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QUESTION

You were taught that in writing an academic essay, you should start with the perception of a problem. Perceive a problem in your present environment and formulate a researchable topic for it.

EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE:

 CAUSES AND EFFECT ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

The importance of a proper education cannot be overemphasized; it is a basic necessity for us to achieve our fullest potential. In the world today, a lot of vices have taken root and while importance is placed on some of these vices, the others are often ignored and they are eating at our very foundation. The sooner we put our affairs in order and try to eradicate these vices, the better for us. Education being a means of teaching and learning is evaluated through examinations at the end of the learning period. Examination not only serves as a feedback for the trainer to ascertain the level of knowledge acquisition but also serves as a measure of knowledge retention by the trainee and so, any misconduct or irregularity that disrupts the feedback mechanism, will give a false outcome of the learning process. This misconduct or irregularity can be called examination malpractice.

The common belief on certificates as the only yardstick to measure ones qualification has led many Nigerians into buying educational certificates to prove their academic worth. Examination malpractice in Nigeria is as old as the country herself. According to *Anzene, 2014; Uzoigwe; Onuka and Amoo,* examination malpractice was first reported in Nigeria in the year 1914, when the question papers of the Senior Cambridge Local Examinations were reportedly seen by candidates before the scheduled date of the examination. The Examination Malpractice Act (1999) explains examination malpractice as any form 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 rule and regulations to the extent of undermining the validity, reliability, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificate issued. Examination malpractice tends to confer undue advantage or undeserved grades to the perpetrators of the act. Also, it may not only be committed by candidates but also by other bodies charged with the responsibility of examination management.

Examination malpractices are common everywhere and every examination season witnesses the emergence of new and ingenious ways of cheating. They include; collusion among candidates themselves and between them and examination officials which occur when candidates writing the same paper copy from each other and when examination officials leak examination materials to students, parents, etc. Another form of examination malpractice is impersonation which occurs when another candidate or hired mercenary sits for an examination on behalf of the genuine candidate. Another form of examination malpractice is ‘giraffing’ which takes its name from the African animal with a long neck. It occurs when a candidate stretches out his neck as long as possible to view and copy what a fellow candidate has written down for a given question. It is one of the oldest forms of examination malpractice. Other forms of examination malpractice include the use of coded sign languages by some candidates, exchanging of answer booklet for note comparison, bribery, intimidation or assault on examination officials, inscription, etc.

Many reasons have been said to be the cause of the prevalent cases of examination malpractice. Petters and Okon (2013) identifies the causes to include fear of failure, craze for certificate, desire of parents to have their children in choice professions and university, pressure on students to pursue courses in which they have no aptitude, pressure on teachers who want to gain favour of students and overcrowded sitting arrangements. George and Ukpong (2013) links the increasing rate of examination malpractice to poor teaching, ineffective preparation by students, ill-equipped library facilities and dubious admission policy. Akaranga and Ongong (2013) view the cause of examination malpractice to parental upbringing. They opined that because of social status and economic ability, most parents are easily persuaded to bribe their way through for the sole success of their children and self gratification. According to Ejimogn (2001) cited in Nsisong (2011), general moral decadence and the high premium placed on achievement and certificates by Nigerians has in recent times spawned examination fraud. The overdependence on educational certificates as a measure of one’s knowledge and competence has led to a mad rush by most people for educational certificates through unethical means. The CWO Voice (2010) links examination malpractice to the following factors: rapid growth and demand for education in Nigeria, poor teaching and learning environment, lack of well equipped teachers who do not have the necessary pedagogy to impart the contents to the learners, lack of viable teaching materials/equipment like standard laboratories, libraries and other things. Other causes are laziness of students, poor study habits, peer pressure, etc.

Undoubtedly, examination malpractice has been a social problem for decades but the rate and manner it is perpetuated nowadays calls for serious concern. The rate of the crime has become so widespread that there is virtually no examination anywhere at all levels and outside the formal school system that there is no one form of illegal practice or another. In a society where examination malpractice is predominant, the impact is seen in the type of human resources the educational system has produced. Again, the educational system strives to inculcate high values and morals but when the system is distorted, that is not the case as individuals who are not entirely academically capable and morally justifiable become the future of the society. Examination malpractice also leads to an irreversible loss of credibility as a country known for examination malpractice loses face internationally and documents or certificates of education from those countries are treated with suspicion. Individuals who partake in examination malpractice become people who have certificates that they cannot defend and are unable to deliver in their jobs. The people who partake in examination malpractice sometimes become nuisance to society as the engage in other vices such as kidnapping, thievery, fraud, etc. Also, the fight against corruption cannot be successful if examination malpractice continues to be rampant in the society. As future leaders, those who participated in malpractice reflect it in their daily lives and some of these people build lives and contest in elections and win through electoral violence and other malpractices. Other effects of examination malpractice include discouragement of students from hard work, low productivity and poor job performance, bribery, corruption, etc. It is important to note that examination malpractice affects all facets of society negatively and will continue to do so until we all collaborate to end it.

 No one can claim to have all the solutions to the eradication of examination malpractice but if we put in our best, we can curtail it by properly inculcating good moral values in our youths, counseling parents to stop helping their children cheat during exams, engaging only honest people in examination management and effectively counseling them on good study habits, we are off to a good start. We can also equip teachers for the technological-driven world and educate them so as to enable them efficiently pass on their knowledge to students, give enhanced salaries and financial aids to teachers and examination officials in order to dissuade them from accepting bribes and properly equip schools and other institutions of learning with current and quality materials to make for conducive learning activities. Again, the Examination Malpractice Act 33 of 1999 should be amended to re-introduce the parts of Decree 20 of 1984 which advocated for 21years imprisonment for convicted culprits of examination malpractice without option of fine. If this is fully implemented, it will serve as a deterrent to students, invigilators, security agents and other collaborators in the malpractice business. Another way of curtailing examination malpractice is for the government to realize that education is part of our foundation and so, allocate annual budgetary for education. Schools should also make use of continuous assessment to judge a student’s performance in relation to specific criteria which will allow at anytime a cumulative judgment about a student’s performance. Finally, it is important to note that the excessive value placed on paper qualification or certificate is a major contributing factor for examination malpractice, which is why a student would go through any means to get a good certificate in order to earn a living. We should always be conscious of the fact that examinations are not really the true test of intelligence.

Since education is the bedrock of every society, any factor or vice that tarnishes the outcome of the learning process must be fought by us all. Examination malpractice has remained a disease in the educational sector for so long and requires a multidimensional approach for total annihilation. Development of any society relies greatly on its human resources and human resources are to be refined through education. So, eradicating examination malpractice which destroys human resources should be taken as a full scale war. Adhering to all possible solutions to curbing the vice of examination malpractice will be a step in the right direction.