Islam, Examination Malpractices and Educational Attainment Among University Students in Nigeria

By

Mohammed Tukur Aliyu, Ph.D
Department of Islamic Studies Taraba State University, Jalingo
Taraba State

Abstract

The study examined Islam, exams malpractices and educational attainment among university students in Nigeria. Related literature were reviewed by paying particular attention to conceptual and theoretical analysis that can enrich any researcher on the subject matter. Under the mythology of the study in order to achieve the set objectives of this research, a Cross Sessional View point was adopted. The study made use of published books, journal articles, and seminar papers. From the research findings, Examination Malpractice is a monster, an immoral act, an antisocial and a cankerworm that has deeply rooted its tentacles inside the Nigerian educational system. It has seriously affected other sectors in the country such as economy, health, politics etc. It has also been discussed that the various forms of examination malpractice can be categorized into two: pre and post examination malpractice. Based on the study appropriate recommendations that will reduce various forms of examination malpractices among our students and other players in educational centers have being suggested.

Key words: Islam Examination Malpractice, education Attainment, University Students, Cankerworm

Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in the life of an individual and a nation. This is because; it is a means of developing the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain of an individual which in turn develops the society. It is an indispensable factor for positive changes in an individual and a society; socially, morally, intellectually, politically and economically. It is the best legacy a nation can give to her citizens as their right (Igbuzor 2006).

However, it has been unable to effect positive changes in both individual and the society due to series of indisciplinary acts that have stood against its assessment and evaluation, thus rendering it futile (Uzoigwe 2013). Among these indisciplinary acts, examination malpractice stands out as the most conspicuous and dangerous act that is affecting the efficacy of education in national development.

According to Jafar (2012), examination malpractice has become a cankerworm in the Nigerian educational sector over the years. It has become the order of the day at all levels of education in Nigeria; primary, secondary and tertiary institutions which include the Universities, the Polytechnics, the Monotechnics, Institutes of Technology, Colleges of Education and Professionally Specialized Institutions (IAU, 2000 and NPE, 1998).

Literature review

At this juncture, it is pertinent to concisely explain some concepts which are integral to this discussion in order to enable proper understanding of the topic. These concepts are Trends, Examination, Malpractice, Examination Malpractice and Educational Sector.

Trend: This means the general direction in which something tends to move (James, 2000). It can also be the general direction in which a situation is changing or developing (Hornby, 2001). It is also what is hip or popular at a certain point in time or what seems to be going around at any given time.

Examination: It is the noun of the word 'examine' which means to test in order to verify, to judge and certify facts (Khan, 2013). Thus, examination according to Gbenga, is the series of questions asked in order to determine whether or not the students have mastered what they are supposed to know or acquire. Olanipekun (2000) opined that examination is testing of students' knowledge on what they have been taught over a period of time. It is a means of assessing the learners in order to know whether learning has taken place.

Malpractice: is an immoral, illegal or unethical professional conduct or neglect of professional duty (Collins, 2003). According to Hornby (2001), it is a careless, wrong or illegal behaviour while in a professional job. It can also be used to mean the failure to act correctly or legally when doing your job, often causing injury or loss (Cambridge Dictionary, 2013).

Examination Malpractice thereof according to Aderogba and Olatoye (2012), can be regarded as any action taken by an individual or groups of individuals to violate the laid down rules guiding the conduct of an examination. It can also be said that it is any act of omission or commission, which compromises the validity and integrity of any examination (Ministry of Education, Benue State, 2001). In the opinion of Bello (1990), it is an aggregate of things done by examiners or candidates that render the assessment process unreliable and useless. It can also be referred to as the illegal means resorted to by the students to pass an examination.

Educational Sector: This includes all the levels of education ranging from primary to tertiary institutions whether private or public.

Historical Background of Examination Malpractice in Nigeria

Examination Malpractice, as a cankerworm, crept into the Nigerian educational system, according to Famiwole (1995), Adeyegbe and Oke (1994) and Maduemezia (1998), in the year 1914 when the Cambridge Senior School Certificate Examinations were reportedly seen by candidates before the expected time of the papers.

Famiwole (1995) further noted that the first case of examination malpractice and irregularities in Nigeria's public examination happened in 1945 and that the result of a Nigerian candidate was cancelled in 1948 because he was found with a history note during the matriculation examination. This immoral act continued gradually till 1970s when mass cheating was first perpetuated in WAEC examination and thus made it a national problem.

Moreover, in 1973, there was a girl who armed herself with nitric acid and threatened to harm her colleagues who refused to allow her to copy from their examination scripts during May/June WAEC examination (Jacob and Lar, 2001 as quoted in Olatoye, 2013). Similarly, it has been noted by Gbenga that the year 1977 marked an important change in the issue of examination malpractice because the people then, challenged the credibility and authenticity of the public examinations in Nigeria which was being conducted by West African Examinations Council (WAEC).

This situation became worsened in the year 1984 to the extent that the Federal Military Government then set up a committee to promulgate a decree called Decree 20 to deal with this monster (PM NEWS, 2010). It should however be noted that this ugly act was most widely spread in the following years as recorded by Money (1997) as quoted by Abdulrazaq and Aminullah (2008).

Amazingly, examination malpractice has become normal and legal in the contemporary world right from the primary level to the professional level. In 1997, the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board reported series of cases of impersonation as recorded by the Guardian (1997:3).

Also, the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reported 236, 613 cases of examination malpractice out of 245, 157 who registered for 2009 National Examination Council (NECO) across the country (Isaac, n.d.). Similarly, in the examination conducted by NECO in 2011, 439,529 cases of examination malpractices were recorded as disclosed by the Director

General of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), Mr. Mike Omeri while in May/June 2012, 615, 010 cases were recorded.

The above analysis shows the rate at which this cankerworm and antisocial as well as anti-national development, is geometrically increasing, thus, it calls for urgent attention especially now that it has involved high level skills in technology.

Causes of Examination Malpractices

Examination Malpractice is a product of multi-farious and multi-dimensional problems or causes which involve the individual, the society as well as government agencies and examination bodies. This can best be discussed under the following headings:

(a) **Individuals**: This includes the students, the parents and the invigilators. In the observation of Raymond (1991), he said that: Most Invigilators paradoxically act like dogs that eat bones they are asked to keep, even police who are security guards steal some examination papers, which they later sold to candidates (National Concord, 1991) It should also be noted that some parents are the supporters of this destructive act as they pay huge amounts of money to machineries in assisting their wards to pass their examination. They bribe invigilators, examination officers, secretaries and even computer operators to make their children pass the exams. Likewise, inadequate provision of books by the parents for their wards which results in their children borrowing textbooks from their colleagues and may in some cases lead to cooperation in cheating or giraffing during their examinations (Popoola, 2010).

In the case of students, some of them are afraid of failure (Jekayinfa, 2012 and Fatai, 2005) while some are desperate in passing their examination and thus taking it as a do or die affair without considering the means to achieve this (Aisha, 2008). Udogi and Ivowi (1995) even noted that some students lack self confidence, which is as a result of laziness, thus, they resort to cheating in the examinations halls. These categories of students have no time for their studies but have enough time for unnecessary discussion, parties, play, amusement and so on, which are not relevant to their future careers. In the submission of Bello (1998 as recorded by Popoola 2010), examination malpractice on the part of the student can also be caused by absenteeism of the students from classes, indiscipline and indiscriminate going out to parties and other ceremonial occasions.

(b) **Society**: This includes the schools, peer groups and job markets. According to Chutta (1995), the major important cause of examination malpractice is the undeserved recognition given to certificates and paper qualifications by the

society and the neglect of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of the individual through education. It has even become a rule and regulation in academic arena that the promotion of staff is basically on paper qualifications and certificates whether genuine or not.

(c) **Government**: In the case of the government as a cause of examination Malpractice is due to her failure to motivate the teachers and reward good performance and job well-done by the teachers which in most cases can result in the loss of dedication to duty. This, according to Eobe (1997), can be caused by anxiety and frustration on the part of the teachers who have been expecting such motivation and reward but later find nothing.

In addition, the inadequate funding of the schools by the government, according to Maduabum and Maduabum (1998), can also cause examination malpractice as well as irregular payment of teacher's salaries and other benefits. Like the society, governments also attach undue importance to certificates and paper qualifications (Jekayinfa, 2012). This irregular payment will lead majority of the teachers and educational officers to involve themselves in immoral acts such as examination malpractice just to cater for their daily and basic needs. The teachers, in most cases, often result to strike in demanding for their rights which will automatically disrupt the academic calendar as well as bring about inadequate coverage of syllabus or course contents, which had been mentioned by Adamu (1998) and Obe (1998).

(d) **Examination Bodies**: These include West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO) and Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) which are presently called Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB), National Teachers' Institute (NTI), Senior Islamic Studies Certificate (SISC) and others. It is worthy to be noted that some officials of these bodies serve as agents of examination malpractice by selling ready-made papers to outsiders. It also involves these bodies based on the establishment of their own examination centers in remote areas where the security of both the papers and officials are not guaranteed.

Forms of Examination Malpractice

There are various ways through which people engage in this endemic malady. However, these ways can be divided into two (2) as follows:

(a) **Pre-Examination Malpractice**: This simply refers to those illegal acts that the perpetrators engage in before and during the examination (cash and kind) to a third party who can be, the examiner, typist, secretary or security officer etc in order to get examination materials before the examination. Examples of this division include:
- Giraffing
- Impersonation
- Dictation of answer to questions in the hall
- Swapping of answer scripts
- Smuggling in textbooks
- Copying answers on parts of the body
- Copying information on pieces of cloth

(b) **Post-Examination Malpractice**: This refers to those acts or activities that take place after the examination. This may include not only the following:
- Alteration of marks (Jekayinfa, 2012)
- Tracing of Scripts to the points of the Maker (Ojerinde, 2004)
- Swapping of answer Scripts into the envelop after examination.
- Begging the Examiner for assistance after examination.
- Issuing of illegal certificate to students

Effects of Examination Malpractice

This ugly act, that has become part and parcel of Nigerian Educational Sector, has enormously affected the national development negatively in all the sectors; economy, health, religion, political and even personal development. These effects can be summarized as follows:

a. Production of unqualified professionals in all fields of knowledge.
b. Discrediting of the certificates issued by the concerned examination bodies.
c. Discouraging other students from studying hard.
d. Irresponsible leaders
e. Reduction in the quality of education
f. Increase in the level of the students' unserious ness

Curbing Examination Malpractices through Islamic Teachings

Islam, as a religion, is an embodiment of morals and values which change the life of an individual and the society for better. This is why it encourages and supports all that can make human life and the society better for peaceful living. Knowledge is one of the things that can bring peace, it is important and an indispensable tool in the religion of Islam. This

is because knowledge is the basis of life and the foundation of all progress and developments as well as civilization (Yakubu, 2010:24). Thus, Islamic teachings depend on knowledge to tackle all spiritual and mundane affairs of man.

However, knowledge in Islam is sought for the development of oneself and the community so as to attain nobility and not to attain certificates or paper qualifications. Thus, the issue of test and examination is not a new thing in Islam as Allah has mentioned in the Qur'ān that:

> *"Human beings think that We shall not test them as those before them were tested" (Q29:2-3)*

It can be deduced from the above Quranic verse that test and examination is part of human life. The essence of test and examination in Islam is contained in Q2:31-34 which says:

> *And He taught Adam all the names (of everything), then He showed them to the angels and said. "Tell me the names of these if you are truthful". They (angels) said: "Glory be to you, we have no knowledge except what you have taught us. Verily, it is You, the All-Knower, the All-Wise". He said: "O Adam! Inform them of their names". And when he had informed them of their names, He said: "did I not tell you that I know the Ghaib (unseen) in the heaven and the earth and I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing. And (remember) when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam". And they prostrated except Iblis…*

Methodology

In order to achieve the set objectives of this research, a Cross Sessional View point was adopted. The research also benefited from secondary sources which included published books, journal articles, and seminar papers. These materials proved useful in providing the necessary information on the subject matter. However, in as much as these materials were useful, they were not short of limitations, but used with utmost caution.

Discussion of the Findings

Based on the methodology adopted in the study, the following finings became obvious:

Islam teaches the followers, among other things good character and up rightness as a way of life. Young ones at home, primary and post primary levels are thought not only the fair of Almighty Allah (God), but discipline and respect for constituted authorities, meaning

that from available literature Islam detest immorality and exams misconduct among students at all levels.

Exams misconduct, based on the study, arises also from the level of immorality in the Nigeria society; teachers\lecturers offering pass grades to their females students; some female students seducing male lecturers by their manner of dresses, appearing half necked and offering other gift items\cash; selling of question papers to students by some lecturers and secretariat/administrative staff; securing admission by parents for unqualified wards in tertiary institutions with cash inducement etc

Incessant industrial strikes by lecturers and other unions in the tertiary institutions, based on the study, is responsible for non coverage of the various subject curricula. The inability of the lecturers to cover enough grounds before the examination periods, due to strike actions, create some laxity among some lecturers and students. Some students will, therefore, result to buying question papers, bribing lecturers, examination officers etc

The study also discovered that since the Nigerian educational system and employers (both private and public sector) believes in paper qualification and better grades/distinction, not minding the process/procedure of acquiring such certificates, examination malpractice have being on the increase.

Inadequate funding of tertiary education in Nigeria especially the public tertiary institutions by the federal and state governments, according to the study, has being responsible for the poor quality of instruction as well as poor academic performance. This situation also creates room for various forms of examination malpractices.

Conclusion

Examination Malpractice has been described in this paper as a monster, an immoral act, an antisocial and a cankerworm that has deeply rooted its tentacles inside the Nigerian educational system. It has seriously affected other sectors in the country such as economy, health, politics etc. The causes of the endemic malady have been traced to individual, society, government and the examination bodies.

Recommendations

Religious bodies, Islamic and christian, be encourage to re-introduce moral teachings and discipline, as it was between 1950 to 1976. these will gradually help in reforming Nigeria education, especially tertiary education.

School regulations, study/lecture time tables, dress code, hostel regulations, food and dining hols regulations, proper defination of lecturers-students, relationships proper observation of outing/visiting days, implementation of define role of parents lecturers interaction/associations etc. Must be fully observed and penalties must be meted to students and lectures by the institutions and the ministry of education.

Both federal and state governments must do very thing within their powers by creating industrial harmony among all the university unions, in order that the academic calender could run smoothly, without strike action.

Both private and public sector employers should down play the over-emphasis on certificates with distinctions (eg first class division or second class upper division), but pay special attention to sense of industry, technology, character, communication skills, team player skills and emotional composition. These skills can be achieved through well organised aptitude test/examination.

The federal and various state governments that are the owners/proprietors of tertiary institution must adequately fund such institutions. These will reduce the problems of staff welfare, lecture rooms laboratories, electricity, water supply, instructional materials, and school buses, cafeteria, banks, students labour markets, etc.

References

Abdulrazaq, O.O. and Aminullahi, S.A. (2008). "Female Students Perceived Causes of and Solution to Examination Malpractice in Asa Local Government: Implication for Counselling". *Sokoto Educational Review* 10(2), June.

Adamu H. (1998). Indiscipline in Nigerian Institutions: Causes, Effects and Solution. In Ehiozwa A.O (ed.) *Etiology Effect and Control of Malignancies in Nigerian Education (EEC OFMINE)* pp. 13-22 Zaria: CPSE Publishers.

Aderogba A.A and Olatoye R.A (2012). Do Religiously Committed Students Engage in Less Examination Malpractice Behaviors? *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education.* Vol. 3. Issue 1.

Adeyegbe, S.O and Oke M.C (1994). *The New and Widening Dimensions of Examination Malpractice and the Effects on the Integrity of Educational Credentials in the West African Sub-Region*. Paper presented at the 12th Annual Conference of the Association of Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA) September 19th-21st Accra, Ghana.

Aisha Nuraini (2008). *Examination Malpractices*: Causes, Effects and Solution. http://www.hadizaoyas.com/tips16.html. Accessed on 31st August.

Al-Attas, S.N (1982). *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*. In Maiwada, D. *Islamic Education: Theme and Contents.* Kano: Bureau fro Islamic Propagation.

Cambridge Dictionaries (2013). *Malpractice*. http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/malpractice. Accessed on 8th September.

Chutta, E.. (1995). *Money Syndrome*. A lead paper presented at the 10th Annual Congress of the Nigerian Academy of Education, Abuja, November 19 to 21.

Collins Theusaurus; (2013). *Collins English Dictionary*. Harper Collins Publishers.http://www.thefreedictionary.com/_/misc/Harpercollinsproducts.aspx?English. Accessed on 8th September, 2013.

Famiwole R.O (1995). Perspective of Students involvements in examination. In O.A. Joseph (ed), *Issues on Examination malpractice in Nigeria* (pp 160-163); Ekiti, Petoa education Publishers.

Fatai K. (2005). *Causes, Implications and Solutions to Examination Malpractices in Ilorin East Local Government Secondary Schools*. An Unpublished B.Ed Long Essay, submitted to the Department of Arts and Social Science, University of Ilorin.

Hornby A.S (2000). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Igbuzor, O. (2006). *The State of Education in Nigeria Action Aid International Nigeria.* A Keynote Address delivered at a roundtable organized by Civil Society action Coalition on Education for all (CSACEFA) on 3rd July.

International Association of Universities (2000). *Nigeria Education System*. Data for academic year 2000-2001, Abuja. National Universities Commission (NUC).

Isaac O.B (n.d) . *The Role of Libraries in the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination*. http://un/lib.un/edu/LPP/PNLA%20Quarterly/busayo74-4.html

Jah, O. (1982). The Philosophy of Islamic Education. In Maiwada, D. *Islamic Education: Themes and Contents*. Kano: Bureau for Islamic Propagation.

James J. Kilpatrick (2013). *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. Houghton Mifflin Company. http://www.thefreedictionary. com/-/dict.aspx?rd=18word=trend. Accessed on 8th September, 2013.

Jekayinfa, A. (2012). "Curbing Examination Malpractice through Value-Orieted Education". Adeleke B.L. and Abioye P.O. (eds.) *General Studies in the Arts: Some Fundamental Topics*. Ilorin :The General Studies Division. University of Ilorin.

Khan Z. (2013). *Essay on the Importance of Examination*. http://www.preservearticles.com/201104014889/importanmce_of_examinaitons.html. Accessed on 28th August, 2013.

Maduabum M.A and Maduabum C.I (1998). Examination Malpractice and Standards: Reflection on Society, Institution and Teacher-Related Factors. In D. Eng (ed). *Meeting and Sustaining required standards in Colleges of Education.* Pp. 123-128. Ankpa: Cuca Communication Limited.

Maduemezia M.U (1998). *Examination Malpractice in the Senior School Certificate Examination: Current Trends, Problems and Prospects*. Paper presented at the WAEC monthly seminar, Lagos.

Ministry of Education, Benue State 2001. "How to excel in examination and be free from Cults". Makurdi, Nigeria: Ministry of Education Publication.

Nigeria Ranked Number One in world examination Practice (2013). http: //www.informationng.com/2012/07. Accessed on 9th September, 2013.

Obe E.C (1998) *An Appraisal of Continuous Assessment and National Examinations in Nigeria Schools*. Inaugural Lecture Series: Lagos: University of Lagos Press.

Olatoye R.A (2013). *Checking the Menace of Examination Malpractice: A call for more Teaching and Learning in schools*. http://www.naere.org.ng/ journal. Accessed on 8th September, 2013.

Popoola A.B (2010). *Examination Malpractice: Causes, Consequences and Islamic Panacea*. An unpublished B.A Long Essay submitted to the Department of Islamic Studies, College of the Humanities, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin.

PM NEWS (2013). *Examination Malpractice: Causes and Solutions*. http://pmnewsnigeria.com/2010/05/04/examination_malpractice_causes_and solutions/. Accessed on 9th September, 2013.

The News Agency of Nigeria "NAN" (2010). NECO releases 2009 SSCE results: 4,223 have 5 credits, including English, Maths. *Nigerian Tribune*, Wednesday, 17 March, p.3

Trend. http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/trend. Accessed on 8th September, 2013.

Udogie and Ivowi (1996). Examination Malpractice: Profile, Causes, Warning signs, Case Studies, Prevention and Detection Strategies. In Onyechere I. (ed) *Promoting Examination Ethics*: Potomac Publication

Uzoigwe, G. (2013). *Corruption in Education and Assessment System: The WAEC Experience*. http://www.iaea.info/documents/paper. Accessed on 8th of September, 2013.

Yakubu, T.M. (2010). *The Islamic Principles and Methods of Teaching.* Kano: The International Institute of Islamic Thought.