



**THE MENACE OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES IN NIGERIA SECONDARY SCHOOLS  
AND REMEDIATIVE MEASURES TOWARDS ATTITUDINAL RE-ORIENTATION: THE  
COUNSELLOR'S PERSPECTIVES**

**Dr. R.A. Animasahun**

**Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Ibadan, Ibadan**

**Phone: 08035796840**

**E-mail: animarotimi@yahoo.com**

**Abstract**

*The problem of examination malpractice in Nigeria has turned a monster which is gradually destroying all other sectors and giving the country a vital place among corrupt nations in the world. This study critically examined the reasons for the menace, the vital perpetrators of the dastard act, the effects of the crime on the students, parents, schools, education sector, the society, and the nation at large. Hence, certain remediative measures were recommended from the Counsellor's perspectives to eradicate the problem of examination malpractices in Nigeria.*

*Key words: Examination malpractice, Factors resident in students, parents, school, government, society ..., Remediative measures.*

**Introduction**

The alarming rate of the increase in the incidence of Examination malpractices in this country calls for urgent attention of all well meaning and patriotic citizens. We can no longer pretend that all is well with our educational programme in this country. In fact, the whole nation is resting comfortably on a keg of gun-powder and time-bomb that may explode suddenly! The occurrences in the recent years made Olayinka (1996), Animasahun (2000, 2002) and Omoegun (2003) concluded that the present quality of Nigerian education seems to be highly questionable judging from the alarming increase in the wave and accelerated dimensions of Examination malpractices being witnessed at the educational levels, thus posing a serious threat to the credibility of the certificates being issued to the scholars.

**What is Examination?**

Examination, simply defined, refers to testing an individual for knowledge or ability of the person in a given subject or profession. Examination in an educational system is the primary measure to test a candidate's knowledge, skill and ability in a specified area of study. It is used to measure the standard of students' performance in all educational institutions. In fact, Examination is the only known instrument for selection to educational institutions, job placements, promotions, scholarship awards etc.

Examination is the main strategy for assessing the quality of performance of an educational system. It is the best approach to evaluating the quality of performance of students, the school system, and indeed, the whole of the educational system as a social organization instituted for the growth and development of a society or nation. Examination, on the other hand, is a necessary evil in the educational industry and the big tail driving the whole of what education stands for. The primary purpose of conducting examination in schools therefore is to provide a measure of learners' ability with a view to making necessary academic and guidance decisions about such learners. Such a measure of achievement (result) may be needed to determine among others who is to be promoted to the next class or level, as well as who to be is



awarded a certificate or class of a degree. The accuracy of such decision depends solely on the reliability and validity of Examination results.

### **What is Examination Malpractice?**

Examination malpractice simply refers to the act of non-compliance with the rules guiding the conduct of examinations in order to gain extra advantage in terms of performance over and above other candidates. According to Salami (1987), it is an improper conduct to one's advantage during Examination. Omotosho (1990) viewed it as a dishonest use of position of trust for personal gains. While Olayinka (1996) sees examination malpractice as deliberate act of indiscipline adopted by students or their privileged accomplices to secure facile success and advantage before, during or after the administration of a test or examination, Onyechere (1997) defined it as an act of wrong doing that contravenes the rules of acceptable practice before, during and after an examination. Dibu-Ojerinde (2001) defined it as dishonorable act that leads to the invalidation of Examination results, cancellation of results, punishing candidates, loss of dignity for offenders, imprisonment of offenders, damage to the image of institutions, wastage of resources, erosion of sanity and a host of other penalties. Omoegun (2003) defined it as a misconduct or improper practice in any Examination with a view to obtaining good results through fraudulent practice. Ogunsanya (2003) defined it as any activity of a student or group of students whose purpose is to give any of them higher grades than they would likely receive on the basis of their own achievement. Finally, on definition, Animasahun, (2005) defined Examination malpractices as practical demonstration of lack of emotional intelligence, trust, dignity and worth, and unquestionable expression of moral laxity and incompetence, whereby the perpetrators fraudulently, cunningly and forcefully steal a grade, a position or class of honour which was not merited and whose action lead to the devaluation of educational standard; thereby participating actively in the downfall of our sovereign nation.

Examination malpractice can therefore be summarized as an act that compromises the validity, reliability and integrity of any assessment or evaluation system in all institutions of learning. It is an illegal means of obtaining academic success during formal evaluation of students' learning outcomes in continuous assessments, periodic terminal examinations or/and in public/ external examinations.

The most disturbing and unsettling reality about the menace of examination malpractice is the fact that education, a proven tool for building integrity, perpetrating good and acceptable values at all levels, fostering regard for due processes, justice and fair play has, in our time and society, been made to wear the toga of negation of their virtues and propensities.

### **TYOLOGY OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES**

Various forms of examination malpractices have been identified and are varied according to the dramatic personnel involved. These include students, teachers, invigilators, parents, guardians, school administrators, business centre operators, personnel of examination bodies, custodians of examination materials and the Law enforcement agents.

### **When does Examination malpractice takes place and how?**

To many people, examination malpractice takes place in the examination hall. No! It is more than that. Examination malpractice permeates all stages of examination. Examination malpractice occurs in the three major stages of examination namely, before, during and after examinations. The different types of malpractices are hereby grouped under the different stages of examinations.



### **Forms/Types of Malpractices before an Examination**

1. Negotiation. Parents negotiate with teachers by giving some monetary or material gifts in lieu of coming examinations. Some students, especially females offer themselves cheaply to male teachers for enhanced academic performance. Male students also help teachers to carry out certain un-official assignments, possibly outside school so as to receive some favours in examinations. This also extends to certain schools charging higher than the required examination fees so as to pay certain amount of money to certain staff of examination bodies, External supervisors, invigilators and the Law enforcement agents, who would all assist in successful perpetration of Examination malpractices.
2. Live-wire. Certain Subject teachers are in the habit of showing their prepared questions to their loved ones before the day of examination. Questions could also be leaked by typists, administrative officers or other privileged individuals. It has been alleged that certain workers in many examination bodies get their fortunes through deliberate carelessness whereby examination question papers are leaked out for sale.
3. Scouting and Scrambling for Life questions (Orijo). Some parents, teachers and students go about searching for leaked examination papers. It has even been discovered that special payments are made for such papers in schools. Only those who satisfy such condition benefit from mass cheating in examinations.
4. Internet jungle. Some managers of certain websites e.g. Guru website collude with certain staff of Examination bodies to smuggle life questions out which some experts would quickly provide answers to and place on the website about 12hours to writing the particular paper. Students quickly access the website and download the answers provided for consequent use. However, the school authority or those assigned to invigilate must have cooperated with such students to allow their nefarious activities to be carried out. Prepared answers are often sent to the students via their mobile phones with internet facilities. The students are smart enough to copy the answers.

### **Forms/ Types of Malpractices during Examinations**

Really, this is the hot stage for examination malpractices where there are diverse methods of cheating in the examinations Some of the types are hereby highlighted:

1. Foreign body. This the process of carrying prepared answer sheets to the examination halls. It also include copying some answers on some sheets of papers to be transferred on aswer sheets during the examination.
2. Giraffing. This occurs when students stress their necks and struggle to copy from fellow students during examinations.
3. Contractor. This is the use of contract agents to drop question papers at designated points for a mercenary who picks the papers, answers the questions and return them to the examination hall.
4. Impersonation. This is a situation whereby somebody is hired to write the examination for another student. Most often, students in higher institutions are those usually engaged to sit for these kinds of students.
5. Rank-Xeroxing. This is a situation whereby a student copies verbatim from another student during examination.
6. Missile catch. This is a situation whereby mercenaries are hired to answer examination questions which are consequently distributed among the students or thrown to specific students who quickly catch and copy.
7. Dictation. This is the situation whereby a teacher, principal or any assigned individual comes to the examination hall and dictate answers to the students.



8. ECOWAS. This is a method of passing coded information from one student to another. It might be the use of fingers especially in objective questions whereby the index finger serves as option A etc.
9. Micro-cheaps. Writing on pieces of papers, and neatly tucked in the shirts, skirts, shoes or other parts of the student's body
10. Contraband- Carrying Text books to the examination hall and copying from such.

### **Forms/ Types of Malpractices After Examinations**

1. Allowing students to write more or tamper with their answer sheets after submission.
2. Replacing the answer sheet submitted by a student with a newly prepared answer sheet.
3. Giving opportunity for certain students to sit for the examination in a secret place after which the newly written answer scripts are added to the submitted ones.
4. Changing or alteration of scores after normal marking
5. Inflation of scores of specific students against the marking guide.

### **THE CULPRITS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES**

Examination malpractice is a terrible criminal offence in which a lot of individuals and agencies are involved. The causes of this nefarious activity could be traced to the various agencies that perpetrate examination malpractices, namely: students, parents, teachers, school, Government, Law Enforcement agencies, Society and Religious agencies (Animasahun,2007; 2011; Fadele, 2007; Famoriyo, 2007; Oyebamiji, 2011).

1. Factors Resident in the students:
  - (i) Academic incompetence. Many students are academically incompetent and yet they want to achieve academic success.
  - (ii) Laziness. Many students are naturally lazy. They do not bother to study at home but depend solely on what the teachers say in the class, which they may not even remember.
  - (iii) Poor study habit. This is the major cause of failure by many students; hence, they look for any means to pass examinations.
  - (iv) Poor Time-Management. A lot of students waste their time on unprofitable ventures, gossiping, watching films and wandering all about instead of studying hard for examination. Yet, they want to pass their examinations at all cost.
  - (v) Distraction. Distraction is the greatest enemy of distinction. Many students are distracted by various social media such as mobile phones, browsing on the internet and negative peer influence, which definitely prevent them from studying for examinations. Yet, they want to succeed in the exams.
  - (vi) Truancy. A lot of students do not attend classes regularly thereby missing the first stage of learning which is acquisition stage, and eventually affect the other two stages: retention and recall stages.
  - (vii) Peer Group influence. Association often determines destination. Bad association by many students influence them into examination malpractices.
  - (viii) General poor academic performance. It seems as if education has totally lost its value with students failing woefully in public examinations. The fear of failure has therefore dragged many students into examination malpractices.
  - (ix) Lack of readiness to learn. Many students want cheap materials and cheap certificates without learning at all.
  - (x) Influence of alcohol and drug use. Most dastard behaviours are carried out under the influence of substance use and abuse.



- (xi) Over ambition to obtain good grade beyond their normal competence. Most of the students are ambitious to further their education. Hence, they are desperate to use any means to obtain the kind of grades that would make their dream realized.
  - (xii) Desire to succeed at all cost. The ultimate goal of attending school is to be successful. However, these kind of students desire to have their own without hard work.
1. Factors Resident in the Family/Parents:
- (i) Poor parenting. Many parents don't know or have what it takes to be parents. They do not monitor the progress of their children but also want them to be successful by any means.
  - (ii) Misplaced priorities. Many parents spend their time and money on other issues of life than on the education of their children.
  - (iii) Lack of time and genuine love for children. Scrambling for money and other issues of life has become the order of the day for many parents in the society.
  - (iv) Parental history of deviant and criminal behaviour. Many parents are naturally criminally oriented.
  - (v) Over indulgence of children. Some parents over pamper their children, and do not correct them even when they engage in social vices.
  - (vi) Child abuse. Many parents have turned their children to instruments or sources of income. They misuse these children to the extent that the children don't have time to study.
  - (vii) Product of broken homes. Children from broken homes often lack either paternal or maternal care or both. Hence, they are left at the mercy of peer group or environmental influence.
  - (viii) Misuse of power, wealth and opportunities. Some parents often use their privileged public office, position in the society and wealth to secure unarranged grades and certificates for their children.
  - (ix) Pressure on children to pursue courses which children are not suited for. Many parents choose life careers for their children, and are desperate to assist these children to obtain suitable grades for such courses at all cost.
  - (x) Over ambition to have children in choice Universities/tertiary institutions.
3. Factors Resident in the Teachers
- (i) Lack of interest in the teaching profession
  - (ii) Incompetence in teaching the students and struggle to cover up.
  - (iii) Intellectual laziness on the part of teachers
  - (iv) Non-challant attitude of teachers
  - (v) Incompleted syllabus as a result of non-commitment
  - (vi) Bribery and corruption on the part of teachers
  - (vii) Teachers seeking cheap popularity and favour from students and parents
  - (viii) Sexual promiscuity perpetrated by teachers
  - (ix) Continuous assessment malpractices by teachers and school counselors.
4. Factors Resident in the School
- (i) Irregularities in admission and admission of non-qualified candidates.
  - (ii) Illegal registration of candidates for Senior secondary school certificate examinations.
  - (iii) Making the school unnecessarily popular to attract more students (especially private schools).
  - (iv) Lack of/Under-utilization of Guidance Counsellors



- (v) Illegal registration of candidates for Senior secondary certificate examination.
- (vi) Poor invigilation
- (vii) Students are made to share insufficient examination materials

5. Factors Resident in the Government

- (i) Poor funding of schools
- (ii) Overcrowding of classrooms
- (iii) Unguarded setting up of private schools
- (iv) Poor admission policy
- (v) Problem of automatic promotion
- (vi) Subjective and politically – motivated recruitment of teachers
- (vii) Lack of incentives for teachers
- (viii) Lack of adequate textbooks, good library, equipped laboratory and teaching materials
- (ix) Lack of professionally trained Guidance-Counsellors in school
- (x) Too much emphasis on paper qualification

2. Factors Resident in Law Enforcement Agents.

- (i) Bribery and corruption. Many of the Law enforcement agents use their uniform and ammunition to get money at all cost. As soon as they are bribed they allow criminals to have their ways.
- (ii) Running errand for other perpetrators. Many of them have been caught running errands for perpetrators of examination malpractices.
- (iii) Serving as shield for the perpetrators. They provide covers and adequate protection for schools and specific students to carry out their evil desires during examinations.

7. Factors resident in the Society:

- (i) Gross indiscipline that has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation's affairs
- (ii) Every Nigerian citizen is a potential criminal
- (iii) Societal praise of successful individuals not minding the means
- (iv) Societal acceptance and praise of successful criminals
- (v) Deterioration of our value systems
- (vi) Worship of money by the society
- (vii) Care free attitude towards patriotism

8. Religious Factors

- (i) Absence of the fear of God even among religious leaders
- (ii) Morality and religious teachings are no longer effective
- (iii) Religious leaders aid and abet crimes provided returns are made to them.
- (iv) Hypocritical religious leaders who struggle to populate their churches/mosques anyhow.

(v.) Political influence on religious leaders. Many religious leaders have bowed under the influence of some political leaders. They can no longer speak the truth or correct the evils in the society, but instead they aid them to achieve their dastard acts.

**EFFECTS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES:**

Examination malpractice, no doubt, compromises the validity, reliability and integrity of any assessment or evaluation system. It makes it impossible to use the results of tests and examinations to determine the level of skills and competence of candidates. For instance,



certificates, diplomas and degrees obtained from educational institutions in this nation are being doubted both within and outside Nigeria. Products of certain Colleges of Education, Polytechnic and Universities in Nigeria suffer discrimination in admission and employment because of the perceived poor quality in the standard of education acquired by the graduates of such institutions.

It has been noted that as a result of examination malpractices, the moral and enthusiasm of some serious minded individuals for hard work, serious learning, honest and objective assessment, and pride of one's academic capability have been dampened! Such morale has been sacrificed for mediocrity, negotiations, compromise, and settlement of cash and in kind, victimization, sexual harassment and threat. In fact, success in one examination malpractice leads to another in greater magnitude.

Other effects of examination malpractices according to Animasahun (2000; 2005; 2007; 2011); Omoegun (2003); Fadele (2007); Famoriyo (2007) and Oyebamiji (2011) include: Mass production of educated-illiterates, mass production of half-baked graduates who cannot defend their certificates, mass production of vagabonds and academic devils that could destroy the country any moment, mass production of deficient future leaders, low quality of labour force and consequent poor performance at the place of work; for instance, the scenario of poor power supply and incidence of collapsed buildings in Nigeria could be traced to incompetency which is a consequence of poor education.

Furthermore, examination malpractice leads to dented image of Nigerian graduates outside the country, thereby lowering the standard of our certificates, prevention of students from identifying and pursuing their true talents, cancellation of results – a colossal loss, damaged image of students, the institution and parents, guaranteed future failure, sustenance of cultism in higher institution, increase in crime rate, total erosion of faith in educational institutions as places where basic ethical values are communicated, breakdown of ethical standard which has given way to culture of fraud and corruption in the society.

Examination malpractice serves as the spring board for Electoral malpractices. It allows mediocre to ascend the positions of power and authority with attendant negative consequences. Hence, building the nation on wrong cornerstone of people with fake claims of skills and knowledge will further compound the retrogressive trends in the nation's development because, examination malpractice has unfortunately led to the parade of vagabonds on the corridor of power.

### **REMEDICATION OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES: Focus on Attitudinal Re-orientation.**

The genesis of examination malpractices could be traced to the moribund, obsolete and inadequate school curriculum through which everybody is trained and prepared to scout for white collar jobs. The word Education, according to ----- is formed from two Latin words: Educere and Educare which means to lead out or to bring out. It therefore follows that education suppose to bring out and nurture the innate potentials of individuals which would prepare individuals to be an expert in his area of natural endowment. Unfortunately, Nigerian kind of education deviated sharply from this. Hence, everybody needs to struggle anyhow to have a certificate that can further guarantee future education to prepare individuals for the white collar jobs that are no longer there. Hence, graduate unemployment set in. Therefore, the first remediative measure is for the government to overhaul the curriculum to allow for the development of innate potentials, which should inculcate vocational development and skills acquisition, creativity and innovation, entrepreneurship training and technological development whereby paper certificates are not over-emphasized.

The importance of professionally trained Guidance-Counsellors in schools cannot be over-emphasized. Let them be recruited, placed in adequate proportion in schools: a Counsellor



to 300 students, and allowed to perform their professional duties alone. They are also involved in teaching but not the kind of teaching that other teachers do. They don't teach specific subjects that are examined later, their own form of teachings complement those of the regular teachers. Such areas of teachings are discussed below.

Students should be taught about ethical values of self worth, dignity of labour, integrity and personal responsibility. Let them be taught about the principle of life success and reasons for failure in life. They should also learn about the values of education and the principle of hardwork. Students should be taught how to formulate life goals and pursuing it. They should be exposed to various creativity thinking as well as creative problem solving skills. Counsellors should develop activities that can foster positive self component (self discovery, self realization, self acceptance, self concept, self esteem, self efficacy and self image) among the students, which would help them to choose careers suitable to their ability, interest and personality endowment.

It has also been discovered that many students don't know how to study. They just read or study anyhow to prepare for examinations. At the end they complain that they easily forget what they read. Therefore, students should be taught adequate study skills leading to the acquisition of effective study habits. Let students understand the meaning of "student"—"He/she who studies" and encourage them to live up to expectation.

The government has great roles to play in the prevention of examination malpractices. Functional religious and moral teachings should return to school. Let this begin with the recruitment of teachers. Recruitment of teachers should no longer be politicized but based on merit. Only qualified, competent, interested, disciplined and morally upright teachers should be employed in adequate proportion for all schools. Adequate facilities and incentives should be provided on regular basis for teachers to function properly. Adequate funding of schools and provision of physical and infrastructural materials should be made paramount to make schools run smoothly and comfortably. Admission policy into secondary schools should not be made automatic but competitive, and the issue of automatic/mass promotion should be abolished.

Furthermore, mushroom private secondary schools should be discouraged, and those in existence be greatly monitored. Let the principles behind the 6-3-3-4 or 9-3-4 system of education be religiously implemented. Let the government make the principle of Continuous Assessment functional, and Inspectors should be put in place and adequately empowered to ensure quality education. It is also recommended that adequate and compulsory teaching of moral and religious education should return to schools.

Teachers have great responsibilities to transform the raw materials of the young ones into leadership materials with the right skills, attitudes, learning and character. It is the responsibility of teachers to plant the seed of positive ideas in the minds of these students. This will allow them to develop critical thinking and become useful citizens in the society. Therefore, teachers should live up to expectation as nation builders saddled to build the future leaders of this nation. Let them resist all temptations to collude with students or examination officials in aiding and abetting examination malpractices so as to maintain their dignity as professionals of integrity. In case of coercion, teachers should quickly report to higher authority without any compromise.

Teachers should teach the students to be highly inquisitive, and religiously handle the issue of individual differences. Let there be functional Continuous Assessment and immediate feedback. Let adequate motivation and reward of excellence return to schools. Encourage the slow learners and poorly performed students through adequate reinforcement strategies. Let there be preparatory and tutorial classes for all students.

Finally, it is recommended that there should be functional Examination Ethics Committee in all schools. Let there also be Students' Examination Ethics Club which will decisively monitor and enforce examination ethics principles among students. Students, teachers, parents and all



stakeholders must be taught about examination ethics as well as the effect and laws guiding examination malpractices. Enough of weak laws and deficient judiciary; let the Federal Ministry of Education (1996) Examination ethics project, Decree 20 of 1984 or Decree 33 of 1997 be implemented to the letter, let culprits serve as scapegoats. Students caught cheating in examination should be expelled and blacklisted for at least 5 years not to go to another school or be tried by Decree 33. School caught cheating should be closed down out rightly and staff sacked. The New Law on Examination malpractices whereby perpetrators are imprisoned for a period of 5 years should be enforced.

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria will remain what it is and the situation will be worst in the nearest future if an urgent decisive action is not taken against the menace of examination malpractices. Hence, all hands must be on deck to wage war against the monster. It is strongly believed that the above remediative measures will bring about effective attitudinal re-orientation of students towards Examination malpractices in public secondary schools.



**REFERENCES:**

- Animasahun R.A.. (2000). For your Tomorrow – A package of Guidance and Counselling Hints for the New Millenium. Agboola press, Iwo
- Animasahun R.A. (2002). Success Key- A Handbook of creativity for All. Agboola press, Iwo.
- Animasahun R.A. (2005). Examination Malpractices: Causes, Effects and Solution. A paper delivered at Command Secondary School Apata, Ibadan at their 12<sup>th</sup> speech and prize giving Day Ceremony for 2005.
- Animasahun, R.A. (2007) The Menace of Examination Malpractices. Lead Paper Presented at the Workshop Organised by Osun State Ministry of Education on How to Curb Examination Malpractices at Zaso Hotel, Osogbo.
- Animasahun, R.A. (2011) The Menace of Examination Malpractices, Poor Academic Performance and Academic Failure Among Secondary School Students: Focus on Remediation. Paper Presented at a Workshop Organised by the Polytechnic Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Dibu Ojerinde O.O (2001). Different Diversions of cheating in University Examination. Ife Journal of Educational Studies 7, 1, 17- 29.
- Fadele, J.A. (2007) Causes, Effects and Control of Examination Malpractice in Educational Institutions. Paper presented at the State Education Stakeholders Interactive Forum on Combating Examination Malpractice in Public and Private Secondary Schools and the way Forward. Organised by The Ministry of Education, Osun state, Osogbo.
- Famoriyo, B. (2007) Curbing Examination Malpractices. The Key Note address Presented by the Honourable Commissioner for Education at the Workshop Organised by Osun State Ministry of Education on A Day Sensitization on How TO Curb Examination Malpractices Held At Zaso Hotel, Osogbo.
- Ogunsanya E.A. (2003). Students' perceived Causes and Effects of Examination Malpractices – Implications for Counselling Strategies. A paper presented at the 27<sup>th</sup> National Annual Conference of Counselling Association of Nigeria, held at University of Ibadan (2003).
- Olayinka M.S. (1990). Guidance and Counselling Approaches to Examination Malpractices. In Obe (Ed). School Indiscipline and Remedies: Lagos Premier Press.
- Omoegun, M. (2003). Curbing Examination Malpractice through Counselling. The Counsellor: An official Journal of the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON), 19 (2), 120-131.
- Omosho H. M. (1990). Examination: The face of malpractices in Nigeria. WAEC News: A House Journal of WAEC, 4 (i), 31-42.
- Onyechere, I. (1996). In promoting Examination Ethics in Nigeria: An Examination Ethic Project Publication.
- Oyebamiji, J. (2011) The Menace of Examination Malpractices. Paper Presented at the Counselling Seminar Organised for the CEC Students of the Polytechnic, Ibadan.
- Salami, A. (1987). The Examination Malpractices Disciplinary Committee of the West African Examinations Council paper presented at a Seminar on Crime and Social Control in Nigeria. Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.