

## EXAMINATION FRAUD: A BANE OF THE ACHIEVEMENT MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Worrisome is the unprecedented examination fraud pervading schools and various institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. While some examinees are vigorously preparing for examinations, others are busy strategizing to carry out examination fraud. This paper identified the varieties and facilitators of examination fraud in Nigeria vis a vis: parent/guardian, community, examination officials, institutional, and student-based examination fraud. It also brings out the implication of examination fraud for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria. It suggested that less emphasis be placed on paper qualification in Nigeria. Stakeholders should vehemently enforce laws on examination malpractices, and thorough supervision of pedagogy should be done in both private and public schools to ensure that the teachers teach, and students learn genuinely.*

### Introduction

Education, world over is accepted as an instrument per excellence, the acquisition of which remains the focus of all and sundry both within and outside the government. The school is the major arena where quality education is acquired through teaching-learning process. At the end of the teaching-learning endeavour comes the assessment of the rate of learning. Examinations are therefore conducted to know how far the students have imbibed the subject matter taught in the class, the result of which are used for promotion to the next class, admission to the next level of education and ultimately used for securing jobs for both individual and national development. This is tandem with the assertion of Eckstein (2003) that the reasons for fraudulent behaviour are not hard to identify. Success in school and in academic life has great value and success in examinations opens the doors to higher education and professional training.

However, while some students or examinees are vigorously preparing for examinations, some are busy strategizing on fraudulent means to scale through examinations. The end result of examination fraud, if not caught, is usually an excellent examination grade. While those who genuinely read for examination are languishing in poor performance, examination fraudsters are celebrating false successes of examination results. The basis of this is that the performance of those who prepare genuinely and those who indulge in the examination malpractices are assessed on the same score board.

Looking critically at examination fraud which has deeply eaten in the fabrics of our educational system, it is evidently lucid that the rights of the citizenry to quality education are unabatedly infringed upon by examination fraudster. The unprecedented examination fraud pervading schools and various institutions of higher learning in Nigeria has attracted attention within and outside the academic environment. Worrisome is the manner at which examination malpractice is ravaging the achievement of educational goals and objectives. Education's role of moulding the individual to turn around the society had fast been eroded by the cankerworm of examination malpractices. The transformation of the society is greatly hinged on the education of her citizenry. Education all over the world, determines technological growth, economic buoyancy, socio-political advancement and global status. However, these laudable objectives of education are greatly being crippled by examination fraud in schools, while right to quality education on daily basis are infringed upon.

The foundation of development of a nation would remain a mirage with a set of citizens who gain admission through examination corruption, pass through the university by means of "sorting" (settling lecturers) and importation of microchips to the examination hall among others.

The spate of academic fraud has taken embarrassing dimension in Nigeria as parents are also deeply involved: the principal/teachers are chief-examination fraud strategists, while examination officials are merchants trading in examination questions. This support Eckstein (2003), who asserted that academic fraud, cheating in high stakes examinations may involve not only candidates but also teachers, administrators, parents, and others.

Examination fraud can be succinctly defined as the illegal and unethical means of passing an evaluation test. Ikupa (1997) stated that examination malpractices is an illicit and unethical behaviour by somebody in the process of testing the ability of knowledge of a candidate through questions. Examination is expected to be catalyst to development as students are tested on proficiency gained after rounds of academic exercise. Instead of assisting the system, the actors are gaining, on

daily basis, additional knowledge in the art of cheating during examinations to make up for academic jobs left undone.

Specifically, examination fraud includes: examination leakage: use of mercenary, microchips, swapping of scripts, smuggling of prepared answer scripts into examination halls: result/certificate racketeering: verbal/physical assault/insult on examination officials, special or miracle centre syndrome' etc. Shonekan (1996) defined examination malpractices as any act of omission or commission that contravenes the rules and regulations of the examination body to the extent of undermining the validity and reliability of the test and ultimately, the integrity of the certificate. In their own view, Oluyeba and Daramola (1992) said that examination malpractice is any irregular behaviour exhibited by the examinees or anybody in-charge of examination, before, during or after the examination which stands contrary of the regulations governing the conduct of such examination. Additionally, Ikupa (2007) declared that examination malpractice is an old phenomenon which is not peculiar to Nigeria, or Africa alone but a global challenge. This was corroborate by Adesina (2007) that the first examination leakage was recorded in 1914 when head of institutions were in the custody of the examination paper and were opening examination question packages before examination dates and resealing it after the questions were copied for teaching in the classrooms

The scourge of examination fraud has greatly ravaged the education sector and by consequential extension, the technological and socio-politico-economic well-being of the nation. Examination fraud, no doubt, has weakened the foundation of the national development and if not checkmated, may fraught the achievement of the millennium development goals

### **Facilitators of Examination Fraud**

There are varieties of facilitators of examination fraud in different locations and examination contexts.

Figure 1: facilitators of examination fraud model

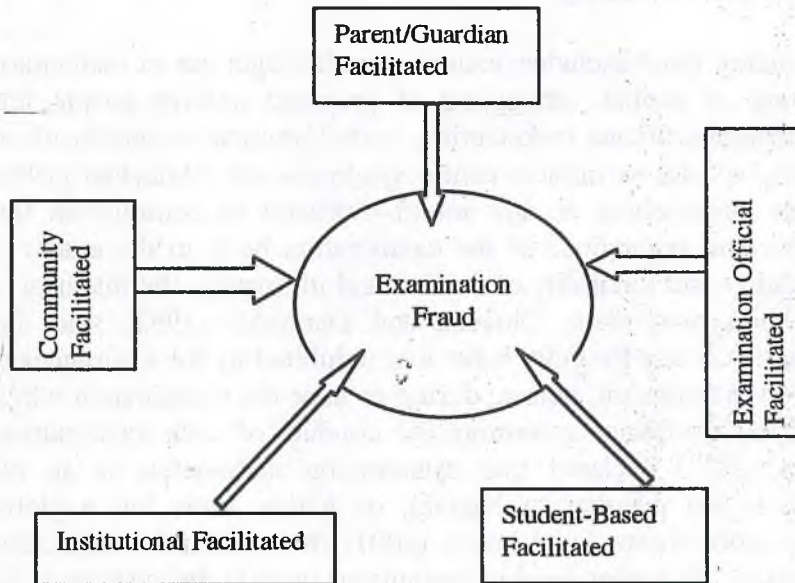


Figure 1 shows the various facilitators of examination fraud viz a viz: parent/guardian-facilitated, examination official-facilitated, institutional-facilitated, community-facilitated and; student-based facilitated examination fraud.

**Parent/guardian-facilitated examination fraud:** Naturally, and by various traditions all over the world, parents are basically responsible for the upbringing of the child. By implication, the parent/guardian has great influence over the child. The societal expectation from the parent-child relationship from the cradle is a positive contribution to personal and societal development. However, examination challenges and the dire need for certification in the society has made the parents jettisoned the noble duty to bring up an upright child. Parents go through series of tactics to assist the child pass examination. The tactics of examination fraud starts right inside the home. Parent go extra length to purchase examination questions, register the child in “miracle centers”, hire mercenary during examination, bribe invigilators and school principal and: prepare microchips for the examinees during examination. The sanctity of the parent’s role in the positive development of the child and the society has been mortgaged at the “shrine” of examination challenges. This goes in consonance with the lamentation of Omoregie {2006} that the laudable aims and objectives of secondary school education are mere mirage with the spate of indiscipline and misconduct paraded, and that the product of

today's secondary school system can neither usefully live in the society nor move into higher institution without their parents' aid.

**Examination official-facilitated examination fraud:** Officials of examination bodies {WAEC, NECO, JAMB, NBTE etc} and appointed invigilators at examination centers are most times engulfed in facilitating examination fraud. This they do through sale of examination questions papers prior the examination. The 1914 examination leakage happened in this form and ever since, the incidence has not abated. Also, the invigilators are sometimes "bought over" by either the school authorities or the students. The invigilators, who are supposed to ensure compliance with examination ethics, are turned collaborators in the act of examination fraud. Teachers are allowed by the invigilators to treat questions papers openly in the exam hall or dictate answers to questions with the cooperation of examination officials. Cases abound on cancellation of examination because the questions found their ways out of the bank where they are kept or in the press during printing before examination are written.

#### **Institutional-facilitated examination fraud.**

The scourge of examination fraud has been fortified by various institutions of learning in the country. From the primary school to the university level, the school authorities encourage perpetration of examination fraud. Most worrisome is the collaboration of secondary school authority in the act of examination fraud.

School principals and officials liaise with appointed invigilators and perpetrators to assist their students cheat in examinations. Very alarming is the rate at which school principals go around to buy examination questions to be treated in the schools before examination dates.

The private schools are worse in institutional facilitated examination fraud. Some of the private schools are tagged "miracle centres" where a child suffering from imbecility can easily have distinction in all subjects as much as he/she pays the bills expected. In the "miracles centres" the proprietors are not deeply concerned with pedagogy but the maximization of profit. Institutional facilitated examination fraud is used mostly to cover-up the academic work left undone by the various schools concerned.

#### **Community-Facilitated Examination Fraud.**

Communities are involved in facilitating examination fraud in schools. The school administration and teachers are often mandated by the community to ensure that

the schools perform well, against all odds. In turn, the school principals and teachers, in order to safeguard appointment and various positions go extra mile illegally to engage in facilitating examination fraud to satisfy the curiosity of the community. Commenting on this unwholesome act, Titiloye (1997) stated that it is below the integrity of any principals to condone examination malpractice under any guise or for whatever reason because of the incalculable harm it has on the future progress and development of this country.

### **Student-Based-Facilitated Examination Fraud.**

Students are the nucleus of examination fraud in schools. This set of people bribes the invigilators/supervisors and insults the examination officials to create pandemonium so as to import strange materials to the examination halls. Apart from this, they hire mercenary to write papers and scout to buy examination papers from examination officials. Tricky enough, students send invigilators on errands ingenuously to perpetrate examination fraud. Microchips are often brought to the examination halls, while others, especially the females, write on laps, underwear and tissue papers to carry out examination malpractices. Exchanges of answer booklets, question papers where answers are written are common phenomena in examination halls. In the event of non-compliance by the invigilators, the students, most times, go on rampage to harass the examination officials, and disrupt the process.

### **Varieties of Academic Fraud**

Of recent, academic fraud had taken an alarming dimension far from the traditional cheating in examination hall. It has metamorphosed to a hi-tech application of devices to commit academic fraud. Specifically, in various institutions and academic communities, the following varieties of academic fraud, among others, are employed, Viz:

- Purchase of examination questions
- Bringing to the examination hall various strange and illegal materials
- Mercenary
- Collaboration with invigilators
- Plagiarism
- "Sorting" (buying over lecturers)
- Falsification of grades
- Use of computerized calculators
- Text messaging of answer through mobile phone
- "Miracle centres"/examination fraud special centres
- Certificate racketeering

- Falsified accreditation of programmes
- University degrees/diploma mills through distance learning programmes.

In his own view Eckstein (2003) enumerated varieties of academic fraud to include but not limited to the following:

- i. Illegal practice in examinations
- ii. Plagiarism
- iii. Fraud in research
- iv. Diploma mills and false credentials
- v. Academic fraud enhanced by Reform policies on education.

**Table 1: Three-Year Comparison of Incidence of Examination Malpractice in the May/June WASSCE (2004 - 2006) in Nigeria**

S/No	TYPE OF MALPRACTICE	PERCENTAGE OF CANDIDATES INVOLVED		
		2004	2005	2006
1	Bringing in foreign materials	1.60	1.17	0.975
2	Irregular activities inside and outside the examination hall	2.35	1.46	1.495
3	Collusion	6.45	4.06	4.432
4	Impersonation	0.11	0.06	0.073
5	Leakage	NIL	NIL	NIL
6	Mass cheating	0.40	0.01	1.206
7	Insult/Assault on supervisors and invigilators	0.07	0.07	0.003
8	New/Miscellaneous cases	0.19	0.03	0.002
	Total	11.17	6.86	7.19%

**Source:** *October 2007 WAEC State Committee meetings' report on statistics of examination malpractice in the May/ June 2006 WASSCE in Nigeria*

Table 1 shows the statistics of incidence of a three-year comparison of the examination malpractice in May/June WASSCE {2004-2006} in Nigeria. The statistics indicate the bringing in of foreign materials into the examination was faintly declining by the year with 1.60, 1.17 and 0.975 for 2004, 2005 and 2006 respectively. Similarly, irregular activities inside and outside the examination hall was also declining by the years {2.35, 1.46 and 1.495 for 2004, 2005 and 2006}. Collusion between the students and invigilators and impersonation in the examination hall were seen to be fluctuating over the years. There was no leakage reported. However, mass cheating increased considerably in 2006 {1.206%}. Surprisingly, insult/assault on supervisor and invigilators nose dived. This could

be as a result of the unholy alliance between the examinees and the officials in the examination hall.

The total incidence shows that examination fraud in Nigeria is fluctuating with 11.17%, 6.86% and 7.19% for 2004, 2005 and 2006 {WASSCE report, 2007}. With this, there had been no permanent panacea to examination fraud in Nigeria. Any measure brought up to curb exam fraud would already have multiple strategies in the offing to foil it by the perpetrators.

### **Implication of examination fraud for the achievement of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria**

The achievement of Millennium Development Goals may be a mirage if the level at which examination fraud is perforating the reliability and validity of evaluation of learning outcomes in Nigeria is not checkmated. Education is the major factor that drives development of a nation. The functional development of a nation under siege of examination malpractice would usually be elusive. The alarming rate at which examination fraud is being perpetrated in Nigeria educational system is worrisome for the achievement millennium development goals.

The target of the world by year 2020 is the achievement of the eight goals which border on:

1. Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger.
2. Universal Basic Education
3. Gender Equality and Women empowerment
4. Reduction of Child Mortality
5. Improved Maternal Health
6. Eradication of HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Communicable Diseases
7. Development of Sustainable Environment
8. Ensuring Global Partnership for Development

The eradication of extreme poverty and hunger can only be realized when the citizenry acquire functional education. Functional education can be ensured when educational curriculum is followed and the evaluation of the skills acquired by students is not based on examination fraud. Basically, poverty and hunger eradication can be on the fast track when there is an improved politico-socio-economic development. These developments can be guaranteed when there is functional technological development which would consequently increase the per capital income and ultimately improve standard of living of the people. However, an increase in examination fraud in the educational system would only bring in backwardness in the development of the nation. Various professional are expected



to be skilful in their various fields but the reverse is the case where people acquire educational qualifications through fraudulent means. In this situation, professional quacks and impostors hold sway and consequently deepen underdevelopment hunger and poverty.

Education is the development of the man and the society. The global goal of education for all by 2015 is threatened by the spate of examination malpractices pervading the nation. The right values are being eroded in the society as young ones in the primary and secondary school are also very broad minded in the act of examination fraud. Young ones no longer think of gaining mastery of what is taught in the school but are openly busy on finding ways to pass the examination conducted at all cost. On the strength of this canker worm in the education system, the acquisition of the basic numeracy and literacy is heading for jeopardy. Hence, the achievement of the education for all by 2015, in examination fraud ravaged country like Nigeria, may be a Herculean task.

Quality education is the bedrock of development in information and communication. A guaranteed quality education could definitely enhance availability and use of information which may reduce communicable diseases, child and maternal mortality.

In all, implication of examination fraud for the achievement of Millennium Development Goals, in Nigeria is enormous. Effort should be geared towards the reduction of the scourge in our educational system so as to bring about quality learning and acquisition of skills for national growth and development. In a bid to strategize for reduced rate of examination fraud in the country and to enhance the integrity of our education, less emphasis should be placed on paper qualification but on efficiency in the disposition of skills acquired. This would give an overall assurance of quality delivery and acquisition of education and a resultant increase in our societal values and economic development.

The various laws on examination malpractices should also be vehemently enforced to actually punish culprits of the dastardly act, while serving as deterrent to others. Thorough supervision of the teaching-learning process should be carried out to ensure that students learn adequately and preparation for examination is vigorously done to allay fears of both students and parents.

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