Schools
06	Bendel	73
18	Ondo	58
11	Imo	57
15	Lagos	46
19	Oyo	44
21	River	36
09	Cross River	34
04	Anambra	26
17	Ogun	26
07	Benue	11
14	Kwara	6
20	Plateau	5
16	Niger	2
	Total	424

*Source: H.M. Omotoso (1998)*

Table 3: Rank Order of the Number of Schools Involved in Nov / Dec 1981 SC / GCE (O/L) WAEC Examination Leakage in Each State. (Ordinary Level)

State Code	State	No. Of Schools
04	Anambra	14
11	Imo	6
06	Bendel	1
09	Cross River	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>

Source: HM. Omotoso (1998)

Table 4: Distribution of Candidates by Types of Examinations Malpractices

Year	Nature Of Malpractice	May	June	Nov	Dec
		'O'	'A'	'O'	'A'
1983	Smuggled Scripts	*	*	75	8
1984		172	3	46	3
1985		109	*	44	2
1986		94	23	74	*
1987		295	4	*	*
1983	Impersonation	116	3	*	*
1984		51	2	91	4
1985		18	*	66	2
1986		19	1	112	2
1987		183	*	*	*
1979	Leakage	719	*	*	*
1981		2394	*	*	*
1985		211	*	*	*
1986		83	*	*	*
1987		*	*	*	*
1983	Cheating	*	*	773	62
1984		3281	34	570	39
1985		4206	*	417	143
1986		7126	333	480	28
1987		7559	28	*	*

Source: HM. Omotoso (1998)



**Table 5: Statistics of Entries and Incidences of Examination Malpractice from 1985 to 1996**

Year	Examination	Total Entry	N0. of Examination Malpractice Cases	N0. Of % Of Total Sat In The Country
1985	GCE & 'A' LEVELS	849,779	6,288	0.74
1986	GCE & 'A' LEVELS	894,373	3,715	0.42
1987	GCE & 'A' LEVELS	763,448	9,217	1.21
1988	GCE & SSCE	612,791	17,062	2.78
1989	GCE & SSCE	437,983	15,660	3.17
1990	GCE & SSCE	726,026	22,391	3.09
1991	May / June SSCE Nov / Dec. SSCE	<u>446,743</u> 299,338	30,982	10.40
1992	May / June SSCE Nov / Dec. SSCE	<u>256,335</u> 299,859	<u>35,479</u> 36,971	12.33
1993	May / June SSCE Nov / Dec. SSCE	<u>521,174</u> 384,046	<u>258,494</u> 27,172	<u>11.22</u> 7.08
1994	May / June SSCE Nov / Dec. SSCE	<u>528,294</u> 529,033	<u>72,516</u> 49,447	<u>13.83</u> 9.25
1995	May / June SSCE Nov / Dec. SSCE	<u>634,576</u> 520,867	<u>119,943</u> 69,185	<u>18.88</u> 13.29
1996	May / June SSCE Nov / Dec. SSCE	<u>630,142</u> 446,163	<u>103,727</u> 86,653	<u>16.47</u> 24.33

Source: (M.U. Maduemezia (1998))

**Table 6: Statistics of Candidates Involved on the Basis of Various Types of Malpractices Between 1991 to 1996**

Number Of Candidates Involved											
	Type Of Malpractice	SSCE Aug/Sept 1991	SSCE May/June 1992	SSCE Nov/Dec 1992	SSCE May/June 1993	SSCE Nov/Dec 1993	SSCE May/June 1994	SSCE Nov/Dec 1994	SSCE May/June 1995	SSCE Nov/Dec 1995	SSCE May/June 1996
1	Bringing in of Foreign Material	17,206	4,479	8,440	8,533	7,291	12,665	9,728	13,335	18,595	14,842
2	Irregular Activities Inside the Exam Hall	1,859	8,360	9,830	5,580	5,920	17,175	10,351	26,645	29,258	20,191
3	Collusion	8,560	19,748	17,374	27,777	6,580	29,099	4,915	65,963	15,603	54,742
4	Impersonation	944	256	667	189	874	233	1,191	913	1,273	351
5	Insult/Assault on Supervisors or Invigilators	194	1,355	650	657	294	1,641	1,916	1,364	215	1,148
6	Special Cases	2,219	1,281	-	5,516	-	5,002	21,346	816	1,962	10,558
7	Mass / Cheating	-	-	-	-	6,213	6,701	21,346	10,907	2,282	1,865
	TOTAL	30,982	35,479	36,961	48,252	27,172	72,516	49,447	119,943	69,185	103,727

Source: M.U. Maduemezia (1998).

Table 7: Statistical Implications Of Examination Malpractice

S/N	Type of Malpractice	Number of Candidate Involved			
		SSCE Aug/Sept 1991	SSCE May/June 1992	SSCE Nov/Dec 1992	SSCE May/June 1993
1.	Number of entire results cancelled	22,257	15,566	19,504	20,160
2	Number of subject Results cancelled	8,471	19,913	17,457	26,092
3	Number of candidates Barred and or handed over to the police	1,471	1,611	1,317	846
4	Number of schools/centres Derecognised	9	60	*	31
5	Number of supervisors/ Invigilators involved in and or Reported for examination Malpractice	45	69	*	91
6	Number of Principals/ Vice principals involved in and Or/ reported for examination Malpractice		31	*	12

Sources: S.O. Adeyegbe (1994).

Table 8: Cases of Examination Malpractice in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

	Tertiary Institution	Year/ No Of Students Affected			
		2000	2001	2002	Source
1	University of Agriculture Abeokuta (UNAAB)	*	*	256	The Punch (2002) Vol 17, (18,674) Pg 46, Oct. 21st
2	Osun State Polytechnic (IREE)	*	*	8	The Punch (2002): Vol 17(18,557) Pg. 28, May, 9 <sup>th</sup> .
3	Federal Polytechnic Auchi, Edo State	214	*	*	The Punch (2000): Vol.24 (1015) Pg 7, Oct. 1st
4	The Federal Polytechnic Offa (FEDPOLPA)	*	*	2,276	The Punch (2002). Vol.17 (18,710) Pg.11, December 10 <sup>th</sup> .
5	Lagos State University	*	*	32	The Comet (2002) May, 8 <sup>th</sup> Pg.6
6	Ado-Ekiti Federal Polytechnic	*	*	20	The Punch (2002) Sept.9 Pg 5
7	University of Abuja (UNIABUJA)	*	*	35	The Punch (2002) Jan.22.Pg 7
8	University of Ilorin (UNILORIN)	*	*	34	Vanguard (2002) May 2.Pg 9

\* Figures not available

The tables above, indicate cases of examination malpractice from 1977,1981-1987, 1985 – 1996, 1991 – 1996 as well as cases of examination malpractice in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.



### *Towards Eradicating Examination Malpractice In Nigerian Schools*

The foregoing tables illustrate that the education industry in Nigeria is deteriorating and symbolically, the image of our experts in various fields could be regarded as fake. It is also glaring that different decrees promulgated have not been effective having considered number of examination malpractice cases. Also, having considered cases of examination malpractice in Nigerian schools and according to the Nigeria's philosophy of education which stipulates as follows:

The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen; the integration of the individual into the community; the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system; and education has to be geared towards self-realisation, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress.

Thus, looking forward with the above Nigeria's philosophy of education as well as cases of examination malpractice indicates that our policy on philosophy of education would amount to a mere paper work. In other words, it is a simple mathematics to agree that in a nation where examination malpractice by students and other perpetrators becomes the order of the day as mentioned earlier; such a nation, cannot produce effective citizenship which will assist in producing social, cultural, economic, political, science and technology for the development of the nation. Failure to achieve the goals enumerated in the National Policy of Education therefore connotes that such Nigeria's philosophy of education could be regarded as a conundrum for educationists. Thus, examination malpractice has become a problem to the Nigerian education industry. In view of this, Akinpelu (2001:7) argues that the problems of education are so interwoven with other social systems such as social, political, economic and cultural. In other words, the problem of education industry however will also affect other systems in the society.

#### **Recommendations**

Examination malpractice in our various schools discredit the academic certificates issued to our students. As a result the following recommendations could be adopted as a panacea to the problems:

##### **Re – Socializing the Learner through seminar:**

At the beginning of every session in all schools, seminar / workshop on examination malpractice should be organized to educate learners; especially on the effects and implications of involvement in examination malpractices on the individual and the nation.

##### **Severe punishment for Officers:**

Typists, clerks, messengers as well as storekeepers who sell photocopies of examination question papers and even live question papers to learners should be sanctioned.

##### **Seminar / Workshop Across all the Tertiary Institutions**

There is an urgent need for Universities across the country to embark on seminar at least twice in a session for the eradication of examination malpractice in our various tertiary Institutions. In furtherance of this, every Dean in the Faculty should place all hands on deck to expose the culprits.

Also, it is worthwhile to appreciate the effort of the Federal Government which in the past instituted a Judicial Commission of Enquiry; to look into the causes and prevention of examination malpractice / leakages. As a result, Alexander Tribunal of 1967 and Sogbetun Tribunal of 1977 were instituted for examination leakages. Also, Decree 20 (1984) stipulated twenty one years of imprisonment for examination malpractice while Decree 22 stipulated 10 years. However, this study recommends 5 years of imprisonment (hard labour) and the list of students expelled for examination malpractice and forgery of certificates should be sent to all tertiary institutions before commencement of admission into higher institutions.



All professional bodies, Principals, Head teachers, Vice-chancellors, Deans, Head of departments, Provosts of Colleges of Education, Rectors of Polytechnics, Associations, such as Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) should endeavour to expose and sanction any student who engages in any form of education malpractice.

#### Parent - Teacher Association

In all, parents and teachers should instill norms and values in the children. Through lectures at Parent-Teacher Association meetings, parents should be strictly educated on the importance of examination to formal education. The need to eradicate every unwholesome practice, which may lead to examination malpractice should be stressed. It is therefore, imperative for parents to inculcate in their children the need to preserve the good family name as well as protect the image of Nigeria.

#### Conclusion

From all critical analysis and observation of the various forms of examination malpractice in the primary, post-primary as well as tertiary institutions; it is glaring that examination malpractice has sadly become a part of the Nigerian culture. Also, having considered the statistics of culprits, it is also as clear as crystal that the emphasis laid on academic certificate is germane to this gullible act which symbolically discredits the validity and reliability of certificates issued to the students. It is therefore, imperative to come out with strong measures so as to eradicate examination malpractice as one of the crises in the education industry. The position in this paper, therefore, is that individuals should avoid unhealthy practices which may constitute examination malpractice in our Nigerian schools.

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