

EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AND THE FORMATION OF NEGATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND ITS ECONOMIC EFFECTS

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ABSTRACT

This expository paper focuses on examination malpractice, the formation of negative organizational culture in secondary schools and its economic effects. The prevalence of examination malpractice has become both endemic and chronic in secondary schools. Because of its endemic and chronic nature, examination malpractice has to a large extent, eroded most of the positive values which the secondary school system is supposed to transmit to learners. Not only that, it has to a large extent influenced the attitude and values of teachers negatively. As a result it is common knowledge that lateness, truancy, indolence, indiscipline, the belief that no one passes examination without cheating and unwillingness to carry out take home assignments is now common behavioural traits exhibited by learners at that level of education. On the part of teachers, examination malpractice has engendered lateness, absenteeism, unwillingness to enforce academic standards and lack of commitment in many of them. The paper posits that in situations where short-cuts to success and glory do not only exist but has become the norm, the culture among the key players is bound to undergo some transformations in conformity with the “new norm”. In this case, examination malpractice has been transformed from an aberration to a norm. Consequently, negative behavioral traits to strengthen and support the “new norm” have evolved. Therefore, in order to curb the menace, the authors made some recommendations, among which include: regular mass orientation by the National Orientation Agency involving the faith based organizations, churches/mosques, town unions, clubs, industries, civil services; severe penalty to be legislated for culprits in any form no matter the status and the teacher should be adequately motivated and have improved condition of service.

KEYWORDS: Culture, Examination, Economic, Malpractice, Negative, Schools

INTRODUCTION

Examination malpractice has become a regular feature of secondary schools in Nigeria. Its nature is both endemic and chronic. Measures to get rid of it have not yielded the desired result. Rather, the more the efforts to eradicate it, the more the spread and the more its acceptance among learners and teachers. This phenomenon which should be treated as an aberration in our educational system has become the norm. A norm is a standard pattern of behaviour that is considered normal in a society (Peil: 1978). When an aberration becomes a norm in any social system, a new set of values and attitudes must come into place to support, sustain and reinforce the new norm. In most cases such a norm and its supportive values and attitudes are negative and as such create problems in the system. At present the school system sees examination malpractice as an aberration that must be fought at all cost. At the same time a reasonable percentage of the key players in the school system see it as a norm and evolve values and attitudes that sustains it. It is common knowledge that both

learners and teachers at all levels of school in Nigeria, during both internal and external examinations, engage in examination malpractice (Omoregie: 2000), (Onyechere: 1996), (Uwazuike: 1993). It is also common knowledge that lateness, absenteeism, indolence, indiscipline, and the belief that no-one passes examination except by cheating is common traits exhibited by many learners. Teachers on the other hand exhibit lateness, absenteeism, low commitment and little zeal to enforce academic excellence (Aniagolu: 2010). All the above constitute negative organizational culture prevalent in our (secondary) school system. In other words, examination malpractice encourages the formation of negative organizational culture in Nigerian secondary schools. The task of this paper is to show how examination malpractice leads to the formation of negative organizational culture in Nigerian schools and its economic effect on the socio-economic development of Nigeria.

Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice is one phenomenon that has generated a lot deal of interest among Nigerian scholars. Many of these scholars have reported that examination malpractices have been on the increase and is steadily assuming a wild and frightening dimension (Ekoja and Mgboro: 2000), (Fausa and Osabere: 2005), (Dike: 2006). Some scholars also agree that examination malpractice is a cankerworm that is about to consume the entire fabrics of the Nigerian education system (Aniagolu: 2010). Nwadiani (2005) is of the opinion that the reason for this wide and great interest generated by this phenomenon (examination malpractice) stem from the view that the value and functionality of any education system lies in its ability to actualize the goals of education through an objective assessment and evaluation of what the learners have learnt or achieved after a period of scholarship. As a result, any action that undermines the examination process poses a great threat not only to the value and reliability of examination result and certification but to the entire education system and national development.

But what is examination malpractice? The Examination Act of 1999 defines it “as any act of omission or commission by a person who before, during or after any examination fraudulently secures any unfair advantage for himself or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulations to the extent of undermining the validity, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificate issued.” According to Oluyebo and Daramola (2006) examination malpractice is any act or irregular behavior exhibited by a candidate or anybody associated with the conduct of exams before, during or after the examination that contravenes the rules and regulations governing the conduct of such examination. In other words, examination malpractice is a term that describes all actions or inactions before, during or after any examination by candidates, examination personnel, parents or their hiring with the intention of yielding to a candidate performance that is devoid of personal intellectual abilities.

Examination malpractice which started as a minor misdemeanor in Nigeria has assumed a chronic and endemic status. It seems to have become a permanent feature of Nigeria Education system since all efforts by government, examination bodies, concerned organizations, educational institutions and individuals towards its eradication have not yielded meaningful and expected result. Rather examination malpractice has become an organized system of cheating involving not only candidates but teachers, heads of schools, parents and various other accomplices. This organized system of cheating has become so widespread that there is virtually any examination that there is no one form of cheating or the other. New and more ingenious, more sophisticated ways of cheating keep evolving (Jimoh: 2009). This situation has been aptly captured by Nwadiani (2005) when he described the process of examination in Nigeria as a “contemporary abuse and a national shame.”

Seen in the above light, examination malpractice is no longer an aberration in the school system but a regular and normal occurrence. In other words, the nation is witnessing a rapid and horrendous transformation of examination malpractice into a norm and the evolution of a set of supportive values and attitudes that makes the fight against it an uphill task. The process of this transformation and the evolution of a set of values, attitudes and practices is what the authors call institutionalization of negative organizational culture in Nigeria secondary school system consequent upon examination malpractice.

Examination Malpractice and the Formation of Negative Organizational Culture in Secondary Schools

Scholars agree that the school as a social organization is a social system (Coombs: 1970), (Hoy and Miskel: 1987), (Okeke: 2004). Hoy and Miskel (1987:58) outlined the five basic elements of a social system thus:

Social systems are composed of interrelated parts or subsystems such that when one part is affected a ripple goes through the entire system;

Social systems are goal oriented.

Social systems are open system (receive and transform inputs to outputs and is adaptive to environmental needs).

Social systems are peopled.

Social systems are normative (have a distinctive culture).

With reference to the school as a social system Willard (1932:6) states: 'the school is an organized whole with an interdependence of parts, a clearly defined population different from the environment, a complex network of social relationships and its own unique culture which can be regarded as organizational culture. William (1981) defined organizational culture as symbols, ceremonies and myth that communicate the underlying values and beliefs of that organization to its employees. In their own view Howard and Davis (1981) regard organizational culture as a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by the organization's members that produce norms that profoundly shape the behaviours of individuals and groups in the organization. From the above definitions, one can deduce that organizational culture include common ideas, values, symbols, standards, norms, beliefs, rituals and habits that are shared by members of an organization which are perpetuated by institutional induction, actions and leadership. Although ubiquitous and usually out of sight and mind, institutional culture has a profound impact on the environment of the workplace and on the ability of the members to succeed and prosper. It also has the power to stealthily make unwary members willing to accept lower ethical standards of behaviour (Kluwer and Lippincott: 2009).

Organizational culture of the school includes punctuality, hard work, regularity, obedience to rules and regulations, promotion of excellence, self reliance and self discipline, honesty and fairness. These vital elements of the cherished culture of the school have almost been obliterated by examination malpractice. This has occurred in several ways:

As earlier stated, the school is a social system whose goal is the production of individuals who after a period of learning are certified through examination as having been imbued with skills, knowledge, attitude and values necessary for the individual's survival and that of the society. Therefore the value and functionality of the school system lies in its ability to actualize the goals of schooling through an objective assessment and evaluation of what the learners have achieved after a period of scholarship. The examination process still remains one of the best tools for this objective assessment and

evaluation. It therefore goes without saying that whatever undermines the examination process poses a great threat to the school system. For the goal of the school system to be effectively realized, the above named cultural practices must subsist among the key players.

However, with the endemic nature of examination malpractice, the school system has metamorphosed into an almost a dysfunctional system sustained by values, attitudes and other consequent practices that have become perverted. The social norms they give credence to can no longer promote moral virtues that were upheld in the past. Of course it has to be pointed out those values and attitudes are social variables that lend credence to social norms. According to Mayer (2000), “morally bad action results from three sources: Good people making mistakes (out of ignorance), good people having weakness of will, bad people choosing evil.” In whichever way it takes, to stop morally bad behaviours, appropriate ways to help good people avoid mistakes and have their will strengthened must be found. Secondly, appropriate punishment for wrong doers must be applied. Where this is not done, the bad behaviour which initially was seen as an aberration ceases to be seen as such. Rather, it is transformed gradually into a norm. Perpetrators of examination malpractice have not been adequately punished. Instead many of them are socially rewarded and they continue to believe that the end justifies the means. With the passage of time examination malpractice ceases to be seen as “abnormal” but “normal”.

Putting all together, the school system is like a house divided against itself. Certain individuals within it see examination malpractice as an abnormality that must be fought without relenting. At the same time a reasonable percentage of the key players in the school system see it as a norm (normal). Since people in the later group are not deterred, their actions (exam malpractice) over the years have gained acceptance, approval, and sadly have been rewarded. Hence more and more people in the first group are recruited into the second. The rest either sit on the fence or turn blind eyes to this sorry state of affairs. This produces a kind of anomie within the school system.

Merton (1968) described anomie as a breakdown in the cultural structure due to a dysfunction in the cultural norms and goals and the socially structural capacity of members of the group to act in accord with them. In other words anomie describes a social condition in which norms are lacking for the governance of individual and group behaviour. In the absence of such norms, the social system is rendered meaningless and people resort to adaptive behaviors. It equally describes a situation in which a goal and the means of actualizing such a goal are at variance. Anomie gives birth to aberrant behaviours and non-conformity, which is a symptom of dissociation between culturally prescribed goals and socially prescribed means of realizing such goals (Jimoh, 2009).

The school system in Nigeria and in deed Nigerians place a very high value on certificates without a corresponding emphasis on approved means of obtaining certificates (which is the examination process). Consequently learners resort to any expedient means of obtaining a certificate - whether legitimate or not. It is this anomic situation that has given rise to the institutionalization of the culture of cheating in examinations which in turn leads to the evolution of a set of supportive behaviours that go with it.

Today examination malpractice is no longer seen as an aberration. Of course an aberration is only an aberration where the popular culture is superior. In the school system the culture of certification through hard work, diligence, fairness and self-reliance is no longer superior. It has been weakened by examination malpractice. In its place are laziness, truancy, indolence, indiscipline, dependency, lateness etc. In a research conducted among secondary school teachers and students in Enugu State, it was found out that over 60% of the respondents agreed that: no-one can pass any exam without

cheating; it is no longer necessary to study hard since success in exam can be easily obtained through cheating; regularity to school and to class is no longer required to pass exam (Aniagolu, 2010).

In other words examination malpractice has a way of enthroneing laziness, truancy, inferior self concept, indiscipline, disregard for rules and regulations. These are negative school culture that is no longer seen as negative. Hence students can now be seen in public places proudly and loudly discussing how they cheated in an examination. It is no longer odd to hear WAEC/NECO supervisors and invigilators discuss how they were monetarily rewarded for aiding and abetting malpractice in exam halls where they were paid to prevent any form of cheating. It is equally "normal" to see SS III students en-mass desert their urban secondary schools where they did JSI-SSII, to remote rural schools where they feel cheating in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) is better organized, enhanced and powered by school authorities, teachers, supervisors and parents. It has to be noted that this mass exodus from urban to remote rural schools for the purpose of taking SSSCE is canvassed and condoned by school principals in rural areas even when they know it is not in tandem with the rules guiding transfer of students. They are motivated to act this way because such admission makes them smile to their banks.

Economic Effects of Examination Malpractice

Human capital is an indispensable variable in growth and development, and has been observed by various economists as the critical factor (Romer, 1986; Mankiw et al, 1992). Examinations practices do result in poor human capital in the short and long-run. Unequivocally, the essence of education is to acquire the ability to add values to the society through the development of manpower quality and participating actively to production due to acquired skills and knowledge. When learners indulge in examination malpractice, it is difficult to be convinced of the degree of ability based on possessed good grades because of the inability to perform is reflected in what the individual can do after graduating with malpractice-acquired-certificate.

The society is worse off as school leavers with good grades cannot contribute meaningfully to the societal productivity at the level of education acquired. Economic development implies a structural transformation of a society such that the society expands her productive frontiers with increase in aggregate output, income and employment which impacts positively on the living standard. This is not easy to attain when examination malpractice is a norm.

To Marshall (1930), the investment in a human being is one of the most valued capitals because of what human being can do after knowledge acquisition. If a learner refuses to do it right in the course of learning due to dishonest means, eventually the human capital would be of poor quality, which impacts negatively on the economy.

Intuitively, it can be pointed out that poor economic development in Nigeria is attributed to corruption and the impact of examination malpractice in the sense that creativity that was supposed to be developed during training have been compromised owing to short-cut approach to success adopted. Oseni (2014) observed that there is a gap between the certificates obtained by graduates and their productivity at the labour market due to the various examination malpractice perpetuated by them when they were in school. It is highly demoralising to see schools products unable to perform when called to respond to issue relating to their area of study. These are empty vessels that can only shine through examination malpractice.

Poor quality product of schools leads to unexpected cost on the part of employers of labour. Many industries in Nigeria have to resort to retraining of trained school products to make them employable. This situation is attributed to

malpractices of many school leavers. This spending in retraining is like duplication of costs which is a waste of scarce resource. Huge cost have been incurred in training students, lack of seriousness and opting for easy way through examination malpractice gave rise to such a colossal waste in a society that is deficient of resources.

An acclaimed accountant, lawyer, surgeon, teacher among others cannot be efficient and effective if skills and certificates were acquired through examination malpractice. The societal anomalies, inefficiency, incompetence, preference for easy way are the outcomes of examination malpractice. News-online Nigeria (2010), points that the experienced bank failures, collapsed buildings, economic sabotage, drug trafficking, fake drug manufacturing and sales are adverse effects manifesting from examination malpractices. You even see the economic effect of examination malpractice as fraud at our filling stations, churches, homes, hospital and markets.

Way Forward

It has been stated that a stitch in time serves nine. This ugly situation cannot be allowed to continue to degenerate to become normal when in actual fact it has been destructive to the system and the society. On this basis, we make the following recommendations:

- Regular mass orientation by the National Orientation Agency involving the faith based organizations, churches/mosques, town unions, clubs, industries, civil services among others on the need to help overcome this menace.
- Severe penalty should be legislated for culprits in any form no matter the status and the teachers should be adequately motivated and have improved condition of service to enable them shun any form of “quick income” that has endangered the system of Nigerian education..
- Emphasis in Nigerian education curriculum should focus more on what individuals can do and not the type of certificates possessed.
- Parents should be educated on the need to discourage their wards from any form of vices and to imbibe honesty in the aspiration of anything including education.
- The immutable law of karma that is law of compensation, law of cause and effect, retributive justice, nemesis and “as a man sow, so shall he reap,” ought to be taught in schools. This will help many people to refrain from negative vices as they come to know that the reward for malpractice is a short and long-run adverse effect.
- Education authorities (Federal and State Ministries of Education, Post Primary Education Board, Local Government Authority etc) should use their good offices to help the country. They cannot claim to be ignorant of the ugly trends in Nigeria education system. More efforts are expected of them to alleviate this ugly trend.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper examined the negative influence of examination malpractice on the organizational culture of the school system. The authors are of the opinion that examination malpractice which is now both endemic and chronic in secondary schools has led to the evolution and entrenchment of such negative behaviours as truancy, lateness, laziness, indolence, negative self-concept, disregard for rules and regulations, lowering of standards and mass promotion at end of school sessions. This evolution and entrenchment are possible because examination malpractice is no longer seen as an aberration

but a norm. In order to bring back academic glory, high standard (through hard work, discipline and self-reliance) back to the schools system, examination malpractice must be fought at all cost. The high value placed on certificates must be followed by an equal high value on the institutionalized process of certification.

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