

An Overview of Examination Misconduct in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

574

By

Dr. Muhammad Garba Mahuta

Abstract

Examination misconduct in our schools and colleges has today become a very serious problem in the Nigerian educational system despite the various measures that are being taken to remedy the menace. This paper identifies the causes, effects and the various means through which the scourge of examination misconduct in schools and colleges can be remedied. Major among the recommendations on how to tackle the problem of examination misconduct are: proper preparation for examination before it is carried out, the standardization of teaching and the adequate provision of material and human resources.

Introduction

Examination misconduct involves various means and methods used by candidates to cheat while in the examination hall or before the commencement of the examination. The major objective of examination is geared toward certification by means of evaluation, grading and assessment. This reflects the strong emphasis that is placed on paper qualification and certification. Hence, they are used as passports for societal rewards, well-paid jobs and the achievement of social status. The desire of students to pass examinations by all means is a common practice and this is a very serious social problem in our society. In fact, parents, teachers, school managers, policy-makers and students are all involved in examination misconduct in one way or the other.

Nowadays, examination misconduct is recognized as dangerous trend to the national development and societal value. There is no doubt that, it is a corrupt practice. The long-term negative effects of examination misconduct on the society cannot be overemphasized; students, parents and the society at large bear the brunt of this evil practice. The rampant poverty prevailing in the country may be seen as one of the main causes of this phenomenon. The malady is further compounded by such factors as parents' attitude of imposing subjects on their children, wide subject syllabuses, competitive examination structures, the fear of failure, negative attitude to work by teachers, competition among school managers and so on.

The main issue as far as the subject matter of examination misconduct is concerned is how to sanitize the examination system in our schools and colleges, as it has become a very serious problem in our educational system. There is need for a plan action to be taken in order to remedy the situation. Otherwise, the future of the educational system, which is the future of the society, is at risk.

The Concept of Examination

Examination is the process of testing and judging by using specified academic standards. It is the testing of knowledge by means of questioning, under intensive care and supervision in a formal set-up. Examination is also a means of scrutinizing with a view to determining the level of performance and achievement of students in a particular course, subject or programme (Bunza, 1996).

Examination is generally regarded as a means of evaluating, testing and assessing the performance or achievement of a person. It is also adopted or used for the purpose of selection, placement, grading, promotion and certification. The outcome or results of an examination is usually used by the labour market to determine the suitability of candidates for job placements or occupational considerations. Examination is an also intended or

deliberate action to test the ability of the learner and to check the ability of the person with regard to what is designed to be tested. The nature of examination depends on the age of the examinees, the subject and matter the target profession. It is often thought of as difficult and challenging by many students. It also causes grief among many students.

The exercise of testing, evaluating, measuring and assessing students' ability periodically is at times used to measure learning outcomes and to predict the effectiveness of the learning activities. This is to assess the success or otherwise of a student, a learning situation or the teacher. Thus, examinations can be regarded as means of assessing the teacher's effectiveness and the students' progress. Examinations therefore show if teaching and learning have taken place in a manner that is of public interest, this is often judged via the outcome or the result (Bunza, 1996).

The Concept of Examination Misconduct

Examination misconduct can be seen as an academic malpractice in schools. It is a behaviour often exhibited by students, which contravenes acceptable and permissible ways of behaviour in the process of examination. Examination misconduct in schools poses a number of challenges to the process of assessment of the learners. It threatens the objectivity, fairness and reliability of the measurements made in judging the students' academic performance. This practice today is becoming the order of the day in schools and colleges in Nigeria. When students engage in examination misconduct, they try to outsmart, cheat and do things that are out of order before, during and after the examinations. By misconduct in examination, it means the various ways and means used by students to obtain answers, to cheat, to be assisted while in the examination hall or before the commencement of the examination. The act is usually manifested in different manners and in different places depending on the students' access to the target materials or answers for the examination.

There are rules and regulations governing the conduct of examinations in schools and colleges. This means that any attempt to act differently, contrary to or by any means other than the acceptable ways of behaviour during examinations is regarded as examination misconduct and will attract punishment. For example, the following are rules and regulations governing the conduct of examinations in Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

- No student shall be allowed to enter the examination hall without the University Identity Card and Examinations Card.
- Candidates should be within the vicinity of the examination hall 10 minutes before the examination is due to begin.
- A candidate shall not be allowed to enter the examination venue if he or she is more than 30 minutes late.
- A candidate shall not be allowed to leave the examination venue within 45 minutes after the commencement of the examination except under exceptional circumstances approved by the Head of Department or the Examinations Officer.
- No candidate shall leave the examination venue during the last 15 minutes of the examination.
- On entering the examinations venue, it is the responsibility of the candidate to draw the attention of the invigilator to any paper or materials on his/her seat, table or on the floor around him/her to enable for such materials to be removed before the examination starts.

- 576
- A candidate who is more than 30 minutes late after the commencement of the examination may be allowed entry only at the discretion of the invigilator in consultation with the Head of Department or the Faculty Examinations Officer. Such cases shall be reported in writing by the invigilator to the Faculty Examinations Officer.
 - A candidate who arrives late shall not be allowed extra time.
 - Candidates are not permitted to introduce into the examination hall papers/books of any kind or handbag or mobile phone.
 - A candidate shall deposit any handbag, briefcase, books, handouts, etc. outside the examination venue or in front of the invigilator before the commencement of the examination.
 - A candidate shall comply with the instruction to candidates as set out on a question paper and answer booklet or other materials supplied.
 - Candidate(s) shall also comply with any instruction given by the invigilator.
 - All rough works must be crossed out neatly. Note that rough works shall only be done on the answer booklet.
 - Under no circumstance shall a candidate write any thing other than his/her admission number and name on the question paper.
 - Candidates must write their examination number only on each separate answer booklet and on each supplementary sheet and shall under no circumstances write their names.
 - Supplementary answer sheets or booklets, even if they contain only rough work, must be neatly packed into the answer booklet.
 - Candidates are required to sign the attendance slip on their desk.
 - If candidates wish to attract the attention of the invigilator, they should raise their hands. Absolute silence must be maintained.
 - There should be no writing on this card and the question paper unless if asked to do so.
 - Any student without Examination card should not be allowed into the Examination Hall.
 - Only the student whose photograph is attached to this card is qualified to write the Examination.
 - Movement in or around examination premises is strictly prohibited.

Source: Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Revised Students' Handbook (2006) & 2005/2006 Students' Examination Card

It is important to note that some of these rules and regulations concerning examination are printed at the back of the University Examination Card, which every registered student of the university is given one before the commencement of

577
examination. The rules and regulations are no doubt meant to guard against any attempt by students to indulge in any act of examination misconduct. This has helped and is still helping tremendously in curbing examination misconduct in the University.

The concept of examination misconduct has been defined in quite a number of ways by different people. For example, Olayinka (1993), saw examination misconduct as an improper practice in any examination with a view to obtaining good results through fraudulent action or behaviour. On their part, Oluyeba and Daramola (1993), endorsed that examination misconduct is an irregular behaviour exhibited by candidates or anybody charged with the conduct of examinations in or outside the examination hall, before, during or after such examinations. In the view of Ahmed (1993), any act of wrong doing or neglect that contravenes the rules of acceptable practice before, during and after an examination by anybody in any way is regarded as examination misconduct. From the above different definitions and conceptions of examination misconduct, it is evident that in whatever way one looks at examination misconduct, it is a deviant and corrupt practice which is contrary to the norms and values of the society.

Various Forms of Examination Misconduct

Examination misconduct as a very serious phenomenon in our schools and colleges occur in different forms and dimensions. Akaninwor, (1997), has identified eleven different types of examination misconducts, namely:

- "Bullets" or "Missiles" ("Catapult system") - The bullets or missiles are tiny folded pieces of paper or toilet roll containing summaries of the major points in a course. They can be hidden and securely conveyed into the examination hall by the students themselves or get catapulted to them into the examination hall by people hired for this purpose.
- "Dubbling" - This is an arrangement through which extensive copying is carried out during examinations. Headscarves, skirts, facecaps, wrappers and so on, are used in concealing the source materials.
- "Body writing" or "Tattoo" - Examination offenders write vital information on hidden parts of their bodies and utilize it while the examination is in progress.
- "Walkie Talkie" system - This is a method through which students smuggle out examination questions to pre-arranged helpers who solve the problems and provide the answers by whispering them from vantage positions.
- "Open window" system - Windows are opened to ease communication between the students and a hired helper with the connivance of the invigilator.
- "Computer" system - With the use of codes, students log lecture points into hi-tech micro-computers such as Casio FX calculators with facilities for double entries and digital diaries, and use them in the course of the examination.
- "Giraffe" system - Like the giraffe, weak students strain their necks to catch a glimpse of the material they want to copy from better students.
- "Super print" - This is a generic term for all forms of writing on clothes, undershirts, singlets, brassieres, handkerchiefs, etc., coded and laid out in flowery designs.
- "ECOWAS" - This is an arrangement between friends who evolve a suitable system of passing information among themselves in coded language during examinations.

- 578
- "Microchips" - These are pieces of paper not larger than visiting cards on which students condense vital portions of their notebooks written in coded form. These "microchips" are smuggled into the examination halls via mathematical sets, calculators, wallets, socks, etc.
 - "Brain for sale" or "Impersonator" - In this approach, a person (impersonator) is hired to write an examination on behalf of a student. The student could be a close relation.
Furthermore, many more are still noticed as types of examination misconducts in schools and colleges, such as the following:
 - Students to deliberately harass and intimidate invigilator or the supervisors so as to have the chance of behaving illegally in the examination room.
 - Some students or agents are hired to stay around the examination room in order to smuggle in answers and smuggle out question papers.
 - Some invigilators give out the question papers and answers to the students.
 - Sometimes Students are assisted by parents, teachers, and some examination officials.

Major Causes of Examination Misconduct

There is no single cause of examination misconduct. In this regard, the entire educational sector has to carry the blame. The unproductive educational system, the criteria for certification, employment requirements, and overemphasis on paper qualifications, equally contribute to examination misconduct. Parents and community members have played and are still playing significant roles in causing examination misconduct. In our attempt to look at the causes of examination misconduct, it will be very important to look into the school environment. In a situation where proper teaching and learning are not taking place, then the future of credible examination is likely to be at risk. Lack of proper and inadequate teaching, results in students losing confidence and hope in examinations in school. Where there is no proper teaching and students want to avoid failure, examination misconduct remains the only alternative. In some cases, teachers have aided and are still aiding some aspects of examination misconduct.

However, the school, teachers and students have to contend with the challenges associated with wide syllabuses. This results in incomplete syllabus coverage in spite of the fact that examinations have to be conducted. How then will students read and pass examinations based on the content areas that were not covered or taught. Additionally, competitive examination structures foster misconduct. The fear of failure, withdrawal from school or low grades, encourages dubious attempts or ways of gaining grades expected for either promotion or achievement in schools and colleges (Denga, 1983).

Furthermore, Olujuwon, (nd) identified the following issues as causes of examination misconduct in schools, namely:

- Over crowding in the school for example, a ratio of 1 teacher to 85 100 pupils.
- Inadequate qualified teachers.
- Inadequate teaching and learning facilities, which render students ill-equipped for the examinations.
- Parental contributions-for example, some parents pay for live papers, and hire people to sit for examinations on behalf of their children.

In support of the above points, Bunza (1993), endorsed that:

579

Immorality in the wider society, inadequate supervision of teachers by inspectors, poor teaching in schools and non-completion of syllabuses before examination., tying of promotion of teachers to the success of candidates at public examinations, absence of guidance and counseling services in schools, lack of confidence on the part of teachers and students, high school fees, the desire to be successful at all cost e.t.c contribute greatly to the incidence of examination misconduct.

Furthermore, Maduka (2001), saw the undue emphasis placed on certificates as one of the causes of examination misconduct in Nigeria. He opined that the Nigerian society places too much emphasis on certificates obtained and examination passed. In addition, Fafunwa (2002), identified another cause of examination misconduct which he said is the lack of proper guidance and counseling programmes and added that some schools do not have guidance and counseling programmes for students, as such, they take courses without proper guidance and parents sometimes in their pride impose courses on their children not minding the cognitive psychomotor capacity of the children before the imposition.

In this regard, the causes of examination misconducts are multidimensional. Therefore, everybody must see into the possibility of helping to remedy the problem. The school, the parents, the community members, the students, the educational planners, must justify their duties so as to sanitize examinations in the educational system. Certificate acquisition should be re-examined or deemphasized. It is evident that the general poverty level must have contributed to the active involvement of teachers and other examination officials in the practice, leading to the alteration of examination grades/marks for money.

Agents of Examination Misconduct

In the views of Aina (1993), and Bunza (1993), the following groups or persons could serve as agents or perpetrators of examination misconducts.

- Parents/Guardians who buy 'live' papers or bribe examiners or invigilators.
- Teachers/Headteachers and Principals who collect money and turn a blind eye.
- Lazy students who do not take their studies seriously and still want to get the best scores.
- The examiners who set and mark the papers.
- The people in charge of printing of the question papers.
- Officials of the examining body, who process question papers, supervise printing arrangements or transport printed questions.
- Supervisors/invigilators at the examination centres.
- Government-by establishing schools without adequate equipment and staffing.
- Law enforcement agents.
- Society-due to its quest for materialism.
- Government officials, institutions use of over-crowded halls and inadequate incentives for invigilators.

The Dangers of Examination Misconduct

One of the aims of education is to equip students with the requisite knowledge and skills to enable them contribute effectively and efficiently to the national socio-economic development. Traditionally, training requires periodic evaluation in the form of examinations with a view to finding out the level at which the students are performing or achieving. Although examinations are not the only instruments for assessing and evaluating knowledge, it has emerged as the major and established yardstick as well as the most practical way of assessment. The following issues are some of the effects/dangers of examination misconduct:

- The rush by many people to try and acquire certificates either legitimately or

illegitimately.
It also leads to professional inefficiency and ineffectiveness.

- It brings shame and embarrassment to families and relations of the victims.
- Examination misconduct has contributed to the falsification of results and certificates.
- Examination misconduct has ruined the future of many Nigerian youths by causing them to drop out of school and leaving them with no meaningful livelihood in the society.

Furthermore, examination misconduct has some immediate effect such as the following:

- Expulsion of student from school: this affects the student immediately and the future of the student.
- Suspension of student from school: this contributes negatively to the academic progress or achievement of the student involved.
- The failing of a course as a result of an offence- this serves as punishment to the victim of examination misconduct.

Measures to Remedy Examination Misconducts

In view of the enormous importance of examinations and the dangers of examination misconduct, the need for concerted efforts to remedy the pandemic cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, the following measures can help address some of the problems of examination misconduct in our educational institutions.

- The education policymakers, government and non-governmental organizations should fight the problem of examination misconduct in all its forms.
- There should be good condition of services for teachers and all involved in the conduct and administration of examinations.
- Teachers should ensure that they cover the syllabuses within the time allocated. On the other hand, students should be serious with their studies and should be allowed to ask questions during lessons. This means that there should be good Teacher-Student relationship.
- Parents and guardians should do their best by providing their children parental support they require, such as, the provision of educational materials and payments for extra lessons.
- Schools are to devise means of checking all academic activities and in this respect should have a strong examination disciplinary committee to check and punish acts of examination misconduct. The preparation for examination should be done with enough time and there should be well outlined rules and regulations for conducting examination in schools.
- There should be second chances for children who fail examinations at first attempt and should be taught again and be made to prepare for a re-sit or a supplementary examination. This can help to reduce the cases of examination misconduct and educational wastage.

Recommendations

Guidance and counseling services should be provided for students. This is to acquaint them with the short-term and long-term consequences of examination misconduct on their future vocations. Seminars should be organized for students. This should be in respect of actualizing the messages to the students with regard to the ill effects of examination misconduct and its negative consequences on students career planning.

Teachers should be serious in their responsibility. Lazy teachers promote examination misconduct. Teachers should cover the content areas and should be

objective in their teaching and marking of examinations. Examinations should be properly conducted and marked. Enough venues and invigilators should be provided for the examinations. There should be proper preparation for examination before it is conducted. The teaching should be standard, materials should be enough and with adequate security.

Schools should boldly display the rules and regulations governing the conduct of examinations on notice boards and other popular or strategic places in the school. Teachers and Principals who are caught in this ugly act should be punished in accordance with the law.

Conclusion

In view of the issues discussed in this paper, it is evident that the conduct and administration of examination is facing a lot of problems and challenges. These problems are in the context of the various examination misconducts. Examination misconducts are in various forms and types and are caused by different factors. Individuals who aid examination misconduct were also examined. The seriousness of the problem demands that concerted efforts be made by all stakeholders to address the issues involved.

References

- Adamu, M. (2001). *Examination misconduct*. A Paper Presented at the 4th Annual special and prize giving day ceremony of Federal Government College, Daura-Katsina State.
- Aina.O. (1996) "Primary Ethics and Integrity of Business and Technical Examinations" in Onyechere I (Eds) *Promoting Examination Ethics. The Challenge of a Collective Responsibility*. Exam Ethics Project Publication, Lagos: 121-135
- Akaninwor, G.I.K (1997), "Examination Misconduct in Developing Areas: A Case Study". In *Studies in Educational Evaluation, Elsevier Science*. Vol.23, No.2, pp. 275-277(3).
- Bunza M (1996) "The Role of Teaching on Promoting Examination Ethics". In Onyechere I (eds) *Promoting Examination Ethics. The Challenge of a Collective Responsibility*. Exam Ethics Project Publication, Lagos 187-204
- Daramola. S.& Oluyeba F. (1993) Incidence and detention of examination misconducts in *Nigeria Public Examinations Promoting Examination Ethics. the challenge of a Collective Responsibility*, Exam Ethics Project Publication, Lagos 17-30
- Denga (1983) "Examination cheating Behaviour among Nigeria secondary schools youth; Implications for counseling" *Journal of Education and Development* 3 (2) July 204-209
- Denga.D. & Denga H (1989) *Educational Misconducts and Cultism in Nigeria*, Calabar Rapid Educational publishers, 1-20.
- Fafunwa, A. B. (2002) *History of Education in Nigeria*. Ibadan: HPS Educational Publishers.
- Olujuwon, T. (2008) *Transforming the Nigerian Educational System*. Internet Materials, Retrieved on 15th December, 2008.
- Usmanu Danfodiyo University (2006) *Revised Students' Handbook*. Approved by the Vice-Chancellor with effect from January, 2006.
- Usmanu Danfodiyo University (2005) *Students' Examination Card*, Issued by University Examination Committee 2005/2006 Session.