



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## A cursory look at examination malpractices in Nigerian schools

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## ABSTRACT

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It is an incontrovertible and veritable fact that the objective of education is invariably to prepare future leaders for the inevitable challenges in the society and by implication develop them to suit manpower requirement. This training definitely requires or involves examination and assessment from time to time, in order to ascertain the level of knowledge and competence of the students. Examination as it stands is as old as the educational system itself. It is explicitly the act of giving the students or candidates a test to determine a student's promotion from a lower class, to a higher one. Globally, this is the basic prerequisite for climbing the educational ladder. It could come in form of a written, oral or practical test. Definitely, every examination has laid down principles or stipulations that must govern people's conduct and behavior during the conduct of such examination ethics. Any wrong conduct discovered during the conduct of such examination is what is called examination malpractice. Apparently examination malpractice tantamount to academic and illegal act that has punitive measures attached to it. In our contemporary Nigeria, the incidence of examination malpractice has escalated tremendously, due to the students' fear of failure, lack of confidence, inadequate preparation, laziness and a lackadaisical and unenthusiastic attitude to what brought them to school. This paper shall examine these issues.

### INTRODUCTION

The entire essence of teaching in the classroom is to effect mental and behavioral change and this can be ascertained through test and examination. For some people in Nigeria, writing and passing examination is a do or die affair. For this reason parents do go the extra – mile to see that their children pass exams. Examination malpractice is actually a cardinal impediment to educational development in Nigeria. It is an integral part of the corruption that invades the national sphere. If examination malpractice is not checked or even eliminated from the academic system of Nigeria, the fabrics of development in all sectors, education will decay and underdevelopment will inevitably set in (Gbenga 2008; Prasongthan et al., 2024; Ikumapayi et al., 2024; Gahar et al., 2024). Ukpong also noted that: "While strategies have been put in place to check malpractice, it appears that on a daily basis, malpractice assumes an alarming trend and dimension and this is due to fear of failure, laziness, lack of confidence and adequate preparation (2021). In order to avert the undesirable repercussion of examination malpractice in the country, it should be the responsibility of schools, parents, governments, agencies and religious bodies to come together, put hands on desk and ensure that this evil is exterminated.

### What is Examination Malpractice?

Examination malpractice simply implies going against the principles that govern conduct and behavior during examination as laid down by the examination council. It is a deliberate illegal act, contrary to the

rules and regulations of the examination. It is an improper conduct by the candidate of an examination with the aim of passing an exam.

Examination malpractice is any action taken to negate and compromise the intent of an examining body. "It is an active or passive action that goes against the rules and regulations of an examination" (Bernard 2022)

Tambawal defined examination malpractice as: "any deliberate act or wrong doing, contrary to the rules of examination, designed to give a candidate an unfair advantage or able frequently, to place a candidate at a disadvantage" (2019). Malpractice invariably does not introduce equities into the examination. In some examinations, the level of malpractice is so high that it tremendously undermines the credibility of the examination system.

Olayinka defines examination malpractice as: "a misconduct or improper practice of an individual in any examination, with the intention of obtaining good result through fraudulent practices" (1994). In this sense, any act that goes contrary to the rules governing the conduct of examination can be termed as examination malpractice and by implication fraudulent.

In Willey's understanding, examination malpractice: "is any illegal act committed by a student single – handedly or in collaboration with others, like fellow students, parents, teachers, supervisors and invigilators" (1997). It is an improper behavior exhibited by candidates or officials who are charged with the responsibility of conducting examination.

Examination Malpractice is so rampant today in both secondary schools and Universities. Students no longer believe in reading, but instead believe in cheating.

Examination malpractice is also examination dishonesty, since it entails unethical acts which goes against the norms of the society and the rules and regulations guiding examination. Students have given this dishonest act different names. Such names include: brain-support, Oyoro, spare part, missiles, bullet, Ekpo, co-operation and combine service. It is also worthy of note that a great deal of parents, examiners and invigilators are in support of this improper act.

## **DIFFERENT FORMS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE**

There are different forms of examination malpractice. In this section, I shall examine some of them as follows:

1. **Inscription:** This is when candidates inscribe materials or information on the body. Such information may be written on the palms, things or any other part of the body. It could also be inscribed on inanimate objects like chairs, tables, walls and so on.
2. **Giraffing:** This is a situation where a student stretches out his neck as long as possible in order to copy or have access to what another student has written. Apparently, this kind of malpractice is named after one of Africa's wild animals with an extreme long neck, legs and small head.
3. **Impersonation:** This is when an unregistered individual takes the place of a registered individual. In most cases, this may even be done with the consent of the authorities concern or even those invigilating. The person who does this is always doing so in order to get favour or monetary reward form the person he is writing for. In the year 2022, it is on record that a law lecturer of the University of Calabar was caught for impersonation in the Nigerian Law School, Abuja campus. This is a good example of impersonation.
4. **Collusion:** This has to do with the exchange of information between students. It may come in form of exchanging notes or even scripts. Very often, candidates writing the same examination copy from one another in this manner.
5. **Leakage:** This occurs when the entire exam questions or part of it is disclosed before the commencement of the examination. This could result from the carelessness or deliberate act of the person typing the questions, or the person keeping the questions. Very often, even the lecturer involved may also decide to enhance this leakage because of some monetary gratification.

6. **Bribery during Examination:** In this case, students pay the examination officials some money, not necessarily to buy the question papers, but to allow them use illegal materials smuggled into the examination hall in order to enhance their success in the examination. Also, this kind of money may also be given in order to secure the extension of the time originally assigned or allotted for the conduct of the examination. This is the economic side of examination malpractice, where monetary values and inducements are utilized. Male students offer money principally to secure this favour, while female students offer money or sex in other to get what they want (Omemu 2015).
7. **Exchange of Answer Scripts:** This is a situation where answers written in a different examination scripts are smuggled into examination hall by mercenaries and replaced with the actual script. Awanbor has indentified this kind of malpractice as: "the most violent means of dishonesty in an examination" (2006). In most cases, even the invigilators are always involved in the execution of such plans.
8. **Combine Service:** This is when students decide to copy from each other or to compare what they have written during examination. This examination malpractice thrives in a situation where one student covers the area that the other student did not cover, so that each of them can successfully benefit from the other's writing.
9. **Special Centers:** These centers are places where examination malpractice flourish. In such centers, candidates are allowed to copy excessively, in order to enhance their success in the examination.
10. **Use of electronic devices:** This involves the use of mobile phones, scientific calculators or any form of electronic device to enhance malpractice.
11. **Sex for grade:** This is a situation where a female student sleeps with a lecturer to secure grades.

#### CAUSES OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

Examination malpractice has a number of causes. The following are some of them:

1. **Laziness on the part of the student:** it is explicit that the reading culture has died among students today. Students no longer read, but only believe in engaging in one form of malpractice or the other. This is why uduigwomen noted that: "One of the deadly Psycho-somatic diseases affecting students academic life is laziness" (2015). Students prefer watching movies, attending parties, engaging in careless visitations and unprofitable conversations to reading.
2. **Desperation:** Students are very desperate and want to pass exams and graduate to the next class by all means. For them, passing exams is a do or die affair. They are ready to go to any length and do anything in order to secure this.
3. **Inadequate Preparation:** It is a common knowledge that poor preparation will always precede poor performance. So, when students are not properly prepared, they decide to resort to examination malpractice.

**Corrupt Supervisors and Invigilators:** When supervisors and invigilators are corrupts, they can help enhance and initiate things contrary to examination ethics. Many Supervisors and Invigilators see the examination time as a time to make quick money. As a result of this mindset, they lower the standard and create a conducive atmosphere for students to engage in unethical behaviours (Onyibe 2015). Ubong was right when he noted that: "the kind of teachers employed by these schools are of low quality because of their inability to pay for professionals" (2021). Some of these school are even malpractice centers, popularly known as special centres.

4. **Inability to cover Syllabus:** When students have not satisfactorily covered the syllabus, this will invariably result in examination malpractice.
5. **Poor parental training:** There is saying that charity begins at home. So, parents cannot be exempted from this social misconduct because from they also contribute to this problem. Some parents are only concern about the provision of fees, but do not care about the academic performance of their children or their proficiency as it appertains to a given subject. Beatrice stressed that: "many parents are even in the forefront to pay for special assistance for their children

during examination” (2020). Evidently, if parents should take time and train their children to be independent and confident in themselves, definitely, such a child will not seek external help to pass an examination.

6. **Environmental factor:** We find ourselves in a society where examination malpractice is celebrated and justified. People now see failing in an examination as a very bad thing and will do everything to avoid it. This is why Okeke stressed that: “if only society would quit seeing failing in examination as a taboo and begin to see failing from the right perspective as a means of identifying one’s area of weakness” (2023).

### Consequences of Examination Malpractice

A student who indulges in examination malpractice will always be living in perpetual guilt and condemnation. He will always lack the requisite self-confidence that can enable him or her succeed. He will not believe in his ability to write and pass examinations. Also, a student who is always engaging in examination malpractice will likely be a victim of expulsion, cancellation of results, jail term (when caught) and ineffectiveness in his professional life. According to Ukeje: “some of the effects of examination malpractice are: Erosion in the school system, it causes irresponsibility, it breeds laziness, it leads to inability to defend results and affect students study habits” (2020). Furthermore, Malpractice brings shame and embarrassment both to the victim and his or her parents. Such students are always embarrassed before others. As a result of this, they lose their credibility.

### Cure for Examination Malpractice

After giving an elaborate explanation of the meaning, forms, causes and consequences of examination malpractice, it is pertinent to at this juncture identify the cure for Examination Malpractice. The following are some of the vital steps that should be taken in order to avoid this unhealthy behaviour in our schools:

1. **Adequate knowledge:** knowledge is very significant in the life of the student. Adequate knowledge of the subject will prevent the student from indulging in examination malpractice. It is also vital that a student knows what constitutes Examination Malpractice and refrains from such a thing.
2. **Adequate Preparation:** Failure to prepare is preparing to fail. It is an incontrovertible fact that if you must succeed as a student, then you must prepare adequately. You must gather and read all the necessary materials that will enable you succeed in your examination. Such materials may include: Textbooks, key points, past questions papers and so on. Adequate preparation will also require asking questions in areas you don’t understand. It will also require having a timetable, which you follow strictly and meticulously (Solomon 2014).
3. **Pray for God’s Assistance:** Prayer is a covenant facilitator of help and wholeness. A student that yearns to succeed must not fail to pray for God’s help and divine assistance. This is because there is a human-divine partnership as it appertains to success. Man has his role to play, as surely as God has his role to play. A combination of these two will always lead to unusual success.
4. **Cultivation of good moral values:** When people learn to cultivate good moral values, it will be easy to refrain from examination malpractice. Parents must stop creating an enabling environment for their children to cheat in examinations. Honest persons should also be utilized in examination supervision and management.
5. **Adequate Remuneration of teachers and Examination Officials:** Teachers and examination officials should be adequately paid and rewarded. This will as a result prevent every financial and material inducement.

### CONCLUSION:

It is vital at this juncture to reiterate the words of a famous American leader, by the name Abraham Lincoln. He was the 16<sup>th</sup> President of America. When writing to his son’s teacher, he noted thus: “Tell him, it is more honourable to fail than to cheat” (cited in Okafor 1990.). Examination malpractice is cheating. One must therefore take an expensive decision never to indulge in examination malpractice, no matter the benefit one

may derive from doing so. The absence of examination malpractices will enhance integrity in the conduct of examinations in the Nigerian educational system. This malpractice is invariably an unwholesome practice encapsulating different types of malicious means adopted by unserious students to cheat during examinations. It is a well-known fact that education is the bedrock of every society. It is therefore our responsibility to avoid any vice that will tarnish the outcome of the learning process. These factors that can tarnish the outcome of learning should be fought by all stakeholders and well-meaning Nigerians. The eradication of examination malpractice, which will militate against human development, should be taken seriously. Once this is done, then we will be able to develop a society where competent and well qualified people will thrive.

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