

## **Examination Malpractice in the Primary School: Problems and Prospects**

**Dr. Rita A. Ndifon, Dr. Bernedette U. Cornelius-Ukpepi**

Department of Curriculum & Teaching  
Faculty of Education University of Calabar, Nigeria  
*drritandifon@gmail.com*  
*bcorneliusukpepi@gmail.com*

---

**Abstract:** *Examination malpractice is a phenomenon that is now fast growing among student at all levels of educational system. Most people see it as a serious problem in school and the society which needs to be addressed; while some other people see it as a normal process of writing examination without which they will not pass; yet others are indifferent about examination malpractice. Be that as it may, the act is unacceptable. This unacceptable practice has become so popular and internalized that the incident is now practiced among nursery and primary school pupils. This paper therefore is aimed at examining the holistic view of examination malpractice in the primary school. It also examined examination malpractice with reference to its meaning, causes, its dimension, dangers as well as ways of managing and preventing it especially at the primary school level.*

---

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

One of the social ills threatening the educational sector at all levels is examination malpractice. Examination is a tool used to measure pupil's achievement. It involves series of questions asked in order to determine whether or not pupils have mastered what they are taught. One of the objectives of education in Nigeria is to prepare the young ones to face future challenges and develop them to meet the nation's manpower requirements. Schools therefore need to conduct examination as a yardstick for assessment. It is the most practical way of assessment in education. Cornelius-Ukpepi (2006) added that examination plays several roles in the teaching and learning process, a necessary incentive to study. The author further added that examination is a means of getting feedback and a yard-stick for evaluating the effectiveness of instructional delivery, selection, and placement for employment.

Balogun, (1999) defined examination as a way to ascertain how much a subject matter in a particular field of study the candidate has mastered. It is also seen as the process through which students are evaluated or tested to find out the quality of knowledge they have acquired within a specific period. Also, Hornby (2005) defined examination as a formal test of somebody's knowledge or ability in a particular subject, especially by means of answering questions or practical exercise (p.58).

Although pupil's achievement in examination may not be the true reflection of their ability, it is however, the closest indicator of the extent of pupil's achievement in a given field. Examination according to Adewale (2011) in a given area or subject, can be used to categorize pupils into high and low ability. Those with high ability are usually given preference above those with low ability. Though, those with low ability would want the same preferential treatment, and in a bid to demonstrate high ability, the resort to indulging in such vice as examination malpractice. The most worrisome aspect of this is the fact that it is practiced among primary school pupils. This is because the primary school is the foundation of a child educational development. The National Policy on education. FRN (2004) described this level as the foundation upon which all levels are built. If the foundation is faulty, it will as well affect other higher levels of education.

Denga and Denga (1998) affirmed that examination malpractice is thriving in nursery and primary schools where one would have thought that children at this level are young and innocent.

In the past, there was a strong link between the school and the home. Teachers knew the pupils not only by their names but to their families. There was a strong cooperation between the school, the society and the home. Moral standard was high. But the explosion of pupils' enrolment in school as a result of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) increased the teacher – pupil ratio in the classroom making it difficult for teachers to closely monitor pupils, as well as finding it difficult to cope with their functions as teachers and as parents, thereby bringing about deterioration in the teaching and learning process. Also, because emphasis has shifted from how skillful people are to what paper qualification they have many pupils/students have resorted to engaging in what is called Examination Malpractice.

In the same vein, Fayombo (2004) affirmed that the over dependence on certificate has led to the 'mad rush' by the populace and the resultant effect is that people either acquire certificate legitimately or other means. According to the author, this messy situation is having a negative effect on the nation's quality of education and the kind of certificates issued to students at different levels, has caused a situation where many people can no longer defend their certificates.

Although examination malpractice in the past may not be totally rule out, the current trend according to Obudigha (2010) is alarming and calls for proper management in order to rid the school of its consequences. Whereas, in the past, students tended to hide the act, now they blatantly advertise the act and positively too.

The question then is what is examination malpractice?

## **2. EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE DEFINED**

Examination Malpractice according to Odongbo (2002) refers to an act of wrong doing carried out by a candidate or group of candidates or any other person with the intention to cheat and gain unfair advantage in an examination. Awanber (2004) defined examination malpractice as the application of unusual means to obtain a score or set of scores that is normally beyond the mental capability or the state of preparedness of a candidate for the examination. Also, Nwana (2000) described examination malpractice as the massive and unprecedented abuse of rules and regulations pertaining to internal and public examination, beginning from the setting of the examination through the taking of the examination, their marking and grading, to the release of the results and the issuance of certificate.

In the same vein, Nwahunanya (2004) defined examination malpractice as the act of omission or commission intended to make a student pass examination without relying absolutely on his / her independent ability or resources. Furthermore, Cornelius-Ukpepi, (2006) maintained that examination malpractice is any wrongdoing during, within and after examination that offers undue advantage to a candidate to the detriment or disadvantage of others. In the same vein, Badmus and Odor (1996) Viewed examination malpractice as wrong doing in terms of construction, custodianship, administration, marking and release of results, with the intention of conferring undue advantage on some candidates over others.

Summary, we can say that whenever the rules and regulations governing the conduct of any examination at any level are not adhered to by the parties concerned, examination malpractice has taken place.

## **3. CAUSES OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

In a study on the causes of examination malpractice, Adewale (2011) maintained that about 20% (percent) of parents believe that insufficient time for writing papers encourages examination malpractice. Be that as it may, the problem of insufficient time should not pose a serious threat to candidate as to warrant examination malpractice. This is because, if a candidate knows what to write, he or she will not have the time for cheating as he will be pre – occupied with trying to beat the time. The author further added that most people are of the opinion that objective questions encourage examination malpractice especially at the primary school level. This is because, many pupils have develop different skills in using their fingers to pass information to their colleagues on the 'correct options' in objective examinations. The author also added that, the syllabus is over loaded thereby making it difficult for pupils to cope.

Pratt (1981) reported that pupils are likely to cheat in the examination when they are not prepared for examination.

### 4. DIMENSIONS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

As the years roll by, pupils come with new dimensions of examination malpractice. In other words, the instances of examination malpractice vary. Some of these dimensions as stated by Obudigha (2010) are as follows:

1. Bringing of foreign materials into the examination hall.
2. Assistance from educational stake holders.
3. Irregular activities inside and outside the examination hall.
4. Impersonation, leakage of question paper.
5. Electronically assisted malpractices etc.

At the primary school level, the most commonly practiced dimension range from giraffing and inscription.

Pupils have now advanced to the level of inscribing materials or information on the parts of their bodies like the palms, thighs, and dresses, hanker chiefs, rulers, chairs, tables as well as the walls of examination halls etc.

### 5. DANGERS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

Some of the dangers of examination malpractice include:

1. Not being able to defend certificate (failure in job performance).
2. Perpetual condemnation of the conscience.
3. Possibility of unfulfilled dreams and vision, if the student is sent away from school.
4. The culprits may be initiated into a system of dishonesty and corrupt practices by which become hardened.
5. It makes a no sense of the educational system and it militates against the country's goal of technological advancement.
6. It makes pupils to lose the ability to study or work hard in their studies.

### 6. WAYS OF MANAGING/PREVENTING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AT THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Certain truths need to be told to pupils about the consequences of examination malpractice, and this should be done on regular basis. In order words, every effort must be made to stop it as quickly as possible before it gets out of hand especially at the primary school level.

Therefore, the following steps will help in managing or coping examination malpractice in the primary school, Obudigha (2010).

1. Examination papers should be strictly secured by the primary school teachers.
2. Sitting arrangement during examination period should be changed on regular basis. Pupils could be arranged according to the number in the register or names.
3. Parents and community should train up their children to imbibe the traditional values of honesty, hard work, fairness, uprightness at home and be complemented by the school.
4. Government should provide conducive learning environment in schools by providing learning facilities and also enhance remuneration for primary school teachers.
5. Enough resources should be made available for the conduct of examination (Ene and Ursula, 1998).
6. Sitting arrangement of pupils during examination should not be too close to each other and pupils should also be thoroughly checked before starting any examination.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper has surveyed the issue of examination malpractice in the primary school including its problems and prospect. It has specifically examining the meaning of examination and examination malpractice respectively. The paper also took a look at the causes of examination malpractice, the dimension with which it is carried out, the dangers it poses to the primary school pupils and the society at large. The different ways of managing or preventing it was also proffered in the paper. To this effect, less emphasis should be placed on paper qualification. When this is done, there is the likelihood that pupils will not engage in examination malpractice. Most importantly, teachers and parents should encourage their pupils/children to have a positive perception of examination malpractice so that they will not indulge in the act thereby maintaining their dignity.

## REFERENCES

- Adewale, G. (2011). Examination malpractice: A stigma on school effectiveness in Nigeria. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press.
- Awanbar, D. (2004) Examination malpractice and the degenerative effects on quality of education examination / assessment and certification.
- Badmus, G. A. & Odor, P. I. (1996). Challenge of managing educational assessment in Nigeria. Kaduna: Ataman Limited.
- Balogun, J. O. (1999). Examination malpractice and the Nigerian society. *The Jos Journal of Education* 4(1), 110-116
- Cornerlius-Ukpepi, B. U. (2006). Examination malpractice, limitations to understanding scientific concepts and academic performance in primary science among primary six pupils in Cross River State. Unpublished PhD dissertation. University of Calabar, Nigeria.
- Denga, I. D. & Denga, H. M. (1998). Examination malpractice and cultism in Nigeria. Calabar: Rapid Educational Publishers Ltd.
- Ene, O. C. & Ursula, C. N. (1998). Strategies for effective conduct of examinations in tertiary institutions in Enugu State. Book of readings on education. Published by Cardinal Crest Ltd.
- Fayombo, G.A (2004). Factors influencing examination malpractices among Nigerian secondary school students. A paper presented at first national conference in Institute of Education O. O. U, Ago-Iwoye. Jan 12-15
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). National policy on education. NERDC Abuja: Government Press.
- Hornby, A. S. (1995) Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary. 5th ed Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nwahunanya, C. (2004). Examination malpractice: A threat to the credibility of distance education. In C. Nwahunanya (ed.). *Distance education at the crossroads in Nigeria*.
- Nwana, O. C. (2000). Aberrations in the Nigerian education system in the state of education in Nigeria. UNESCO Abuja.
- Obudigha, W. (2010). Checking examination malpractice in Nigerian schools. Retrieved 27/6/2012 from <http://wisdom4word.blogspot.com/2010/04/examination-malpractice-in-nigeria.html>
- Odongbo, D.N. (2002). Controlling examination malpractice and irregularities. Uganda National Examination Board's Experience. Proceedings of the 20th Annual Conference of AEAA, Arusha Tanzania.
- Pratt, D. (1980). Curriculum design and development. New York: Harcourt Brace, Janorarich.