



Examination Fraud in Tertiary Education: The Quality of Teachers for National Development

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Abstract

The objective of tertiary education is to prepare future leaders for societal challenges and therefore develop them to suit the manpower requirements of that society. This training therefore involves examination and assessment from time to time in order to ascertain the level of knowledge and competence of the students. On the other hand, Teachers in any school system are persons trained and assigned to perform the role of knowledge development and transmission through the process of teaching. In the course of performing this role, the teacher contributes to the economic and social wellbeing of individuals and society. In the long run, the teacher's job has far reaching economic, social and environmental sustenance implications for over all national development. This paper therefore takes a look at examination fraud in tertiary education: the quality of teacher for national development as an economic crime against the nation because of its negative impact on the quality of middle and high level manpower (teachers) produced in the country. The paper discovered that social vices like drug abuse, kidnapping, rape, armed robbery, banditry and the rising spate of insecurity in the country can be attributed to insufficient and inadequate education giving rise to examination fraud in tertiary education system. This paper therefore suggests among others that examination fraud in tertiary education should be treated as an economic crime and perpetrators should be punished accordingly.

Key Words: Examination, Education, Fraud, Quality, Teacher, National Development.


Introduction

Examination malpractice seems to have become a norm in the formal school system because it appears to have been generally accepted as a sure way to obtain high grades in any standard examination. What makes this norm very frightening is that it is not peculiar to school-based examinations but has permeated through other examinations organized by national and international examination bodies like those the West African Examination Council (WAEC), the National Examination Council (NECO) and the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). Examination malpractice has become a recurring decimal in educational assessment in Nigeria. Apart from its frequent and increasing occurrences, examination malpractice has eaten deeply like canker-worms into the fabric of the nation's educational system as it has



become a pollutant, which is having a serious debilitating effect on the assessment of curriculum objectives.

Examination malpractice is fast becoming an aspect of the students' culture in higher educational institution regardless of the school authority's preventive and punitive measures to discourage examination frauds. For example, partial or total cancellation of results, suspension or expulsion of affected students from school and the 21 – years imprisonment stipulated by the Miscellaneous Offences Decree 20 of 1984, have not really deterred the culprits from the fraudulent practice.

At all levels of education, examination fraud is a punishable offence and persons found culpable in reported cases have suffered varying measures of punishment irrespective of whether they are students, lecturers or administrative staff. This indicates that examination fraud is not a legal condition for examination success. The tertiary education level is a level of education at which all types of human capital (including teachers) are developed for the national economy. As rightly observed by  Tintin, (2017) and West, (2018), it is economically harmful for examination fraud to be tolerated at any level of organized education in any country because of the inherent danger to human resource development and national wellbeing. This paper discusses examination fraud in tertiary education institutions with the purpose of highlighting its impact on teacher development in particular and national development in general.

Conceptual Clarification.

The concept of Examination. Examination is a process that helps education managers and teachers to formally determine the level of learning achieved by learners. According to Olumero, (2022) defines examination fraud as any examination not conducted in accordance with specified norms set up by the examination body. In the same view, Oluyeba & Daramola, (2022) view examination malpractice as any irregular behavior exhibited by candidates or anybody charged with the conduct of examination in or outside the examination hall before, during or after such an examination. whatever may be the form of examination, it is important that candidates respond to the assessment instrument or examination questions and instruments (as the case may be) and are assessed within the legal condition for the examination. All other activities directed at influencing the outcome of the examination, outside the legal conditions, amount to examination fraud.



Examination fraud has been described in various terms by researchers, so much so that the synonyms include examination malpractice, academic fraud, unethical examination practice and unethical professional activities. The term “academic fraud” is more encompassing because it includes all unwholesome behaviour exhibited in the education industry such as plagiarism, piracy and other forms of theft of intellectual property. Tinibu, (2017) defines examination malpractice as an academic fraud directed at having undue advantage in an examination process. Examination malpractice has also been defined as all activities before an examination, during and/or after the examination which are directed at giving undue advantage to some candidates over other candidates in the examination West, (2018) & Agabi, (2018).

Features and Causes of Examination Fraud in Tertiary Education

The features of examination fraud have been identified by researchers to include exposing examination questions to some candidates prior to the examination date and time; bribing invigilators to ignore illegal activities in the examination hall; exchanging answer scripts in the course of the examination; and deliberately changing the grade of candidates in the course of result documentation Tinibu, (2017); Dibia & Okpara, (2015); West, (2018) & Agabi, (2018). Examination fraud also manifests in the form of impersonation. This is a situation in which a candidate pays someone to sit for the examination on his/her behalf using all of his/her details to access the examination hall and to write the examination for an absent candidate.

While not contesting the position of West, Dibia and Okpara, Agabi (2018) identified insufficient education at the basic levels arising from a weak transition process as one of the major contributory factors to the alarming increase in the occurrence of examination fraud in schools at all levels of education. Anyaogu, (2008) blamed it on inadequate facilities and poor enrolment quality. The quest and preference for certificates rather than usable skills by employers of labour, as observed by Dibia and Okpara, (2015), further compounds the problem and sustains in persistence.

There is no acceptable justification for examination fraud at any level of education because it has very adverse effect on the quality of educated manpower in any society that tolerates it. The impact of examination fraud on the quality of teachers produced in the country has a much further reaching implication not only on the production of a supply of labour that is of good quality in the economy but also on the impact of education on national development in general. This is because teachers perform very important roles in the general wellbeing of a country. Teacher education should therefore be provided with utmost care and close attention.



The Economic Importance of Teachers

The economic importance of teachers is captured in the statement that has become a cliché over time, “no nation can rise above the quality of her teachers and her education system”. This cliché is self-explanatory in the sense that the implementation of national education policies and programmes are highly dependent on the quality of teacher available in the country. As posited by Ejembi, (2025), nations that desire to move out of the unenviable circle of mediocrity and socio-economic inferiority often employ the potentials of education; and a well-organized and properly implemented teacher education programme is capable of producing an education process that can develop a child into a sound productive citizen with high value for dignity of labour. In Ejembi’s opinion, the development of rapid economic independence is highly dependent on the existence of an education system that is of good quality, which itself is dependent on the quality of education given to teachers. By implication, the quality of education given to teachers greatly influences the quality of education in a country.

A professionally certified teacher is presumed to possess adequate knowledge of subject content, well developed relevant skills and good knowledge of professional ethics required for effective teaching. A teacher that fits into this description is of good quality and constitutes reliable human capital in the school system. A teacher’s certification becomes doubtful when he/she is observably lacking in the possession of the identified variable of teacher quality that makes him or/her a capital resource in the advancement of education and national development. The economic importance of adequate and careful development and supply of good quality teachers in the Nigerian education system is also captured in the introductory remarks and acknowledgment to the 6th edition of the national policy on education. Improving quality of education through effective teaching is identified as one of the major factors that necessitated the modification of the national policy on education and warranted the production of the 6th edition. FRN, (2014).

It must be noted that the education of teachers in Nigeria falls under tertiary education which is aimed at contributing to national development through high level manpower training; reduction of skills shortages by producing skilled manpower that is relevant to the needs of the labour market; and promoting and encouraging scholarship, entrepreneurship etc FRN, (2014). This implies that the rot in the tertiary education system occasioned by insufficient funding, enrolment explosion and rising cases of examination fraud also impacts negatively on the quality of teachers produced by universities and colleges of education. By their specialized



training at the tertiary education level, teachers also fall into a group of workers classified as human capital. However, when such teachers graduate with certificates fraudulently acquired through examination malpractice, they become liabilities rather than assets in the school system. This is because such teachers become easy tools for all manner of academic fraud in the school system and students who pass through such teachers may end up like them in a vicious circle of weak and incomplete learning.

Teachers are major factors in the preparation and development of human capital through the school system. The education of teachers should be comprehensive and adequate in meeting the national goals of education. The quality of teacher education should reflect in the reliability level of their certification. This reliability level is measured by the ability of the teacher to constantly exhibit relevant skills and knowledge in the areas of training for which he/she has been certified. A teacher's certificate is questionable as a basis for quality assessment when the teacher cannot function effectively in the teaching process and exhibits weak knowledge of subject matter. This happens when the teacher's certificate is based on wrong assessment result due to examination malpractice. Such teachers become unreliable learning facilitators and their existence in the school system becomes a major contributory factor in the sustenance of examination fraud and the production of unemployable graduates. The reverse is the case when teachers are adequately trained and reliably certified.

Considering that a great percentage of education workforce is developed through formal education, the importance of ensuring that teachers are professionally trained and disciplined into acquiring a certificate that is professionally reliable cannot be overemphasized. As observed by Amanchukwu and Obijuru, (2013), appropriate education optimizes the development of a child in preparation for his or her future contribution to the socio-economic advancement of the country. In line with this observation, Solomon, (2014) aptly notes that national economic development will be difficult to achieve with a workforce developed on a norm of fraudulent academic practices. The practice of examination fraud in a teacher training institution can seriously mar the prospects of economic advancement in the country if left unchecked. This is because professionally trained and certified teachers are employed at all levels of education in the country.

Employing a supply of poorly trained and wrongly certified teachers in the school system condemns the general goals of education to imminent failure that manifests in the production of graduates that are unsuitable for employment within the national economy. This is



considering that education curriculum at all levels are planned to suit the socio-economic needs of the country, with regards to the development of human resource in skill areas that are required for national economic advancement. The issuing of teacher certificates that are unreliable therefore has very serious cost implication for national development. The retention of such teachers in the school system compounds the hydra headed twin problems of unemployment and poverty both of which prolong the economy's dependence of foreign aids and borrowing.

Importance of Teachers in National Development

Teachers are presumed by society to possess a rich knowledge base that enables them fit into many roles in the society. Teachers are therefore assigned very important roles in the sustenance of communal peace and harmony without which development will be difficult to achieve, in spite of abundance of natural resources. The education of migrant families for better productivity will be difficult to achieve in the absence of professionally trained teachers. In Nigeria, teachers facilitate the election of national leaders by participating actively in various capacities as election umpires, returning officers, collating officers, chair persons of electoral commissions etc. teachers also serve as agents of public enlightenment, especially on issues of national concern like environmental maintenance, family planning, inter cultural tolerance etc. They are able to provide these community services because of the level of education and professional discipline that they have attained over years of training and practice. This, however, does not rule out the existence of teachers who cheated through the levels of education and presently teach at various levels of education in the country.

Ijaduola, (2018) described teachers as custodians of knowledge with development skills that enable them impart knowledge to individuals with varying degrees of talent and interest. He drew a distinction between good teachers and bad teachers. From his perspective, a good teacher with professional training and qualification will evoke in learners the readiness to learn, while a bad teacher, a poorly trained teacher will stall motivation to the extent that results in "several cases of absenteeism, underachievement, dropout and unwanted pregnancies among female students". Ijaduola's, (2018) position is that when teachers are professionally trained and properly placed on the job, they do well on the job irrespective of gender, age, or location of school. This position affirmed that the result of a descriptive survey he carried out using 1500 teachers randomly selected from primary schools in four geopolitical zones of Ogun State who responded to the qualification and job satisfaction questionnaire. The result of data



analysis showed qualification and job satisfaction questionnaire. The result of data analysis showed qualification as a strong determined of level of job satisfaction among primary school teachers; significant difference did not exist between male and female teachers; and between old and young teachers who had the same qualifications.

Ijaduola's findings imply that a teacher's level of confidence on the job is high when such teacher is professionally trained and qualified for the job assigned to him, hence the associating high level of satisfaction. By contrast, the teacher who only acquired certificate without the requisite knowledge is not likely to exhibit the same level of on-the-job confidence and satisfaction. This affirms Ejembi, (2018) position as cited in Pauley & Owede, (2018) that national development will be difficult to attain in a nation when a significant percentage of her population does not have quality education and cannot fully explore their potentials. Teachers who cheated their way through school entrench fraudulent practices in school because they misused the opportunity they had for learning and acquiring professional training and discipline. Therefore, as noted by researchers in education, the only thing that such teachers can teach in schools is how to cheat in examination Iroka & Koko, (2018); Solomon, (2014); and Anyaogu, (2018). Such teachers are described by Agabi, Onyeike and Wali (2013) as time wasters in the school system because they waste the education time of learners and the country's time for producing relevant human resources. The existence of such teachers spells doom for the school system because their inherent poor attitude to work will entrench moral decadence and intellectual laziness among learners. The role of teachers as important agents of positive socialization for national development cannot be overemphasized hence the need to ensure that teacher education and certifications are of reliable quality.

Impact of Examination Fraud on Teacher Quality

The adverse effect of examination fraud on the quality of teachers supplied to the education sector by various tertiary education institutions in the country is very far reaching. This is so much so that West (2018, p. 93) likened it to "an outbreak of ebola disease in its devastating nature... an aspect of stealing that destroys young citizens and turns them into cheats as all levels of their lives." Describing examination malpractice as a national disaster that has attained an alarming proportion he noted that the involvement of teachers and other stakeholders in education has helped to sustain and advance this fraudulent practice. He identified other factors that have helped to sustain the participation of teachers in examination fraud to include poverty, irregular payment of teachers' salaries and allowances, and the get-rich-quick syndrome. The



presumption here is that teacher is duly trained, reliably certified and properly placed on the job but poorly remunerated.

Whatever may be the causative or sustaining factors for examination fraud, the fact that the existence of examination fraud in teacher training institutions has serious implications for teacher quality cannot be denied? The following are some of the implications.

- i. **Cost Implication:** Material and financial resources are wasted on prospective teachers who are not interest in learning, whose singular purpose of seeking and gaining admission into tertiary education institutions is to acquire certificates by hook and by crook without the requisite professional training. They eventually constitute teachers without training, in the school system that lack knowledge of subject matter and professional ethics. Such teachers constitute agents of moral decadence in schools because they have nothing to offer in terms of intellectual and moral discipline. They waste education time and resources producing graduates that constitute liabilities rather than skilled manpower in the economy.
- ii. **Lowering Prospects of Producing Relevant Manpower:** The country depends on tertiary education institutions for the production of high level manpower with relevant skills required in the labour market. This goal will be difficult to achieve when the quality of teachers produced for the education sector is compromised by fraudulent academic practices. Until examination malpractice is checked in teacher training institutions, the rate of graduate unemployment will be difficult to control. This is because no profit oriented organization would employ a graduate that will be useless on the job. Employers of labour are interested in human capital and not in educated liabilities.
- iii. **Lowering Quality of Education:** The quality of education provided in a country cannot be guarantee when teacher quality is compromised. This is because quality of education development is highly dependent on quality of teachers at any given time in the course of national development. The quality of teachers is compromised when examination malpractice persists in teacher training colleges and faculties of Education in universities. A teacher who would not learn well and acquire complete knowledge before graduation is also not like to teach well. Such a teacher is like a poorly baked pie, charred on the surface but raw on the inside. In the long run, learners who are taught by the teacher become like him, a poorly baked pie because the teacher can only give what he has. In this way, the vicious circle of insufficient education and incomplete learning is sustained.



Conclusion

Examination Fraud in all its forms is a major hindrance to the achievement of the desired level of teacher quality that is mandatory for the effective achievement of sustainable national development. Its persistence in teacher training institutions is sustained by the employment of non-trained teachers at various levels of education, particularly in teacher training institutions and faculties of education in Nigeria. The contribution of teachers to national development in the production of skilled manpower and in controlling unemployment and the associated social ills is adversely affected when teacher quality is compromised by examination fraud.

Suggestions

1. Considering that it takes a teacher to train another teacher, this paper suggests that only persons with professional qualifications in the teaching field should be employed as lecturers in colleges of education and faculties of education in universities. This will ensure that teacher training gets the utmost attention that it requires.
2. Examination malpractice in a teacher training college of faculty should be treated as an economic crime and punished as such. This is because any type of fraud that hinders the production of relevant human capital for the national economy is an economic crime because it hinders the economic advancement of the people and the country.

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