

Engaging Social Studies Education as a means for Reducing Examination Malpractice

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ABSTRACT

The ever increasing incidences of examination malpractices and the problem associated with the conduct of examination in Nigeria calls for a thorough review and an innovative way of conducting examination, this article is to look at social studies education as a curriculum design to curb examination malpractice in Nigeria. The alarming rate of increase in examination malpractice in Schools calls for concern from all stake holders in the education sector. The incidence of examination malpractice is multidimensional in nature and cut across all levels of educational institutions. Education is seen as instruction or training by which students/young people learn to develop and use their mental, moral and physical powers for development. Examination mal-practice plants the seed of unethical values in the fertile minds of students. Giving this monster free reign amounts to supporting an enabling environment whereby future leaders, doctors, civil servants, bankers, politicians, accountants, journalist and professors are forged on the fraudulent foundation of examination mal-practice.

Key Words: Examination Mal-practice, Social Studies ,Education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The growing menace of examination mal-practice in our schools is becoming worrisome and disturbing phenomenon day after day. The problem is not peculiar to a particular level of education rather it pervades all educational facets in Nigeria. The derogative falling in our educational standard is becoming uncontrollable; the pollution of our education by both stakeholders and students is now pointing towards the wrong directions and our dependency on external technology result from our inability to purge out this menace. Nigerians known with the emphasis on certificate orientation, this will gradually kills our technological development. Although, there are effective strands of social studies education programme, thus in it's skills, abilities objective, attitude and values orientation, and citizenship education we can stem examination mal-practices and misconducts. Examination remains the best tool for an objective assessment and evaluation of what students have achieved after a period of schooling. Hence any action that undermines examinations poses a great threat to the validity and reliability of examination results and certification.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLERIFICATION

Examination malpractice is any act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of, before, during or after any examination fraudulently secure any unfair advantage for himself or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulations to the extent of undermining the validity, reliability and authenticity of the examination (Examination Act, 1999). Examination malpractice can be defined as all forms of cheating which directly or indirectly falsify the ability of the students, inside an examination hall, that involve him/her in any illegal examination related offences. It ranked as one of the most dangerous problems of any society (Onyechere, 1996). The national council for social studies (2010), opined that Social Studies is an integrated studies of the social science and humanities to promote civic competence. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of culturally diversified, and democratic society in an interdependent world. In this way, students should be helped to construct a personal perspective that will enable them to explore emerging events that is persistent or recurring issues, considering their implication for self, family and the community.

The committee of primary school Social Studies programme in Nigeria in NERC (1980) in Ololobou, Kadiri & Celestine (2007) defined Social Studies as: Those common learning of man's interaction with its social and physical environment it is not only a study but a way of life of how man influences and is influence by his physical, social, political, economic and cultural environment. Ololobou et'al (2007) define Social Studies as the study of man in his totality. It draws from a variety of sources to relate the individual to his social environment developing the right attitudes, values and abilities to help him grow to become a responsible citizen capable of performing his civic and national obligations. The new Lexicon Websters' Dictionary (2010) of the English Language define education as "Instruction or training by which people (generally young), learn to develop and use their mental, moral and physical powers" The three key words are mental, moral and physical powers. When you abandon the rigors of study and depend, instead on fraudulent method to pass examinations, you are not developing your mental powers. Adams & Amao (2010).

"Examination defined as a formal test of somebody's knowledge, skills or ability in a particular subject especially by means of written questions or practical exercises. Examination mal-practice on the other hand constitutes an offence under the Act 33 of 1999 constitution. It bodies established by government to conduct examination in public schools at various levels, and to ensure the credibility of the results.

3. EXAMINATION MAL-PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

An examination which can be in essay or objective form, oral or written, theory or practical, constitutes an integral part of the education. It is conducted in order to determine the extent to which knowledge and skills have been acquired. As an instrument for decision- making, examination is always prone to fear and anxiety. Examinees would want to pass the examination by all means. Also many school authorities and parents would want to explore all means of getting good grades for their students and children. Hence, they resort to different forms of examinations (Fasasis, 2006). Examination mal-practice is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, as well as indeed in any part of the world. The first examination mal-practice in Nigeria was reported in 1914, when there was a leakage of question paper into the senior Cambridge Local Examination, others trace the origin of examination mal-practices to the wave of cancellation of Nigeria candidate paper in 1948; the most pronounce mal-practice in Nigeria was that of 1964 that was tagged "Expo" (Oladope 1997) (in Olushola 2010). The incidence of examination malpractice in Nigeria has become so wide spread that there is virtually no examination anywhere at all levels and outside the formal school systems that there is no one form of sharp practice or the other. Every examination season witnesses the emergence of a new and ingenious ways of cheating. The alarming rate of increase of examination malpractice has been described as a global issue (Awanbor, 2005). The value system in Nigeria has broken down completely and so adults and youth act without moral scruples.

This is the reason why the menace (examination malpractice) still thrives unabated despite its grave consequences on the social, political and economic structures of the nation (Olatunbosun, 2009). The phenomenon of examination malpractice seems to be aggravated by the large scale and shameful involvement of dishonest and greedy teachers, school heads, parents and all those who take part in examination malpractice (Ijaiya, 1998). The prominence assumed by this malady in junior secondary schools has become a source of concern to stakeholders in the education industry. According to Olusola (2010), the growing menace of examination mal-practice in our school is becoming worrisome and disturbing phenomenon day after day the problem is not peculiar to a level of education, rather it pervades all educational facets in Nigeria, Primary, secondary, tertiary and other professional institutions of learning. Thus in this regard social studies education has the mandate of the inculcation of the right type of attitude and values towards effective citizenship, and National Consciousness.

Exam malpractice has created menace in our higher institution of learning; it has caused low integrity and respect among academicians. Among the various way of solving this menace is through social studies education being the only social subjects that teaches ethics, value, Norms and beliefs of standard approval which can be relied on, due to the high prevalence of examination mal-practice caused by over reliance on certificate, this could only be solved in collaboration with various stakeholders in education, government parastatals, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), and parents. The issue has grown into different level of momentum which only a concerted effort can reduce as widely reported by Onyechere (1996) and Olushola (2002). It is an open fact that nothing poses a great threat to all educational problems in Nigeria than the issue of examination mal-practice in our schools. It is on this note, that the researcher felt it necessary to investigate how of Social Studies Education Programme can reduce of Examination Mal-Practice among Students of all school levels and other stakeholders.

Udoh (2011) described examination malpractice as a national emergency situation that requires urgent attention. The poor and declining academic performance of students in Nigerian schools owing to examination malpractice is becoming alarming that the achievement of educational goals is endangered (Ukpepi & Ndifon, 2012). The introduction of the global system of mobile telephones (GSM) in the country has revolutionalized examination malpractice in the school system. The emergence of technological devices has spawned new and more sophisticated approaches to dishonest conduct during examinations. A lot of academic information is stored in handsets and other gadgets like the MP3s and smart phones for direct use in examination halls or for onward transfer via SMS to other students anywhere in the country. Examination malpractice is a social evil that can damage society to the extent of possibly leading to a failed state. It has serious economic, political and social consequences (Aminu, 2006).

3.2 Forms of Examination Malpractice

These are the different patterns, types, categories or classifications of examination malpractice. The following have being identified as the different forms of examination malpractice; leakage, external assistance, smuggling of foreign materials, giraffe, improper sitting arrangement, ghost centres, illegal collection of money by teachers, collusion, impersonation, forging of CA, inflating scores by staff or teachers, copying from textbooks (Shenekon, 1996; Omooba , 2008).

4. CAUSES OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

The causes of examination malpractice among junior secondary schools in Nigeria are numerous. Several scholars have put forward major causes. Omooba (2008) classified the causes of examination malpractice into psychological, sociological and economic factors. Psychological factor deals with ill preparation by students for examination either as the result of laziness, fear or absenteeism. Bello and Madaki (1997) cited by Omooba (2008) emphasised that unpreparedness create lack of confidence in students' abilities to pass their examination thereby resulting to cheating. Increase in number of students' enrolment was hardly matched by a corresponding provision of facilities and teachers.

Also, the use of inappropriate teaching method which affects teacher's delivery of subject matter and thereby giving little or no room for the development of formal reasoning patterns in students and these make the students unprepared psychologically and cognitively for examination and consequently, students resort to cheating in order to pass. While Social factor involves a situation in which the acceptable ways of doing things is thrown away to the dogs. Obagah (1995) cited in Obasohan (1998) opined that people no longer strive for merits through genuine means but by fraudulent practices. That the society places more emphasis and premium on paper qualification and carelessness about how the certificate can be secured. Economically, Ogiri (1998) was of the view that Nigerians today are worshippers of money. This was why those in charge of examinations were blindfolded with money by candidates. The shift on societal value from moral rectitude to wealth at whatever means coupled with the dwindling economic fortunes of teachers are also some of the causes advanced for examination malpractice (Omooba, 2008).

Ladan (2003) attributed the high increase of examination malpractice to general apathy and continued moral decline within the society, lack of disciplinary control over teachers and non-teaching staff, difficulty in prosecuting examination malpractice offenders, corruption by security agents. Other factors responsible for examination malpractice stipulated by Fagbuyi (2012) include: irregularities in the conduct, administration of examination and lack of adequate preparation by examination bodies, lack or insufficient examination materials and question papers and leakages of examination questions. Fagbuyi (2012) further stressed that examination malpractice is aided by examination officials, parents, staff and students of schools and staff of examination bodies. There were various instances where parents and guardians encouraged their wards to cheat by going to the examination centres to pay for assistance during examination and in some areas, parents arrested for writing examination for their wards.

Denga and Denga (1998) asserted that parents, guardians, community leaders and teachers are guilty of collaborating in one way or the other to aid and abate examination malpractice. The author further said that rich parents often dangle money on teachers and pressurise their children to pass with good grades. Also, that guardian does parade the examination premises winking and whispering and desperate to help their wards to do well. It can be deduced from the above views, that parents and guardians' pressure on their children to do well and the act by giving money to teachers can influence students to cheat their way out and consider cheating as the right thing to do.

5. RELEVANCE AND EFFICACY OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN CURBING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE.

It is imperative to note that social studies is a discipline which deals with man's interaction within his environment and the people around him. It deals with people who have various problems and are striving in order to improve their living conditions. However, social studies is not limited to just academic processes but also inculcates the right types of values, skills and attitudes needed for functioning and survival of the individual and the society. It is a subject that asks questions, raises issues, faces problems, and identifies realities of life (Isyaku, 2012). Therefore, through the knowledge of social studies, students understand their environment and the social problems existing within their environment and attempt to proffer solutions to such problems, for instance, examination malpractice, cultism, human trafficking, prostitution, drug abuse, and corruption (Ololobou, 2004).

Social studies deal with the process in which a child learns the norms of his/her society (socialisation). Significantly, social studies aid the child to acquire the desired knowledge, attitude and skills that would help the child to be responsible and impact the society positively through total abstinence from examination malpractice. The knowledge of social studies is adequate to reshape and transform those who engage in examination malpractice to become diligent and committed to their books. Social studies education is about man and his activities in the society. As a unified and integrated subject, it utilizes the systems approach in tackling social problems and vices like examination malpractice.

It corrects the inadequacies of the individual and society and strives to instil in learners social attitude and values such as godliness, respect, obedience, open- mindedness, integrity, uprightness, honesty, loyalty and ethical behaviour among other virtues. It rises generation of individuals such as students who can think for themselves. Social studies develop in the individuals the capacity to learn and acquire skills, abilities and competences, both physical and mental, as equipment for the individual to live and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society (Ololobou, 2004).

The knowledge of social studies will equip the students to be self reliant and independent so as to enable the student contend with challenges of examination malpractice and it will form the foundation for continuing education. This will help eliminate the issue of cheating and any other wrong during examination. Through social studies education students obtain knowledge of the past which will help them to shape the present and predict the future. Social Studies is scientific in nature because it embraces innovations and critical thinking. Imperatively, it will help develop students' positive attitude towards scientific and technological innovations instead of relying so much on certificate oriented based education (Ololobou, 2010). This will help broaden the horizon of the students and discourage students from examination malpractice. Social Studies equip students with basic skills and good social habits to fit into the society. It means, the learner will possess all the required attributes needed to live within the society.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Conclusively, this article allighs with the social studies objectives at the post primary educational level which aimed at developing the student's capacity to learn and to acquire skills essential to the formation of a satisfactory professional life (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998).Credibility of examination in junior secondary schools will be guaranteed if social studies curriculum is effectively implemented. This will help reduce examination malpractice plaguing the education industry in Nigeria and will also go a long way to improve and transform student's attitudes and approaches toward examinations.

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