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EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE IMPACT ON GOVERNANCE

Edet J. Tom

and

Enefiok E. Ibok

*Department of Political Science
and Public Administration
University of Uyo, Uyo*

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Abstract

University education is sine qua non for development and for the preservation of the society and every person in it. Its end product is to enhance the achievement of human happiness and welfare of the society. Where university education is allowed to take normal course, it always leads to good governance. This work holds brief on the purpose of university education in Nigeria as well as on concepts of examination and examination malpractice. It assesses the forms of examination malpractice prevalence in Nigerian universities and the impact of such on governance. It argues that good governance will continue to elude the nation until examination malpractice is drastically reduced in the university system. Some suggestions on how to curb this social malady are proffered.

Introduction

Education is a process of developing or perfecting human being; It is to make man good. Many people both ancient and modern hold this view. They include Plato, Aristotle, Edward Blyden, Garvey and millions of others in Nigeria who impoverish themselves to ensure that their children are educated. Its end product is to cultivate the humanity of man by developing his special human excellence, both intellectual and moral, to enhance the achievement of human happiness and welfare of the society. The university education plays a strategic role in education of man through its lofty programmes and curriculum. Where this is allowed to take normal course it could lead to good governance and sustainable development. In Nigeria, however, examination malpractice has marred university education and has constituted internal assault on the academic process and has impacted negatively on good governance.

Governance refers broadly to the exercise of power through a country's economic, social, and political institutions in which institutions represent the organizational rules and routines, formal laws, and informal norms that together shape the incentives of public policy makers, overseers, and providers of public services. It essentially, consists of participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision.

Good governance flows logically from the concept of governance. According to Mohideen (1997) governance becomes good when it is operated in accordance with legal and ethical principles as conceived by society. Put differently, good governance is a normative concept by which society seeks to provide a guide

and direction to itself through standards and norms embedded in the governance idea (Adejumobi, 2004). The urge to steer state and society according to defined rules and procedures, and ensuring that governance in all its ramifications serves the interest of the greatest number of people in society through a collective, participatory endeavor is much linked to the type of university education one received. Its component parts are rule making and standard setting, management of regime structures and outcome and results of the social pact (UNECA, 1999)

These characteristics of good governance are to be radiated by elected and public officials who, most of them, often pass through university education. They include president, vice President, governors and their deputies, council chairmen and their deputies, legislators, commissioners, permanent secretaries, directors, accountants, auditors treasurers, board members, etc. Taking its root from the Platonic tradition of the past two thousand years, governance was, therefore, a moral business.

♣ **University Education: Its Purpose and Justification**

In Nigeria university education is planned to have the following as its objectives:

- Inculcation of national consciousness and unity.
- The inculcation of the right of value and attitudes for the survival of the Nigerian society.
- The training of the mind in the understanding of both the immediate and the remote world.
- The acquisition of appropriate skills, ability, and competence, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in, and contribute, to the development of society.

Deducing from the above stated objectives of university education, it is correct to say that university education, apart from influencing the scopes of self-realization, also enhances development of the faculties of mind, those powers of intelligence and imagination without which no intelligent work such as governance can be accomplished. In addition as Umoh (1984) observes university education seeks to develop free human beings who know how to use their minds and are able to think for themselves.

Further still, a good university education imbues the recipient with high moral standard and good behaviour (Tomori, 1984). This also meant that with good university education there would be no more corruption, bribery, nepotism, favoritism, victimization rigging of election, drug peddling, certificate racketeering, and examination malpractice, all of which make Nigeria sick onto near death and make good governance elusive. On the contrary, all of these would be swept away by honesty, fair play, fair dealing dedication to study, dedication to duty, high sense of nationalism and loyalty to the Nigerian nation, increased productivity, and strict adherence to other tenets of democracy. Above all, it will lead to good governance.

As Tomori (1984) opines, morality is the life wire of a nation. University was to be a 'factory' for the production of highly moral men and philosopher kings whose virtue is wisdom. University education did not mean training aimed almost wholly at passing examination. It was meant to equip the beneficiaries with skills and right attitudes towards good governance and national development. Perhaps it was in recognition of instrumental potency of university education for good governance that government white paper enumerated the purpose of university education as earlier listed.

Examination and Examination Malpractice

Examination is a test of knowledge. In educational system, examination is a sine qua non and is useful as a basis of assessment for grading, placement and certification (Onyekwellu, 2005). It enhances promotion from one level to another. As Inyang (2002) correctly contends, the quality in education is measured by the level or standard maintained in the proper administration of examination for certification. These objectives of the examination are at times obscured by a social malady called examination malpractice

Examination malpractice has been defined by many authors. Nenty (2001) sees examination malpractice as including anything that is done at any stage of the examination process to give some examinees an undue advantage over the others in the score or grade assigned to them, and in the use of such grade or score. Salami (1990) sees examination malpractice as an improper or dishonest act associated with examination with a view to obtaining an unmerited advantage. Oyekan (1996) seems to agree with Salami when he conceives examination malpractice as deliberate acts of indiscipline adopted by students or their privileged accomplices to secure facile success and advantage before, during or after administration of test and examination. This includes leakage or untimely giving out of items of test or of examination paper, copying or cheating during examination, any examination related misconduct and dishonesty like favoritism, or aiding and abetting, cheating when handling examination documents, administering examination and when scoring examination scripts. Broadly speaking, examination malpractice is any act done to influence the score and grade one obtains from examination in order to gain an undue advantage.

In primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions in Nigeria various dishonest methods are being employed by individuals sitting for examinations just to ensure that they pass. These methods include using pieces of paper containing answers, copying from the individuals sitting next to one in the examination hall, obtaining answers to the questions before the examination date, using telephone text messages to receive answers while writing examinations, or even writing answers on some unscrupulous part of the body. Some individuals even registered for the examinations and then pay others to sit for the examinations for them.

Evidence and causes of Examination Malpractice in Third World Countries

Writing about integrity of examination in developing countries, Greaney and Kellagher (1996) indicated that forms of malpractice have increased perhaps due to importance of public examination along with deterioration in administrative efficacy and ethical standard. Similarly, according to Schab (1991), the practice of cheating in school examination has increased over the past 30 years however, not much research has been directed towards this phenomenon which everybody recognizes as a serious problem and its effects on good governance. Concurring, as it were, with Schab, Nenty (2001) asserts that news on examination malpractice is a regular feature in newspapers, radio and TV broadcasts across Africa. He concludes by observing that all these contribute to a serious demeaning of the relevance and appropriateness of assessment in African education, and the quality of educational certificates. Apart from these, the belief in examination malpractice tends to have significant influence on both the cognitive and behaviour of the learners.

Nenty (1987) in his analysis of the social background to cheating during examination, held the value and reward systems of the society to blame. Though the society heightens every learner's need to succeed, it discriminates in providing every child the opportunities needed for success. While much of the wealth is concentrated in

very few hands, the little that is left is open for serious competition by a large majority of population. According to Anderman and his colleagues (1998), when adolescents learn in an environment that stresses competition and grades, it tends to be natural for some students to see cheating as means of survival in such context.

For example, differential and discriminatory provision of curriculum facilities and quality staff across schools whose students are expected to succeed in the same examination, social maladies like corruption, sectional and ethnic injustice, political favoritism, influence peddling, religious hypocrisy, and general social and academic deprivations are seen as the underlying social factors that influence cheating. Given the presence of these maladies, students do not tend to feel any guilt about cheating. Nenty (1987) concludes that, "In an 'every man for himself,' 'dog eats dog' and 'winner takes all' society like ours, the 'expectation to succeed at all cost' puts a lot of pressure on the learner." The society directly or indirectly exerts a lot of pressure on the child to succeed at school even under extremely deprived conditions. Partly as protest against this condition, and partly in order to succeed, the student is driven to cheat in examination especially when his fate depends on the result of such an examination.

Concurring, as it were, with Nenty Rogosin as quoted by Hurlock,

We cannot continue to tell children that "honesty pays" and then hummer at them "don't be a failure". Something is bound to crack – putting a premium on acquiring high marks, and then assuming that resistance to temptation will automatically take place because of generalized trait of honest, is to fly in the face of available scientific information and evidence. Honour system of the kind or another cannot be said to exist in a vacuum.
(Hurlock, 1968:584).

Furthermore, in a society where there is abundant evidence of affluence attained by few, mostly through cheating and corruption, the frustration arising from some people's inability to satisfy their very basic human needs like food, cloth and shelter encourage the tendency to cheat (Nenty, 1987).

Similarly, Biehler (1978) argues that there is a tendency to cheat in every human being mostly where corruption is rife. Almost everyone, when the pressure is extreme and given intense competition, would cheat under the afore-stated conditions. While some people will cheat most of the time, few will hardly ever cheat; but practically, every one has a 'breaking point'.

Theoretical Issues

The explanation for examination malpractice is offered by Lefrancois (1972) and Nenty (1987). These scholars contend that all forms of behaviour whether desirable or undesirable like cheating during examination are mostly learned. That all living organism exist in relation to some environment which act, on, and interact with them and in the process modify their behaviour, that behaviour that brings satisfaction tends to be repeated whereas those that do not bring satisfaction tend to be discontinued.

Lewinian theory as propounded by Lewin (1936) contends that each individual has a life space consisting of persons, his goal, the path to these goals, and the relative attractiveness of competing goals, as well as the barriers that impede

one's progress toward them. At any given time, the individual's choice of action is determined by the attractiveness of the goal underlying his action, and the strength of the respective barrier separating one from each goal. If, to a particular individual, two goals are incompatible, for example, the maintenance of the society's moral value, and passing a very crucial and important examination, the tendency is to choose to attain the goal with the thinner barrier. Apart from the fact that the maintenance of the society's moral value looks very remote to the students, especially in a society where one's life single act of honesty might not lead to the achievement of his immediate important goal – getting a certificate, earning a promotion, or gaining an admission into an institution for further studies. Hence the individual tends to go for the 'easiest' and achievable and what to him is the most important and personal goal.

Examination Malpractice in the University System and Its Impact on Governance

In the Nigerian University system, examination malpractice takes different forms. Collusion among candidates is one of the forms of examination malpractice. This involves exchange of scripts and smuggled materials among the examinees. 'Giraffing' and dubbing constitute other forms of examination malpractice. Here the student involves in cheating, elongates his neck to enable him copy from other students who may or may not be willing to cooperate with him. Sorting is also a form of examination malpractice in which a course lecturer collects money or indulges in sexual gratification with a female student which is euphemistically known as 'sleeping' for specified marks whether or not the student has taken an examination in the course. At times the lecturer will have an agent or agents who, depending on grades needed, collect certain amount from students within the campus or outside the campus.

Leakage is another form of examination malpractice which is rampant in the university system and involves removing of life question papers and circulating them before or during the examination or having the pre-knowledge of what is to be examined. Besides these, other forms of examination malpractice which is common in the university is abetting. Here the supervisor or invigilator connives with the student who involves in examination malpractice either by providing the student with examination related materials or by hanging around the axis where the student is sitting to bar other invigilators from that area through impression that somebody is there. This action at times, takes dimension of collecting smuggled materials from one cheater to another cheater whom the invigilator has abetted.

Impersonation is a serious form of examination malpractice which is very rampant in the university system. The examinee hires another person to take the examination for him. At times the examinee will enter examination hall and collect examination materials to create impression that he has taken the examination. At the end of the examination, based on condition pre-arranged, he may not or may pass the answer script to the invigilator with fake particulars. Recently the use of electronic has been adopted by the cheaters. With advent of mobile phone, the use of electronic to cheat in examination in the university is common. The examinee copies into the handset the areas he suspects will be examined or if leakage has occurred he types in the points, retrieves and uses them during examination. There is yet another form of examination malpractice known as 'camouflage' which mars university education. This method is the latest and very difficult to detect. Here the cheater uses either handkerchief or class admit card with examination related points written on it, and copies from it.

'Fooling out' has been used by cheaters for sometime now. The examinee goes out from examination room with or without permission in pretext of going to ease himself and then uses the opportunity to glance through textbooks or lecture notes and grasps some points that will be useful to him when he gets back to examination hall. 'Labeling' is another form of examination malpractice identified by Onyekwelu (2005) as being common in the university system. The labeling may be done on the desk where the examinee may sit or on the part of the body of the examinee such as laps and palms. Labeling on the lap is more common among female examinees who believe that the male invigilators will not insist on checking their laps. The labeling can also be done on the flaring cloths worn by the cheater. Labeling is a process where the examinations related materials are copied on a hidden but convenient position to the examinee for copying during examination. At times rubber band is used in tying the materials onto the body or other objects. Mathematical set is also veritable tool to hide materials for cheating. Examination materials are in the same vein hidden in the rolled sleeves of shirt, behind the belt, or inside the socks. Examination related materials are also at times rapped in a handkerchief and used at convenience.

Examination malpractice, mostly in the university system as examined here in this work has very serious implications on good governance, social justice as well as for the effectiveness of human development effort through education. It poses a dangerous threat to the very social thinking that gave rise to examination in the first place. According to Greaney and Kellaghan (1996), the concept of equity and meritocracy which are cornerstone for good governance are closely tied to the institution of examination. In imperial China, a prime consideration was that 'all-important business of government must not be left to the accident of either birth or wealth' (Hu, 1984). According to the same source, this philosophy underlined the introduction of examination to European and other countries:

The principle of equality implied that all citizen would be in position to compete (fairly) for qualification, employment, and wealth, and that advancement would be based on demonstrated achievement in schools and examination.

With examination malpractice, this principle tends to give way to a system in which ability to cheat during examination determines, for very many people, the quality of their academic credentials, and hence who is qualified, who is employed, who has the wealth and who runs the affair of government. It has rid the society of the ability to separate the 'seeds from the chaffs' in human development efforts and to build its future on proven solid human intellectual foundation.

However, where the officials who are supposed to be foundation for good governance were those who practiced examination malpractice when they were students good governance remained detestable to them and elusive to others. Once one involves in examination malpractice, it encourages indolence and acts as a brake upon his ability, it discourages that deeper sense of individual responsibility which must be ready in a period of active reconstruction to accept obligation and fulfill trust. Above all, it retards productivity which is sine qua non for good governance (Nkrumah, 1972).

Examination malpractice in the university makes the university education to produce citizens and leaders who cannot exercise their political liberty responsibly instead they use it to steal from and cheat the nation as many Nigerians do today. Plato sees education as the positive means by which the ruler can shape human nature in the right direction to produce a harmonious state. If citizens are well educated Plato opines, they will readily see through the difficulties that beset them and meet emergencies as they arise and improvement is possible. Without good university education leaders grumble when difficulties beset them.

Recommendations

Recruitments of lecturers must always be based on merit as well as on the moral background of the recruits. Quality teaching and intensified effort to cover examination syllabus can restore confidence on the part of examinees. Lecturers must assume impersonal orientation when invigilating examination. This will curb contempt arising from cordiality and reduce favouritism.

Provision of adequate infrastructure such as classrooms, desks and well assigned library in the university system for effective teaching and learning process is necessary.

Enlightenment campaign on the evils of examination malpractice must be carried out and be made a permanent feature of orientation for freshers.

Only those who are successful in aptitude tests conducted in a very strict condition should be admitted and those caught on the act of examination malpractice must be rusticated or appointment be terminated and be handed over to law enforcement agents for prosecution.

The Deans and Heads of Departments should take as a point of duty to undertake routine checks to see what is going on in the examination halls.

Better remuneration is recommended for lecturers and reward system must be instituted for those with good moral and academic records.

Appointment of individuals to political positions and nomination of individuals to contest for political posts must always be based on his/her records when he /she was a student. Those found to have involved in any kind of examination malpractice should not be given chance to serve.

Conclusion

Examination malpractice is a social cancer that seeks to destroy university system. It has impacted negatively on the standard of education and made good governance elusive. All hands must be on deck to check this social malady. It is only when university education is served from this hydra headed monster called examination malpractice that the system will produce philosopher kings that will guarantee good governance. This work maintains that good governance will continue to elude the nation until examination malpractice is drastically reduced in the university system.

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