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## TOOLS FOR CURBING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES IN NIGERIA POST-BASIC EDUCATION: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND LIBRARY SERVICES PERSPECTIVE

Oresajo, N. Olasunkanmi, Oyekan, Opeyemi A & Adeniyi Akinwole  
Adetunji

National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, Ondo State,  
Email: [oresajo\\_nojeem@yahoo.com](mailto:oresajo_nojeem@yahoo.com), [oyekanope@yahoo.com](mailto:oyekanope@yahoo.com) [tunjiadeniyi68@gmail.com](mailto:tunjiadeniyi68@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:** Examination malpractices seem to be prevailing at all levels of education in Nigeria these days. Most of the stakeholders in education no longer see examination malpractices as an offence to examination ethics and conducts. It is rather seen as part of those things that must be experienced during examination period. However, in order to curb this menace (examination malpractices) there is need to address the standard of education at all levels of education especially the post-basic education. To do this, quality assurance in education and use of library effectively in education service delivery cannot be ruled out. Therefore, this study examined examination malpractices as concept, identify some of the causes and effects of examination malpractices, quality assurance as concept, need for quality assurance at the post-basic education and also looked into library services and its roles in enhancing quality assurance at the post-basic education. Conclusively, recommendations were made and this includes: There should be need for school community such as principals, subject teachers and Librarians to cooperate among themselves by introducing and inculcating into students the reading culture and habit skills: and the school administrators and government should mandate the schools time-table committees to include library period on the schools timetable at least a period per week.

**Keywords:** Quality Assurance, Library Services, Post-Basic Education, Examination Malpractices.

## INTRODUCTION

People do say that examination is not a true test of knowledge, thus it is used as pre-requisite for testing knowledge, capacity and skills in any field of formal education. It is used for selection, placement, certification and promotion among other purposes. Examination helps in measuring and observing the level of knowledge acquisition and understanding of the learners. It also helps the instructors to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the learners as they responded to questions asked as feedback. It assists the teachers to modify their methods, contents, techniques, and strategies of instruction. According to Fasasi (2009), examination is machinery, through which the extent of knowledge and skills acquisition are determined at each stage of education. The outcome of an examination is used as a basis for decision-making on the examinee's ability. The examinee is consequently awarded a certificate which could qualify him for admission into a school, promotion into higher level of educational institutions and employment opportunities. It could be observed these days that examination malpractice seems to be the order of the day especially at the post-basic education level. Post-basic education is the type of education designed for the children between the ages of 14 to 16 years old. In Nigeria, post-basic education covers the senior secondary school one to three (SSS 1-3). Learners are to spend three (3) consecutive academic sessions and at the end of the third academic session, external examinations are conducted by the external examination bodies, namely: West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO). At times it may be a matter of choice that is either WAEC or NECO or both as the case may be. Most often learners at this level of education will want to pass at all cause, in the sense that passing examination of WAEC or NECO will accord them opportunities of securing admission into tertiary institutions or being gainfully employed elsewhere. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) in the National Policy on Education (NPE) Section 3 Sub-section 35 referred post-basic education as; Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBECD).

The education children received after a successful completion of ten years Basic Education and passing of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate Examination (JAISCE). It includes: (i). Senior Secondary Education, (ii). Higher School; and (iii). Continuing Education given in Vocational Enterprise Institute (VEIs) to either Basic Education graduates who are not proceeding to Senior Secondary graduates that not proceeding to the tertiary level, as a means of preparing them for the world of work, wealth creation and entrepreneurship.

The policy document stated further the objectives of Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBECD) in Sub-Section 36 to include:

- a. Providing holders of the Basic Education Certificate and Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate with opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background;
- b. Offering diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, disposition, opportunities and future roles;
- c. Providing trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades;
- d. Providing entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance, and for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development;
- e. Developing and promoting Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of World's culture heritage;
- f. Inspiring students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence;
- g. Fostering patriotism, national unity and security education with an emphasis on the common ties in spite of our diversity; and
- h. Raising morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour.

However, Mishra (2011) attributed examination malpractices as any form of illegal and unauthorized assistance given to a single candidate or group of candidates in an examination. Saxena (2009) opined that examination malpractices are misconducts that ranges from leakages to an on orthodox help to a candidate by the invigilator or any other person which may give the candidate undue advantage over others. Jekayinfa (2012) posited that examination malpractices have become a cankerworm that portends grave dangers for the nation. Against this background, the current study worked on the concept of examination malpractices, post-basic education, quality assurance, the role of quality assurance and library services in curbing examination malpractices at the post-basic level of education

### **Concept of Examination Malpractices**

Examination malpractices can be attributed to any form of action taken by an examinee that goes contrary to the rules and regulations guiding an examination conducts and ethics. According to Akpotu (1998), examination malpractices are non-conformity with the guiding rules and regulations of examination. It can be seen as a conscious or a deliberate and sometime unconscious attempt by examiner and/or examinees to circumvent examination rules and regulations. Examination malpractice is a phenomenon which disturbs all the stakeholders in education –teachers, parents, Parents Teachers Association (PTA), Ministry of Education Officials, examination bodies like West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), National Teachers' Institute (NTI), Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), etc. This has seriously affected the quality of education in Nigeria, so much that some foreign institutions tend to derecognize the products of Nigeria educational system (Thomas, 2005 cited in Bala, 2012).

Jimoh (2009) remarked that the incidence of examination malpractice has become a widespread that there is virtually no examination anywhere at all levels and outside of the formal school system that there is no one form of sharp practice or the other. The

incidences of examination malpractice are common everywhere and every examination season witnesses the emergence of new and ingenious ways of cheating. Oredein (2008) opined that Examination malpractice is any wrong doing before, during or after any examination. Although one may not be able to rule out examination malpractice in the past, the current trend is alarming and calls for proper management in order to rid the school system of its consequences. Ruwa (1997) cited in Oredein (2008) traced back examinational practice to 1914. He further reported that in the University of Maiduguri, about 25% of the students interviewed admitted to have engaged in one form of examination malpractice or another. However, Oredein (2008) affirmed that examination malpractice occurs in both internal and external examinations. In short, it has become an epidemic in the nation's educational system, which needs a prompt attention. Fagbemi (1998) cited in Oredein (2008) postulated that examination malpractice had posed embarrassing situation to the nation that the Federal Military Government in 1984 promulgated Decree 20 to deal with it. Part of the Decree reads thus: Any person who fraudulently or with intent to cheat or secure any unfair advantage to himself or any other person or in abuse of his office, produces, sells or buys or otherwise deals with any question paper intended for the examination of persons at any examination or commits any of the offences specified in section 3(27) (c) of this Decree, shall be guilty of an offence and on conviction be sentenced to 21 years imprisonment.

Oredein (2008) further stated that examination malpractice Act 33 of 1999 revised the above decree but now stipulates punishment ranging from a fine of N50,000:00 to N100,000:00 and imprisonment for a term of 3-4 years with or without option of fine. This new development is due to the inability of the appropriate authorities to enforce the old Decree 20 of 1985. Despite all these laws, examination malpractice has been on the increase and this may be due to non-implementation of the laws. Reasons for it being the low moral standard in schools, candidates' fear of failure, lack of

confidence in themselves, inadequate preparation, laziness and '419' syndrome that have eaten deep into the life of the society. Pratt (1981) cited in Oredein (2008) stated that students are likely to cheat when they are not prepared for examinations.

Ruwa (1997) cited Oredein (2008) reported that university lecturers are of the opinion that inadequate teaching and learning facilities, poor conditions of service of teachers' fear of failure by students and admission of unqualified candidates into universities are responsible for examination malpractices. Fayombo (2004) cited also in Oredein (2008) categorized the reasons for examination malpractices into psychological and sociological causes. The over dependence on certification has led to 'mad rush' by the populace and the resultant effect is that people either acquire certificates legitimately or otherwise. This messy situation is having a negative effect on the nation's quality of education and the kind of certificates issued to students at different levels. Okwilagwe (2001) cited in Oredein (2008) opined that the interest in non-intellectual factors would seem to have stemmed from the idea that "the human being is a complex whole" That is, man is made up of intellectual, emotional, affective and psychological traits. For them to develop and reach their full potential in life, these traits must be understood, harnessed, and be catered for by the school. Students' involvement in examination malpractices has become perennial and institutionalized. It is a testimonial to the flawed process of admission into secondary schools and tertiary institutions. It has invariably, reflected in the multifaceted crises in the nation's educational system.

Okezie (1999) cited in Zachi (2009) identified the forms and types of examination malpractice that he also described such as the method called examination made easy:

- Students been aware of the examination before the actual examination time ahead of the others;

- Paying the supervisor, teacher to smuggle out the questions and provides answers the questions;
- Inflating marks for students by lecturers and teachers;
- Cheating when writing examination: this is one of the oldest methods of examination malpractice. There is 'giraffing' which has to do with the exchange of idea during examination by students by exposing their answer scripts for one another; and
- Mercenary/impersonation: hiring of students to write examination for another. This method involves hiring a senior or a more brilliant student than the person involved to sit for examinations in his place.

### **Effects of Examination Malpractice**

Examination malpractice place education on a dangerous foundation and creates a bad image for a nation that thrives on falsehood. It also distorts evaluation processes as the actual performance of students are not accurately measured and known. Incompetent students earn certificates and grades that they do not deserve. Examination malpractice may lead to wrong determination congruencies between performance and set objectives. Thus the goal of evaluation of education is therefore distorted. It gives unreliable characters that are evaluated thereby giving wrong information to the examining body in measuring the standard of education. Examination malpractice could lead to cancellation of examination results and this has devastating effects on the students that will have to rework the cancelled examinations. This could greatly affect their performance due to psychological trauma they will go through when retaking the examination causing confusion in the examination hall to facilitate entrance of prepared answers into examination hall. It could be in the form of group work, verbal exchange of ideas and giraffing due to proximity of text mates and over rowdiness, Ojikutu (1987).

## **Causes of Examination Malpractice**

Some causes are beyond the power of the school managers. In other word, this can be seen to be external factors, they includes:

- (1) The environmental tone of the communities where schools are situated hence school cannot exist in isolation. Whatever goes on in the communities will affect the school system. Nduka (1983) affirmed that the moral decadence of the youth of this country, the falling standard of moral education indicated by examination malpractice, indiscipline and students riots and the myriad of other moral ills seem tainted with reflections of the moral state of the society as a whole.
- (2) Government insensitivity to educational needs: According to Akpotu (1998) the Nigerian political system since independence has been characterized by inconsistency, instability, fraud, nepotism and all forms of political, social and economic malpractice. Hence corruption has been the bane of the Nigeria polities. Aluko (2007) also affirmed that Africa is a continent where in most cases, the least-able rule, while the most highly educated, the skilled and the best trained go into salaried employment, the mediocre or the college drop-out, or the soldier takes over the political machine which give direction to the whole society and determine the level of its scientific and technological utilization and advancement. This shows that when those who do not know the value of education is at the helms of affairs what is needed in the educational sector can never be released as at when due.
- (3) Parents and adult member of the society: In those days manual labour is part of education but now a day Nigeria parents behave that their children must not engage in manual work and must not suffer, parents go out to amass wealth leaving the children at home unguided, uncontrolled and without parental monitoring and care. Hence on the long run parents provide money for their children to buy live examination question. Therefore, the co-operation which the youth receive from the perpetuating examination malpractice further encourage and



teach the innocent young ones that the crude ways of obtaining certificate not minding the implication for the nation's economy, socio-cultural etc.

In other word, the causes of examination malpractices could be traced to include internally factors and these are:

- Attitude of students toward knowledge and skills acquisition when still at school.
- Not placing emphasizes on acquiring knowledge and skills from their teachers inform of instruction and orientation and/or from their seniors, parents, teacher and the society at large which justify the end means' hence they engage in all manner of must-conduct with little or no time devoted to serious academic pursuit.
- Teachers, teaching methodology: Ukeje (1986) opined that the teachers are the main focus of change and the anchor in the teaching-learning process indeed the main determinant of quality in the educational system. Therefore, teacher have important roles to play in the success or otherwise of any educational system. He further stated that today, our best brains cure our sick, design our roads and bridges while our poorest brains teach our youth. This statements bring about a state where teachers truancy, make the students imbibe the attitude of truancy. Teachers that have been pauperized by the emolument given to them and the financial inducement given to them by the students easily lieu them into examination malpractices.
- School facilities; the school building and school environment are often not catered for. The schools building of 1950s remain as they were more than 60 years without any improvement. The chairs, table and the toilet, office, teachers' staffrooms, poor school environment and poor infrastructure contribute immensely to poor teaching, poor academic performance and high rates of examination malpractice.

### **Inadequate Instructional Materials**

Inadequacy of instructional materials affects effective teaching and learning processes in our educational system. In most cases, teachers do teach in abstract and this often affects their efficiency negatively. These inputs (instructional materials) are essential elements for effective teaching and learning processes, where they were in short or no supply the delivery and the comprehension of the teaching and learning processes will be difficult. The resultant effect will be an encouragement of examination malpractice.

### **Incessant and Prolonged Strike Action and Low Teacher Commitment**

Incessant and protracted strike action of teachers and the students seat at home as a result of the strike, do contribute to factors affecting efficiency of education system. This strike actions and low teachers commitments have adverse effects on the nation's educational system and indirectly having a crush on the quality assurance in education.

### **Government Capacity and Finance**

Politics is a critical factor in supply and demand for education and it also affects the quality assurance in the educational system of any country. This is a truism because whatever aspect of education the government decides to fund, that aspect becomes priority for the society, with other areas being neglected. It is no longer news that the capacity of government to implement educational policies may be limited due to inadequate resources. This inadequacy is a function of inefficiency in quality assurance in educational system. The policy and the decision of the government and their implementation can contribute positively to examination malpractice by cutting corners around the inadequacy of the government in this area.

### **Concept of Quality Assurance**

Quality assurance is different from quality control. It is before and during the event process concern to prevent fault occurring in the

first place. Quality assurance is about designing quality into the process to attempt to ensure that the product is produced to a predetermined specification put simply quality assurance is a means of producing defect and fault-free products. According to Edward (2002) quality assurance is about consistently meeting product specification or getting things right first time, every time. Babalola (2007) defined quality as fitness to purpose in relation to the user and customer needs. It can also be taken to mean that the product confirms to standards, specifications or requirements. Bamisaye (1983) cited in Gbenu (2012) words quality may be defined as the sum of composite of the properties inherent in a materials product. Quality assurance in education on its own can be seen as relative term because what constitute quality education vary between country to country based on their economic resources, value system, educational goals and philosophies among others. Quality assurance in education improves the quality of the work force by raising the levels of its skills and efficiency. Quality assurance gives a nation access to the world's body of knowledge, hence the adoption and adaptation of the reigning technology to specific environment it facilitated. By and large the general outcome of quality education a progressive increase in productivity and efficiency. Quality assurance in education enables people to monitor the expressed potential capacities of educators and administrator. Gbenu (1998) cited in Longe (1999) puts learning environment and student's outcomes under the umbrella of quality of education, hence the graduates should be able to prove their worth by their level of performance in the competitive examination and other challenges that will confront them without any criminal help called examination malpractice.

### **Need for Quality Assurance in Post Basic Education**

The need for quality assurance in post basic school is paramount and it ensures quality of teaching and learning in curbing examination malpractice. For quality assurance to be used as a tool in curbing examination malpractice, Adegbesan (2010) opined that there is need for the harmonization of the internal and external criteria of

quality assurance raising standard of excellence of the educational system. Education is dynamic and full of professionalization of teaching in the country. To set a standard under which a qualified and well trained teacher must operate is highly imperative. Therefore, government should find educational institutions according to best practice in world over. Effective supervision should be put in place to make for check and balances. Poor supply and low quality of teaching staff limits the efficient of educational system in Nigeria. While adequate supply and highly competent qualified teacher in quality instructions and curriculum change brings about effective teaching and learning processes. A study conducted by Ajayi (1995) in the planning of secondary education in Oyo State from 1985 to 2000 revealed a short fall in the supply of teachers at the expense of the unprecedented increase in the students' enrolment in the state. Ajayi (1995) decried about the appalling products of training colleges, obsolete inadequate materials and equipment as well as lack of dedicated teaching staff as factors limiting efficiency of educational system.

### **Concept of Library Services**

The antecedent of library in Nigeria can be traced to 1879 when first library in the country was established and it was called town library. Thus, library services improve knowledge, studying and reading skills/habit. According to Metzger (1991) library are needed to enable the individual develop full potential and widen the perception, interest and skills. A library is organized for use and maintained by a public body and institution, a corporation, or a private individual, public and institutional collections and services may be intended for use by people who choose not to, or cannot afford to purchase an extensive collection themselves, who need material no individual can reasonably be expected to have. Libraries also provide the services of librarians who are experts at finding and organizing information and at interpreting information needs. Libraries often provide quiet area for studying and often offered common areas to facilitate group study and collaboration. Libraries do provide public and schools with

facilities for access to their electronics resources and the internet. Modern libraries are increasingly being redefined as plan to get unrestricted access to information in many formats and from many sources. (Wikipedia 2012).

### **Objectives of School Library**

Schools library objectives focus on functional approaches that will affect changes in students', teachers' and the community services. Ogunlade (1996) cited in Onanuya (2007) highlighted the following as the objectives of the school library:

- To stimulate and provide students in all phases of their reaching so that they may find satisfaction and enjoyments and growth in critical situations.
- To participate in school programme as it attempts to meet the needs of the school, teachers and students.
- To enhance the development of gifts, talents of pupils through independent reading.
- To help the teacher to stimulate and develop in the students imaginations and creative skills.
- To help the students to study independently, develop initiative and learn at their own pace.
- And lastly to stimulate reading habits. These objectives and a host of others are geared towards developing learners' personality and rising quality assurance in education through effective utilization of school libraries and their services.

### **The Roles of School Library towards Quality Assurance in Education**

School library being an instructional material centre, a learning resource centre play the following roles in post-basic education and also a tool for curbing examination malpractice. The school library could encourage both teachers and students to engage in a process of self-learning and independent inquiry. The library in any educational system should be the nucleus of the learning process and the hub of the school curriculum. Being a resources centre it plays a great role in

the learning process. Ajayi (1995) stated that a good library could help in promoting the development of teaching skills, providing a frame work for academic achievement providing students with vocations information and providing up-to-date materials. Furthermore, growth in school enrolment without a corresponding expansion in infrastructures, prominence in teaching could be shifted from formal to informal methods that lay emphasis on the need for the individual learner to learn by him/herself through the use of school library. Teachers teach students reading skills through the use of the library. For examples groups could be formed within the class and each can be asked to complete subject bibliographies on available books in the library collection, this will make the students familiar with books in the collection.

It also improves teaching and enhances competence of the teachers as well as making learning more meaningful, efficient and useful to the learner thereby by discouraging examination malpractice since the students themselves have what it takes to enter into examination hall with information they have already gather in the library. According to Zachi (2009) opined that reading could be said to be the gateway to knowledge and positive self-development of the reader. If reading develops a man and through reading a society is develop then it is an activity that deserves a very serious attention and patronage.

## **CONCLUSION**

Examinations are tools meant to appraise the degree or the extent to which students achieve set goals in our educational institutions, which makes paper qualification (certificate) to come to the front burner. It is quite unfortunate that most examination conducted in most of our schools is being greatly characterized by examination malpractices of different types, forms and degrees. This paper presented two strong means of curbing this menace called examination malpractice at the post-basic level of education. However, the library services could be of great help in the task of curbing examination malpractices to a minimum. To achieve this, the

parents, teachers, guardians, examiner and school administrators are to sensitize their students/children the significant of the library services in schools. However, if quality assurance in education as a tool of enhancing standard in post-basic education is well administered by the party concerns, this will go a long way in reducing the negative effect of the menace known and called examination malpractice. Therefore, the standard of education in Nigeria will have value at the international communities. Therefore, in this study the following suggestions stated below were recommended.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- There should be need for school community such as principals, subject teachers and Liberians to cooperate among themselves by introducing and inculcating into students the reading culture and habit skills.
- The school administrators and government should mandate the schools time-table committees to include library period on the schools timetable at least a period per week.
- Use of library should be an integral part of the curriculum as early as primary education. This should also drag feet in the post-basic education curriculum. This idea will enable the students at this level of education to appreciate the importance of library services and develop the habit of reading on their own.
- Governments and its agencies should put more efforts in upholding the international recommendation of 26% of the total budget of the nation to education, and states too should follow.
- Qualified teachers should be employed into schools and there should be training and retraining schemes, workshop and seminar for them to be able to grasps the latest methodology of teaching their students.

- Emphasis should be reduced on paper qualifications and encourage skills (what can you do) the do or die attitude of acquiring certificate will reduced.
- To uphold the quality assurance the inspectorate division of the educational system should be empowered and re-engineered towards constant monitoring of schools activities.
- Government should ensure that school libraries are well stock with relevant and current books that are in line with the current curriculum. If possible post-basic schools should have e-library facilities in place and functional 24/7.

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Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Oresajo, N. Olasunkanmi, et al (2017) Tools for Curbing Examination Malpractices in Nigeria Post-Basic Education: Quality Assurance and Library Services Perspective. *J. of Education and Policy Review*, Vol. 9, No. 4, Pp. 1-18

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