

Full Length Research Paper

Curbing examination dishonesty in Nigeria through value education

Alice Arinlade Jekayinfa¹, E. O. Omosewo², A. A. Yusuf¹ and U. A. Ajidagba¹

¹Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin P.M.B.1515, Nigeria.

²Department of Science Education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

Accepted 06 December, 2010

Examination dishonesty is one of the most devastating and conspicuous forms of indiscipline in Nigeria. It has become a cankerworm in the Nigerian education system over the years. It has graduated from being an educational issue to an educational crisis. It has many forms, causes and consequences and the Nigerian government has tried on many occasions to put an end to it but to no avail. It is a hyper-dreaded monster which has to be curbed in the Nigerian educational system. This paper identifies the different dimensions, causes and consequences of examination dishonesty in Nigeria and how it can be curbed through the teaching of value education by given opportunity to students to reflect different values and the practical implications of expressing them in relation to themselves and others. Teaching them that values may vary from people to people and from culture to culture, but there are universally- accepted and cherished values such as honesty, integrity, openness and uprightness which they can imbibe. These set of universally- accepted values are recommended to be taught to children right from home, to the elementary, secondary, to the tertiary level of education in Nigeria. If this is done, there would be proper integrity in the systems of examination in Nigeria.

Key words: Nigeria, dishonesty, examination, value education, teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has suffered huge losses as a result of endemic corruption, which is evident in high crime rate and other indices of systemic social disintegration. The unhealthy incidents of fraud, embezzlement, bribery and forgery perpetrated by Nigerians at home and abroad have earned the country the status of a pariah nation in the international community. These corrupt practices, which started right from home to the primary and secondary school levels had stalled the development of the nation.

The development of a nation largely depends on the types of values that are cherished, vigorously pursued and applied by majority of its citizens. Although, values vary from place to place, from people to people and from one country to the other, there are universal values that are

recognized generally, and accepted in societies throughout the world. These include honesty, hardwork, justice and patriotism. Nigerian society has gradually relapsed in its adherence to laudable traditional values for which traditional societies of the pre-colonial era were known. Most of the traditional folklores and fireside stories contain lessons to be learnt in honesty, humility, charity to destitute and dedication. These values have been greatly eroded and many anti-social vices have emerged which are threatening to wipe out these cherished values.

Some Nigerian students in the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions are known to exhibit several unhealthy attitudes, which are reflections of a lack of moral integrity in the educational system. Such unhealthy attitudes include indiscipline, fraud and drug abuse. The most conspicuous indiscipline and devastating of these social ills in the Nigerian school system is examination malpractice. It has become a cankerworm in the Nigerian educational system over the years. It has graduated from

*Corresponding author. E-mail: aajekayinfa@yahoo.com. Tel: +2348033893206.

being an educational issue to an educational crisis. This monster has many forms, causes and consequences. Government and school authorities have tried to curb the occurrence of examination cheating but to no avail. Decisive measures should be taken to curb its menace. The thrust of this paper is to stress how examination dishonesty can be curbed through the teaching of value education.

Statement of the problem

Many educators and educationists such as Adekale (1993), Adeyinka (1993), Adesina (2006), Anwabor (2006), Bamwo (2006), Jekayinfa (2006), and Olasehinde (1993) have written on many aspects of examination dishonesty in the Nigerian education system. However, none of them has written on how to curb examination dishonesty through the teaching of value education. This paper has attempted to fill that gap.

Purpose of study

The general purpose of this paper is to discuss how examination dishonesty in Nigeria could be curbed through the teaching and learning of values education. Specifically, the paper discusses the following issues:

- (1) Examination dishonesty;
- (2) Dimensions of examination dishonesty in Nigeria;
- (3) Types of dishonesty perpetuated by students during examinations;
- (4) Various causes and consequences of examination dishonesty;
- (5) Steps taken by the government to curb examination dishonesty in Nigeria;
- (6) What value education connotes; and
- (7) Curbing examination dishonesty through the teaching of value education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- (1) What is examination dishonesty?
- (2) What are the dimensions of examination dishonesty in Nigeria?
- (3) What forms of dishonesty are perpetuated by students during examinations in Nigeria?
- (4) What are the causes and consequences of examination dishonesty in Nigeria?
- (5) What steps have been taken to curb examination dishonesty in Nigeria and how effective have such measures been?
- (6) What is value education?
- (7) How can examination dishonesty be curbed through value education?

The concept of examination dishonesty can also be referred to as examination malpractice or cheating during examination. Examination malpractice is embarked upon in order to obtain higher score or rating than the examinee deserves. Dishonesty in an examination setting is any activity carried out before, during or after an examination by a candidate or agents who could be parents, siblings or hired persons, aids, personnel of examination bodies or stakeholders like the school officials (examiners, invigilators and/ or supervisors) that distort the expected and valid outcomes of the examination (Anwabor, 2006). There are dimensions of examination dishonesty and they include those that occur before, during and after the examination. Each of these is explained below:

Dishonesty before examination

Examination dishonesty can happen before an examination is conducted. Dishonesty before examination undermines completely the integrity of the examination. Dishonesty before examination can include leakage of questions. This involves the granting of privy access to the contents of an examination either directly or indirectly to a candidate or a number of them or their agents. This is very serious in the sense that it renders all efforts irredeemably futile.

In this age of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), this type of dishonesty can be pervasive, covering a very wide scope of the examination. This type of question leakages does not give room for rescue intervention because live questions are usually targeted by dishonest syndicates. It completely erodes the basis of certification, which is learning and character. It also falsely confers honour on those that are not due for such honour.

Leakages of examination questions can occur from a number of sources. In public examinations, such sources include: The staffs at the production site, those who are responsible for the printing of examination questions, those who package examination materials, and those who convey the questions from the press to the examination centers because many of them have been implicated in matters of question leakages (Anwabor, 2006). In school examinations, examiners, typists and office assistants constitute major sources as questions are shown to favorable candidates for one kind of gratification or the other.

The preparation of answers, which candidates bring to the examination hall, is as a result of leakage of questions. Students who have privy knowledge of the examination, in addition to preparing answers on papers which they bring into the examination hall are known to write answer points on convenient parts of the body, covered with their clothes. Question leakages also can lead to students going to the examination venues ahead of the

commencement of the examination to inscribe answers on desks or take vantage seats in order to be able to receive undue assistance in the course of the examination. When these types of candidates are caught in the act of cheating/dishonesty; it constitutes a breach of the examination.

Another practice that is also common is for school officials (principals or proprietors) to be active participants in the examination dishonesty during public examinations. They can do this in several ways. It can be done through creation of "Miracle Centers" by school authorities who charge the students exorbitantly well above the recommended examination fees to secure the cooperation of examination officials so as to favour their examination centers thereby compromising the examination. School authorities in some instances have contracted out their examination centers to touts who perpetuate unwholesome acts of compromise of the examination hall. Some school authorities can hire subject specialists to solve leaked questions and the solutions are either dictated to the candidates in the examination hall if they had all paid the exorbitant charges, or a selected group of candidates hidden away in a private secured room. Also, school authorities, according to Awanbor (2006), are also known to have pooled money collected from students to desperately bootleg live questions from the production point. Leakages of examination questions have become a worrisome phenomenon because of the various ways this practice undermines the conduct of valid assessment of learning.

Dishonesty during examination

Examination dishonesty can occur at any stage of the examination process. Students and/or their agents after perfecting their pre-examination plans, come to the venue fully armed and ready to insult the integrity of the examination in a number of masterful ways. Researchers and educationalists such as Adesina (2006), Anwabor (2006), Banwo (2006), Solake (1997), Olaniyan (1997) and Olasehinde (1993) have written on a number of behaviors that are exhibited by students during examinations to cheat. Some of them are also listed by Jekayinfa (2006) and they are:

Giraffing

This is an act of sticking out one's neck to see another student's answer sheet.

Abracadabra

It is a method common in rural schools. It is a magic term

connoting that the more you look, the less you see. The students will use spiritual power so that when they go to examination hall with "foreign materials" which will be seen by members of the class excluding only the invigilator. Sometimes, they may use the same power to make the invigilator a living robot till the end of the examination.

Lateral connection

This is a sitting arrangement whereby the "bright" student is seated in the center flanked on both sides by other students.

Nothing-nothing

This involves the use of empty biro to trace information on a blank white piece of paper. Seeing this on the table, one would think there is nothing on the paper, but on closer observation, one would realize that the paper is well loaded with facts related to the examination.

Dubbing

This is when students copy in the examination hall either their partners' papers or the materials they brought into the examination venue.

Contract

This happens when a student's grade is influenced with the assistance of a friendly teacher.

Tattoo

This happens when a female/male student writes information on the tender part of his/her thigh where they can easily adjust to reveal the materials and can be cleared within a second when there is a problem (Samuel, 1995).

Rank xeroxing

This happens when a student collects and writes a colleague's answer word for word.

Computo

This involves the use of calculators, which have facilities for multiple entries. The invigilator may not know that it has such facilities; he may think it is an ordinary

calculator.

Missile catch

Represents answers written on a piece of paper, squeezed and thrown to a colleague while the examination is going on.

Swapping

Is an exchange answer booklets so that the bright student can write answers out for his/her colleague.

Tokens

Involves jotting of points on the mathematical set, razor blades, rulers, hankies and others of the like for referencing during examinations.

Sign language

Involves using fingers and sounds as coded for response alternative on objective tests.

Body aids

Involves jotting of answers on the underwears, underdresses or thighs for referencing during examination.

Mercenary service

Involves employing the service of another student to write the examination.

Table top

Is the writing anticipated answers on the top of a desk before the commencement of examination.

Cnn

Is the sharing of questions and answers between groups for eventual connection in the examination hall.

Time out

Is the act of going out to the 'toilet' to read up answers.

Direct access

Is an act whereby an examiner helps students during examinations.

Stroke

Is a situation whereby a student pretends to be sick during an examination in order to gain the examiner's sympathy while marking.

Post examination dishonesty

Examination dishonesty is not limited to examination time only. A lot of activities go on at short, medium or long-term range from the moment of examination, which impinge on the integrity of an examination. The following are some of the ways that cheating can take place after an examination:

- (a) Students tracing their scripts to the point of the marker and seeking to and/or successfully influencing their grades. This is common with schools examinations where cash and kind are freely exchanged for marks or grades.
- (b) Alteration of marks: this is a case where the initial score earned by a student is altered and raised in order to enhance the academic standing of the student.
- (c) In public and school examinations, some candidates even trace their results to the last point of call, that is, the computer rooms where marks are stored for final processing and grading. Anwarbor (2006), while elaborating on the wide spread nature and scope of post examination cheating, revealed that parents and/or school examination authorities go with cash in hand after examination have been written with a motive to influence the scores of their wards. He remarked that in some cases, mark sheets are blatantly mutilated, the scores altered to the bargained price and level in order to provide soft landing for the candidate in the quest for a brilliant certificate or selection into higher institution of learning.
- (d) Swapping of answer scripts: The answers written by the examination mercenaries are smuggled into the examination hall in replacement of the actual scripts. This, according to Anwarbor (2006), is the most violent means of dishonesty in an examination because of the unruly atmosphere created by the candidates and their agents to execute this plan.

Causes of examination dishonesty

Many factors have been reported to cause examination dishonesty in schools. These had been discussed in various dimensions by researchers such as Ipaye (1982), Adeyinka (1993), Olasehinde (1993), Adesina (2006),

and Banwo (2006). All these causes have also been highlighted by Jekayinfa (2006) to include:

Pressure to obtain good grades;

- (i) The fear of failure;
- (ii) Unpreparedness by students;

Too much emphasis on paper qualification;

- (iii) Desire to meet societal and parental expectation;
- (iv) Accessibility to question papers;

Leakages through teachers;

- (v) Inadequate time and facilities for study;
- (vi) Crowded work load;
- (vii) Unannounced tests;
- (viii) Poor instruction;
- (ix) Lack of supervision;
- (x) Pressure by peers to cheat;
- (xi) Unstimulating course materials;
- (xii) Inability to cope with schoolwork;
- (xiii) Lack of understanding of questions;
- (xiv) Lack of proper supervision;
- (xv) Questions not relevant to topic taught;
- (xvi) Too difficult examination questions;
- (xvii) Lack of confidence in one's ability;
- (xviii) Self-concept and lack of control on examination cheating;
- (xix) Indolence of teachers and students;
- (xx) Inadequate coverage of Syllabus/course study;

Poor counseling services; and the

- (xxi) Influence of peer groups.

In most of the studies conducted on examination malpractices in the Nigerian schools, there is a consensus that the two greatest causes of examination dishonesty were and still are the fear of failure and too much emphasis which the government and society attached to paper qualification.

Efforts made so far to curb examination dishonesty in Nigeria

The Nigerian government, in order to curtail the trends of examination dishonesty in schools has made some laws, some of which are:

- (i) Decree 27 of 1973 on the West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE) which prescribed 2 years jail term for offenders.
- (ii) Decree 20 of 1984 amended by Decree 22 of 1986.
- (ii) Decree 33 of 1999 which prescribed 21 years jail term for any offender.

All these penal codes made by the military have not been

implemented. No offender on record is known to have been tried under any of these decrees. It has been observed that the decrees/laws are too draconian, unreformative and hence, unenforceable. So, there is the need to curb examination dishonesty through some other ways like teaching of values education in Nigerian schools.

Curbing examination dishonesty in Nigeria through value education

Value is a predisposition to believe that something is good or bad. Values are determined by the belief people hold. They are ideas about what someone or group thinks is important in life. Values play a great role in decision-making. People express their values in the way they think and act (Lemin and Welsford, 1994).

Values are taught so that students can know in advance, the actions they can take in any given situation. Value education involves "educating for character" and for "moral values". It is the teaching of respect and responsibility to citizens for good character development and for the health of the nation. As pointed out by Dike (2005), "respect and responsibility are two fundamental moral values" that a society should teach its citizens. Other values are honesty, fairness, self-discipline, compassion, prudence and other democratic values. However, rule of law, due process, equality of opportunity, checks and balances and democratic decision-making are "procedural values". All these would enable the people to create a viable humane society and to act "respectfully and responsibly". Thus, taking responsibility for the things wrongly as well as the things rightly done is the way to move the society forward. Dike (2005) claimed that responsibility matters in all what people do.

There is increasing moral problems in the society (corruption, greed, violent crimes, political killings) and in Nigeria schools (examination dishonesty, drug abuse and other destructive behaviors) these behaviors, call for 'value education' in the schools which will spread to the larger society. Some individuals and institutions with morality problems are known to have 'aided and abetted frauds' during the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board Examinations (JAMB), the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO), examinations leading to the frequent cancellations of results. The Daily Independent of 22nd May, 2005 reported that in the past nine years, about 'five million' results have been cancelled.

Owing to the craze to obtain certificates from institutions of higher learning, many students have been involved in examination dishonesty and have been rusticated." Moral education' or values education is essential for the success of a democratic society. This is because, the people must possess the appropriate character to

build a free and just society and the moral foundations to make democracy thrive in the society where it had never been cultivated. Good character and values education must be instilled in people at an early age. Values education or good education consists of knowing what is good, desiring what is good and doing what is good. This should be instilled in the children right from the elementary schools.

People who have good character, according to Dike (2005) act truthfully, loyally, kindly and fairly without being much tempted (or pulled) by the opposite (forces to indulge in anti-development behaviors). Value education should be planned for by the curriculum developers so that the teaching of respect, responsibility and other moral values like honesty should be in the nation's schools curricula for good character development. The alarming rate of examination dishonesty in Nigeria, calls for the teaching of value education. Children and youth must not just be educated "to know" and "to do", they must be educated "to be and to live together (Jacques, 1996).

Quality education recognizes the whole person and promotes education that involves the affective domain as well as the cognitive. Values such as peace, honesty, forthrightness, dedication and diligence are cherished and aspired by the world over. Such values are the sustaining force of human society and progress. What children and youth learn is later woven into the fabric of the society. So, positive values should be passed on to school children so as to create a better world for all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Educators should give room for activities that actively engage and allow students opportunity to explore and experience their own qualities which are of crucial importance.
2. Use a child-centered approach, flexible and interactive session to make students engage in reflection, visualization and artistic expression to draw out their ideas.
3. Educators should create a value-based atmosphere in which all students can feel respected, valued, understood, loved and safe.
4. Allow students to think about and reflect on different values and the practical implications of expressing them in relation to themselves, others, the community and the world at large.
5. Inspire students to choose their own personal, social, moral and spiritual values and be aware of practical methods for developing and deepening them.
6. Let students appreciate that although values differ from people and vary from place to place, there are universal or generally accepted and cherished values in societies throughout the world which they should also imbibe. Such values are honesty, integrity, dedication and openness.
7. Educators are to utilize their own rich heritage while

integrating values into everyday activities and the curriculum. In lower classes and among children ages 6-14 years, most of our traditional folklores and fireside stories that contain lessons to be learnt on honesty, values of hard work, and social service to the community, should be made use of. Stories from modern African writers and stories that have their origin in the white man's culture which highlights universal values should be encouraged.

8. Let students be aware of possible penalties and sanctions against people who depart from the cherished values of the society.

9. Let students know what lying, stealing, dishonesty and so forth, amount to, and let them know that they should be regarded as wrong or immoral

10. Teach them "knowing how". This is what researchers called procedural knowledge, knowing how to do something. For example, "knowing to be honest involves knowing that if you find someone's purse, you should return it with money and all the things you found in it intact. In such an instance, that's how to be honest.

11. Students do need assistance in developing values "know how". Assist students to develop the values of "know to" This is the type of knowledge that leads to action. A person who "knows to" can be counted upon to do particular things in specifiable circumstances. If for instance, a student "knows to" be honest, he/she will not cheat even if he can get away with it, He/she will return lost and found belongings regardless of their value, and so forth (Clabaugh, 1999).

12. Educators should conduct themselves more decently because, generally, many students who "know that" honesty is the best policy, and "knowing how" to be honest still are dishonest. This is because the students need quantum leap from the "knowing that" and "knowing how", to "knowing to". The student can only develop "knowledge about values only when the important people in their lives live that way. The best way to really help students "how to" act more morally is for the educators to conduct themselves morally, to be people to be emulated and to be above board.

Each student is encouraged to achieve his or her potential in all respect and, through critical and creative thinking, to develop a broad understanding of his or her own values and world views.

Each student should have the opportunity to explore different values and personal value system; and acknowledge his/her own uniqueness and be encouraged to develop self respect and dignity. Each person has freedom of will, is responsible for his/her own conduct and should be encouraged to develop discernment on ethical issues and to recognize the need for truthfulness, honesty and integrity. Students should know that society has something to gain from every individual's life. They should strive to contribute good and not bad things to their society.

REFERENCES

- Adekale A (1993). Incidence and causes of examination malpractices among students of the University of Ilorin. *Niger. J. Educ. Foundations*, 4(3): 1.
- Adesina S (2006). Examination malpractices. The nightmare of the Nigerian educational system. Keynote Address at the national workshop on examination malpractice in Nigerian educational system organized by the African University Institute Imeko, Ogun State, 14-16th March.
- Adeyinka AA (1993). Examination Examined, the Nigerian secondary school system Inaugural Lecture April, 29.
- Anwabor D (2006). The nature and form of examination malpractices some measures towards its eradication". Lead paper presented at the National Workshop on examination malpractices in Nigerian educational system organized by the African University Institute, Imeko, mOgun State. March 14 -16th.
- Banwo F (2006). Examinations malpractice in Nigerian educational system.: The scope and implications on national development. Lead paper presented at the national workshop organized by the African University of Institute, Imeko, Ogun State, March 14th -16th.
- Clabaugh GK (1999). What is worth, knowing about values? <http://www.newfoundations.com/clabaugh/cuttingedge/values%20Education.htm>/retrieved 29/4/2008.
- Denji DT (1976). Curbing examination traumas in our higher institution of learning. *New Nigerian* June 12.
- Dike VE (2005). Values Education and National Development. <http://www.nigerianvillagesquare.com/content/view/0132/55>.retrieved 24/4/2008
- Ipaye JB (1982). Continuous assessment in schools, Ilorin, University Press, Ilorin.
- Jacques (1996). Learning: The Treasure Within, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty First Century, UNESCO publication
- Jekayinfa AA (2006). Examinations malpractice and the law: The Nigerian experience. in Segun Adesina and Lekan Adeniyi (Eds.); Examination Malpractices in Nigerian Education system. Lagos, Yemab Investment Limited Lemis M, Potts H, Welshord P (eds). Values Strategies for classroom teachers Hawthorn, Vic, and Australian Council on Higher Educational Research.
- Olaniyan JO (1997). Perception of examination malpractice in our system. *KONJOST*, 1(12): 2-3.
- Olasehinde FAO (1993). Cheating in examination in the University of Ilorin: Styles, causes and remedies. *Nigerian J. Educ. Foundations*, 4(3): 1.
- Solake AA (1997). Examination cookery in higher institutions of learning: Issues involved and solutions to the problems. *Educator*, 1(7): 1.