

# EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: BURDEN OF THE EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

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## **Abstract**

*This paper argues that examination malpractice is a manifestation of antisocial behaviour, and educational administrators have a responsibility to introduce policies that would help to check examination malpractice and thereby save the country from destruction. The challenge of examination malpractice is not only a burden to the educational administrator alone, it is an issue that everybody in programs of training children or character reformation should be involved in such as the family, government and non-governmental organizations, the teachers and the churches.*

**Keywords:** Examinations Malpractice, Nigeria Schools, Educational Administrators

## **Introduction**

One of the most frequently discussed issue in Nigeria today is examination malpractice in schools at all levels of education. Practices such as copying from prepared material that is relevant to examinations, leakage of question papers by teachers and support staff, sale of examination grades, exchange of grades for sex, collusion with invigilators, among others, are very rampant occurrences in the Nigerian school system.

It is a national consensus that examination fraud is one of the most fundamental obstacles to development in Nigeria, and for this reason, educational administrators have made frantic efforts to deal with the problem. The federal government has made a law that criminalises examination malpractices with penalties that include 21-year jail term for culprits; while various examination bodies such as the West African Examinations council (WAEC), the National Examinations Council (NECO), the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB), different tertiary institutions and state governments have adopted administrative procedures to mitigate and control it.

With all these efforts, examination malpractice has continued in different forms. This is worrisome for a number of reasons. The first worry is that is that the most effective way to destroy a nation is to destroy its education, and examination malpractice which is one of the most destructive instruments of education is very rampant in the Nigerian educational system. The second worry is that efforts being made to checkmate examination malpractice in the educational system are not working, and rather, cheating in examinations is becoming accepted by a large section of the Nigerian society across all strata of individuals and groups.

This in my view creates a burden for the educational administrator whose duties include quality assurance that is being destroyed by examination malpractice. I argue here that examination malpractice is a manifestation of antisocial behaviour, and educational administrators have a responsibility to introduce policies in this regard that would help to check examination malpractice and thereby save the country from destruction. The paper is divided into three sections. The first part attempts to examine the sociology of examination

malpractice, while the second looks at policies educational administrators can put in place to resolve it. The part concludes the discussion.

### **Antisocial Behaviour and Examination Malpractices**

Discussions on examination malpractices have identified several causes or reasons for its spread in Nigeria. The several factors mentioned are among others, the craze for certificates, poverty, poor teaching and preparation for examinations by students, parental neglect, money making mentality of teachers and lecturers, wrong value system, lack of libraries and books, peer pressure, community pressure, etc. (Olatunbosun, 2009; Oko & Adie, 2016). Government, educational administrators and civil society organisations have made frantic efforts to checkmate these causes, but have achieved minimal results.

This paper makes a case that examination malpractice is fundamentally linked to antisocial behaviour, and therefore, any useful attempt to understand it and find solutions should be from the perspective of antisocial behaviour. Anti-social Behaviour means different things to different people, due largely to differences in culture, values religion, among others. For example, whereas Homosexuality, Gay marriage and Lesbianism are widely accepted in the United States and some European countries, it is seriously frowned at, and not accepted by an overwhelming number of countries in Africa (Ikediashi & Akande, 2015). Also, even within particular groups, some accepts it as normal while others see it as anti-social behavior. However, the common thread which runs through the different explanations or descriptions sees it as “the destructive, harmful, negative actions or maladaptive behaviour of an individual towards other individuals or things in the society” (Khaliq & Rasool, 2019, 116).

Although the school is a place to learn social behavior, it now promotes anti-social behavior (ASB) when relationships among pupils and students are not properly managed (Alimardany & Alimardany, 2013). Again, concern is further deepened by the fact that ASB among pupils and students is a global problem that pervades all countries; both the developed and less developed.

In Nigeria, ASB is a common place, and as noted by Ikediashi and Akande (2015, 31) “In modern times, there are varieties of behaviour exhibited by adolescent in Nigeria which make right thinking citizens wonder if our national values have been eroded”. From Lagos to Kano, Abakaliki to Zamfara, Sokoto to Warri, Yenagoa to Ibadan, etc, ASB is not only pervasive but, becoming the norm. For example, students do not only cheat in examinations, but are aided by parents, teachers and school administrators. For this reason, Examination malpractice, cultism, truancy, absenteeism, sexual misconduct such as rape and sexual exploitation, destruction of school property, stealing, etc. are ubiquitous in the school environment. These vices have created an unconducive environment for teaching and learning.

Antisocial behaviour is both overt and covert. While “overt antisocial behaviour is offensive behaviour that is not concealed, covert Antisocial behaviour is unseen and non-confrontational” (Khaliq & Rasool, 2019, 120). The literature has identified numerous contextual factors that determine Antisocial behaviour among children. But family and school have almost always been singled out as fundamental influences on child behavior.

**Table 1: Determinants of Anti-Social Behaviour**

S/n	Determining Factor	Description
1	Media violence	Exposure of children to television violence through the watching of movies, video games, and cartoons
2	Exposure to physical violence	Direct observation of killings, use of guns, arson, physical beating, etc.
3	School Environment	Poor school administration and associated vices such as sexual abuse by teachers and older students, use of vulgar language by teachers; inefficient class control; among others
4	Family Environment	Poor parenting associated with lack of love, sexual and physical abuse, poor material well-being and supervision, absenteeism of parents, among others.
5	Peer Influence	Influence of anti-social peers; influence of juvenile gangs,
6	Socio-Economic Status (SES)	Neglect by poor parents or excessive care (pampering) of children by wealthy or well-to-do families
7	Neighborhood Environment	The influence of anti-social behavior in by children of other families

**Source:** Jevtic, 2011; Ojo, Reinke & Herman, 2002; Njendu, 2014; 2015; Walsh, 2019

The above indicates that ASB is caused by a variety of factors, and subsequently, the understanding of these in context is essential in deterring intervention measures.

### **The Family and Society**

One of the strange paradoxes of the family as an institution in contemporary Bayelsa State is the high and increasing incidence of single parenting, divorce, cohabiting and sexual promiscuity. This has created a family environment characterised by absentee fathers; neglect of the socio-economic needs of children; poor socialisation; lack of parental control over children; and ineffective emotional development of children. One major consequence of this is the development of sociopathic personality among several adolescents and other levels of children; some of whom have grown to become the youths and young adults of school age. Sociopathic personality is the outcome of antisocial personality disorder (APD) which refers to “pervasive pattern for, and violation of, the rights of others”. It is noted to “begin in childhood or early adolescence and continues into adulthood”, and is partly caused by the lack of parental affection and discipline and environmental factors (APA, 1994). Individuals with Sociopathic personality are lack love and warm interpersonal relationships. (Olumati, 2006)

## The School Environment

The school environment is largely characterised by infrastructure deficits and the subsequent congestion of classrooms; poor/inadequate teaching aids; absence of libraries and recreational facilities; poor supervision by appropriate ministry and agencies of government; and poorly motivated teachers and school administrators on account of poor remuneration and welfare. These factors, and others, have individually and collectively contributed to the neglect of pupils and students, and subsequently contributing the high level of ASB

### Addressing the Challenge: Policy Options and Realities

The discussion above clear shows that the causes of anti-social behavior are multidimensional, located in context, and dynamic. Consequently, the solutions would also be multidimensional. This section of the paper provides some policy options to address the problem. In doing this, the paper would not overlook the existential realities in Bayelsa State that are closely connected to the challenge of ASB.

### Behaviour Modification: Identifying Intervention Options

Behaviour modification (BM) implies the reversal of habits and attitudes with a view to changing the behaviour of an individual in relation to his/her mannerisms and or environment. It seeks to reduce or eliminate undesirable behaviours and subsequently teach or increase acceptable behaviours. By nature, the actions of men are characterised by objects of aversion and pleasure. The objects of aversion are attitudes, behaviours and things man pursue that causes him pain, and consequently, he/she runs away from it. Conversely, the objects of pleasure gives man happiness, and thus, he/she always go for it, and repeatedly. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory captures this with the demonstration of how man pursues needs in a hierarchical manner and how he/she moves on when once one set of needs are achieved.

**Figure 3: Abraham Maslow's Hiercahy of Needs**



Because the pursuit and achievement of these needs gives man happiness, he/she is always in motion, and the success in achieving these or failure determines his/her behaviour. Consequently, the objects of pleasure are effectively used to motivate man to behave in a positive or acceptable manner. Thus the traits of aversion and pleasure defines the behaviour of man, and for this reason, they are largely used to shape and modify behaviour (Wayper, 1973). For example, one of the effective means of keeping man away from breaching rules is to cause him inconvenience such as imposing fine or restricting his/her freedom through imprisonment or isolation. This underpins the principles of behaviour modification that guides the policy recommendations in this paper. The recommendations are presented in contexts as discussed below.

### The School Environment

Behaviour modification in school is derived through a combination of actions by teachers, school administrators/heads and the government. Supervising Ministries. Based on this and the earlier discourse, the following suggestions are presented.

### The Role of Teachers

Punishment, behavioural retracting, reinforcement and counselling are recommended for adoption in case specific manner as noted below.

**Table 2: Behaviour Modification Intervention by Teachers**

Instrument	Description of Action ( s)	Type of ASB
<b>Punishment</b> - Painful or aversive action to reduce or suppress bad behavior	Caning, picking pin, frog jumping, etc	Stealing, telling lies, habitual late coming, failure to do assignment/homework, dirty appearance, fighting
	time-out; transfer to another school, isolation or seclusion	Drug use, bullying, hazing ( performing rites of passage)
	Dismissal, imprisonment, take to correctional center	Rape, cultism
	Fines/Levy	Destruction of property - furniture, books, etc.
<b>Behavioural Retracting</b> – Signing agreement between student and teacher/school management	Indisciplined students are brought before a teacher or appropriate committee to discuss issues arising from behavior, retract remorse and commitment to refrain from such behaviours by student	Stealing, telling lies, habitual late coming, failure to do assignment/homework, dirty appearance, examination malpractice, bullying, hazing ( performing rites of passage)
<b>Reinforcement</b> – Giving reward for good behaviour	This motivates good habits by giving rewards such as a clap, best having, special privileges, money, etc. to influence bad behaving pupils/students to copy good habits and also encourage those who exhibit good behaviour to sustain it. This requires the introduction of best behaving or performing awards	NA

Counselling	The following counselling methods are recommended: (a) Reinforcement methods (b) Cognitive Restructuring (c) Signing undertaking not to misbehave (d) Guidance on value selection (e) School-home collaboration (f) Use of biographies of successful persons to point to role models	All forms of ASB except criminal cases that are beyond the competence of civil authority
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**Source:** Adapted from Kinai, 2010

### **The Role of School Heads/Administrators**

The role of school heads/administrators and teachers flow into each other. But there are specific actions school heads need to take to create conducive environment for behaviour modification. The following are specific actions and policies that can be taken to ensure behavior modification.

1. Development of classroom rules for teachers and pupils/students to promote class room discipline. These should include: prohibition of the use of mobile phones and other communication gadgets; no late coming; outlawing of movement in and out of class when teaching is ongoing without justification and permission; decent dressing; how to resolve disagreements among pupils/students; class room meetings to provide social and academic interaction between pupils/teachers and among pupils/students.
2. Institution of home-school communication scheme to prevent communication gap, misunderstanding and conflict actions of parents and the school. This can be done through home-school book or via social media platforms such as whatsapp where appropriate. This would help to ensure that home works are done; prevent absenteeism and truancy; ensure self-monitoring
3. Monitoring of teachers who teach difficult subjects such as Mathematics and other quantitative subjects due to their dominant involvement in sexual assault and exploitation
4. Ensure that class teachers do not leave the class until the last child has left the class
5. Appoint teachers to monitor movement of pupils/students within school premises after school hours and ensure that no student remain behind for more than 30 minutes after school hours except under supervision
6. Rules and procedure to ensure random test for alcoholic and drug use among pupils/students at school gate and hostel rooms/apartments
7. Rules and procedure to search students to ensure they do not come to school with dangerous weapons, outlawed items/equipment's, drugs and alcoholic beverages

### **The Family**

As one of the key agents of socialisation, the family has a responsibility to responsibly raise up children. Parents should therefore be encouraged to provide the social, economic, educational and psychological needs of their children; in order to secure parental control of

children. Parents should also be encouraged or compelled through state legislation such as the Child Rights Act to protect the rights and dignity of children by refraining from vices such as rape, assault, use of abusive language, neglect, among others. Enlightenment and sensitization by the traditional institutions, religious institutions, civil society organisations and the mass media would help to achieve this. Significantly, a conducive economic environment that secures livelihood is critical for this to happen. This requires government to undertake economic reforms that would help to create an enabling environment for this change to occur.

## **Government**

The government has numerous responsibilities in the process of behavior modification. Some are discussed below,

### **School Infrastructure**

There is an urgent need to improve on school infrastructure to reduce congestion, control movement in and out of school; and also make the school environment an exciting place for pupils and students

### **(b) Teacher Behaviour Modification**

Teacher behaviour modification is important for in dealing with examination malpractice in Nigeria, and two points are discussed here.

#### **(i) Teacher Motivation**

The government should adopt appropriate motivation strategies to induce teacher interest in the job. The provision of a realistic remuneration scheme, job security, career advancement and post retirement convenience are essential requirements for this to be achieved.

#### **(ii) Teacher Training and Retraining**

There is need to train and retrain teachers to acquire modern techniques of teaching to help them manage the new technology children in schools

## **Conclusion**

This study looks at the challenge facing examination malpractice. Despite laws made to criminalize examination malpractice which states 21 years' jail term for such acts, and the similar collaboration with external examination like the WAEC, JAMB, NECO, etc, alongside the effort also made by different higher institutions to support the procedure to eliminate or control examination malpractice that has proved abortive.

Essentially this study posits that educational administrators have a duty towards ensuring that quality assurance is achieved in order to support the war against examination malpractice in every level of our educational system in Nigeria; yet in looking at these dynamic challenges facing examination malpractice the paper is segmented into three parts as follows: ( 1) The first attemptst to examine the sociology of examination malpractice; (2) The second segment that examines the policies the educational administrator can put in place to achieve effectiveness; and (3) The third that looks at the role of the school head or administrator in solving the issue of examination malpractice such that it has greatly increased the habit of examination malpractice such as; the madness for certificates,

poverty, poor teaching, poor learning environment, wrong values, lack of modern teaching facilities in terms of well-equipped laboratories and libraries, community pressure, peer pressure, and careless attitude towards preparation of both internal and external examinations on the part of both students and teachers.

It also looks at the issue of anti-social behaviour culturally with respect to matters of gay marriage, homosexuality, and lesbianism. Whereas the paper sees some dominant determinate factors such as media violence, and physical violence, the school environment and the family environment, peer influence, socio economic status as part of the cause of examination malpractice in schools with its results in his society and family bringing about single parenting, high rates of divorce and cohabitation and sexual problems in Bayelsa State for instance. The paper posits that in achieving solution to the problem of examination malpractice at all levels, the following policies reality should be followed.

- 1) Behavioral modification: i.e reversal or changing habits by teachers, school heads and administrators of school, managers and the supervising ministries itself.
- 2) The change in school environment
- 3) Change in the role of teachers for example punishment and counseling, etc.

Hence, the paper concluded by looking at the role or function of school heads administratively and as administrators saying that because the function of administrators and that of the teachers' flow and cross into each other, there should be some specific action and policies that could enhance behaviour modification to reduce examination malpractice such as

- 1) Development of classroom rules for teachers to promote classroom discipline
- 2) The issue of institution of home-school communication scheme to prevent communication gaps should be introduced to prevent misunderstanding and conflicting actions of parents and the school.
- 3) The monitoring of teachers who teach difficult subjects such as mathematics and other quantitative subjects should be taken seriously to avoid issues such as sexual assault for examination malpractice and exploitation of innocent or serious studios students
- 4) The appointment of teachers to monitor movement of pupils and students within the schools and 30 minutes after the closure of schools, and also examining random test for alcohol and drugs.

Consequently, all stakeholders involved in the development of human behaviour from the informal to the formal should be involved in the task behaviour modification Intervention. These include the family intervention, government intervention, which could take the form of policies and improving modern School infrastructure for effective learning and teaching. The teacher's behaviour modification which for instance should come in form of motivational package in salary and wages and also another modification of teacher's behaviour should also take the form of training and retraining of teachers for efficient and effective delivery of knowledge which could in turn reduce examination malpractice in all levels of our educational system.

Following the policy option of the reality on the ways of addressing the challenge facing examination malpractice, it is very obvious that school administrators may not be able to solve the problem of examination malpractice alone, so there is a need for stakeholders to



look at the matter holistically, i.e a look at the cause of anti-social behaviour, to the determinant of anti-social behaviour and the school environment itself etc.

Secondly, take a firm decision to introduce behaviour modification and identify intervening options to all concerned by bringing all the teachers and administrators themselves; family effort, government effort, etc to brainstorm and come up with solutions to the problem of examination malpractice in Nigerian institutions.

Again because the role of school administrators and teachers flow into each other, there should be conducive environment while the specific actions and policies should be taken to ensure behaviour modification which is clearly stated on the role of school heads and administrators on page 8, to ensure the examination malpractice may be reduced while the issue of provision of modern School infrastructure, training and retraining of teachers, and motivation by government should be taken seriously. Whereas only people of unquestionable integrity should be appointed by the government to head agencies that conduct external examinations, for example WAEC, NECO, JAMB etc, with periodic checks and decisions updated and reviewed by the head of such agencies at all times necessary, and at all levels of agencies handling external examination activities in Nigeria's educational system.

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