PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN TEACHING: THE NEED FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT

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ABSTRACT

The term "ethical conduct" brings to the fore a debate about the distinctions between codes of conduct and their purposes, and ethical principles and their place in the teaching profession. Some would argue that codes of conduct mandate specific behaviour in particular situations, but do not promote individual adherence to ethical principles. The grey areas in decision-making which confront most teachers on a regular basis arise in the face of competing interests and values. Codes of conduct may assist, but not give clear definition to teachers' decision-making. In other words, the organisation or system can mandate what not to do in particular situations, but it is impossible to list all possible situations that may arise. This becomes the territory of ethical decision-making. The delivery of training related to codes of conduct may be possible. Training individuals to adhere to particular ethical principles when making decisions may not be possible. This paper addresses the challenges and constraints in the implementation of training and development programmes with regard to professional ethics in teaching in large education systems. The scope of the training and development challenge is revealed by posing a series of questions. Some of these questions go the heart of the professional learning discourse. The use of case studies as a professional learning strategy is explored and examples of cases are included.

Keywords: teacher education, teacher professionalism, professional ethics, teaching ethics, development and training

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INTRODUCTION

Ethical practice lies at the core of the teaching profession. The establishment of an agreed upon set of ethical principles by both the teaching profession and the public provides collective understanding and vision for the professional judgment and action of educators. There are, however, many challenges facing teachers in their profession in the area of professional ethics. It has been stressed by various authors that the challenge has to do with teacher in-service training programmes that hardly include issues of professional ethics (Jekayinfa, 2005, Hoyle & John, 1995). This paper is therefore intended to address the issue of teachers' professionalism and teacher ethics in Nigeria.

THE CONCEPT OF PROFESSIONALISM

According to Halliday (1999), attempts have been made to solve the problem of definition using different approaches, such as the functionalist approach, the interactionist approach, the Foucauldian approach and the division of labour approach.

The functionalist approach is premised on the concept of a professional knowledge base. The focus of this approach, according to Eraut (1994), is the social control of expertise. This approach was developed by Marshall (1963) and Goode (1969). Criteria such as collectivity orientation and altruism were emphasised. The functionalists view a profession in terms of its central social function, its length of training, body of knowledge, high level of skills, a code of ethical conduct, client centredness, autonomy, independent decision-making, adaptability and self-governance. What is paramount in this approach is what a profession needs to be like and how its members need to act. People who define a profession from a functionalist approach state that the approach spells out the privileges and position of professionals in terms of a rational solution to society's needs.

Eraut (1994) observes that providing a list of professional traits and assuming their integrative function has not removed or solved the problem of definition. This is because most of the criteria in the functionalist approach to the definition are culture-bound with greater significance in some countries – especially the developed countries – than in others. For instance, the approach assumes that there is a well-defined set of needs within society without working on the question about the nature of society. This means that the approach provides an understanding of the nature of the profession in terms of current practices that arise from the needs of societies, without considering the variations that exist within societies.

The interactionist approach is concerned with the everyday actions and interactions of professionals and how they define their social world as participants and construct their careers. This approach views professionalisation as a social and political project or mission that is designed to enhance the interest of an occupational group (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996). This is why the interactionist approach is also called the social constructivitist approach. To the interactionist, profession is a relative concept that can be subjected to different constructions according to the discursive disposition of its advocates and critics. In this approach, the driving force of professionalisation is striving for upward mobility, while the main strategy is social closure, which enables the groups with a common interest to act in a collective manner to protect their interests and membership.

The emphasis in this approach is on employment rewards for those who achieve professional status. Ukpo (2005) maintains that the materially and symbolically privileged position of professional workers is achieved by virtue of the protection and patronage of some elite segment of society. The problem with this approach to the definition of profession is that the group may willingly or unwillingly erect barriers that could, in turn, promote inequality in an attempt to close access to its occupation.

The Foucauldian approach, on the contrary, establishes the relationship between knowledge and power. It is observed that knowledge is a key component in the competition for power. To Foucauldians, knowledge and power are two sides of the same coin. Who decides what knowledge is and who knows what needs to be decided? The power and legitimacy of professions are acquired, in part, from their status as organisations, defined by their control over knowledge. If control over knowledge is lost, what happens to power? McDonald (1995) observes that this approach rejects any idea that the state is a purposeful actor; instead the state is considered as a collection of institutions, procedures and knowledge, which together form the particular direction that the state has chosen. The Foucauldian approach suggests that both the state and the professions are, in part, the emergent effects of the interplay between changing government policies and occupational strategies.

The concern of the division of labour approach is the competition between professions. Its focus is on the content of professional work among professions and

dispute over work areas, to which McDonald (1995) refers to as the jurisdictional dispute. This approach was made popular by Abbott (1988).

The different approaches provide useful understandings of professions and their professional activities, which have brought agreement on the criteria and characteristics of a profession. There is widespread agreement, according to Hoyle and John (1995), on the criteria of knowledge, autonomy and responsibility. The approaches have provided benchmarks with which the status and conduct of a profession or its erosion might be measured and also draw attention to the changing nature of professional status, definition, work and behaviour.

According to Stanley et al. (1956), a profession may perhaps be defined as an occupation based on specialised intellectual study and training, the purpose of which is to supply skilled service or advice to others for a definite fee or salary. With regards to teaching, the UNESCO Intergovernment Conference on the Status of Teachers (1966) states the following:

> *Teaching should be regarded as a profession. It is a form of public service which requires of teachers expert knowledge and specialised skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study; it calls also for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of the pupils in their charge.*

TRAITS OF PROFESSIONALISM

The search for a set of criteria by which a profession can be recognised has been on for at least a century now. Yet, there are no universal lists of characteristics of professionalisation that are universally acceptable. However, there are areas of widespread consensus, including the following:

- **Performing an essential social service:** Teaching meets this criterion. The service that education performs is essential to the individual child who cannot be fully socialised into our modern society if he or she does not receive formal education. To society, it prepares individuals for various occupational roles.
- **Possessing a body of specialised knowledge:** There are some differences of opinion as to whether teaching meets this requirement. In teaching, both the subject matter knowledge and knowledge of education theory are essential in the preparation of teachers. What is not appreciated is the fact that education

has a specific distinctive subject matter component. It could, therefore, be said that teaching meets this particular criterion.

- **Having a high degree of autonomy:** A profession must be self-regulating and self-governing. The autonomy to practice the profession relates to two main factors that are interdependent. The autonomy of the individual professional to perceive his or her role and responsibilities the way he or she feels best is in the interest of the profession and the autonomy of the profession as a whole. Teaching does not meet this criterion fully.
- **A code of ethics:** Professions usually have well-defined codes of ethics to regulate the conduct of their accredited practitioners. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) in Nigeria has a code of ethics that guides its relationship with students, parents, the community, employer and the profession. Unfortunately, it has little or no influence in matters of policies for auditing and registering professionally qualified persons in the profession. In addition, it lacks the control and legal backing to enforce the standards it sets.
- **Organisation into professional groups:** Every profession institutes and operates a professional association or organisation to which it ascribes certain functions and powers, such as the advancement of the professional competence and maintenance of prescribed standards. Every professional association has a self-concept that transcends that of a mere trade union. Unfortunately, the major obstacle preventing the NUT from becoming a professional body has been the lack of extended educational training for all members of the union. The implication is that the NUT has no control over its members when compared to other professions, such as medicine, law and engineering, among others.
- **Exalting service above personal gains:** Members of any profession are expected to regard their services to the public as altruistic, with public interest put above financial and other gains.
- **Recognition by the public:** Recognition by the public is closely linked to the nature of the service that the profession renders. It must be such that the service is regarded as being essential to humanity. Further still, the practitioners or the profession must have a high self-esteem. Coupled with this is the question of personal satisfaction demonstrated by members of the profession. This is not always true of the teaching profession.
- **Setting its own standards:** Standards are set and it is only when a new entrant satisfies the stipulated requirements that he or she can be registered

as a member of the profession. The medical and legal professions, for example, have laid down standards that new entrants must meet before they are admitted into the professions. This is not true of the teaching profession, where the NUT lacks the control and legal backing to enforce the standards it sets. Although the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is being charged with that responsibility, it is too early to assess its effectiveness since it only came on board six years ago.

Judged in the light of the above discussion, teaching in Nigeria doesn't meet all the characteristics of a profession in many countries of the world. In Nigeria, however, teaching is yet to achieve autonomy and teachers do not require a licence or certificate to practise. A decree setting up the TRCN was promulgated in 1993, but it is yet to be operational. Thus, it can be said that in Nigeria, teaching is progressing towards full professionalisation.

The TRCN partners with universities, state governments and other stakeholders in the education sector to organise training and retraining programmes in various parts of Nigeria for teachers, with the aim of professionalising the teaching career. It also aims at equipping teachers to become better professionals.

CONCEPTS RELATED TO TEACHER EDUCATION

Education is a very powerful instrument for social progress. It is the greatest power yet known to man for his own improvement. Broadly defined, it is the aggregate of all the processes by means of which a person develops abilities, skills and other forces of behaviour of positive (and sometimes negative) value in the society in which he lives (Fafunwa, 1982). Education is seen as a tool that is used for the integration of the individual into society so that he or she can achieve self-realisation, develop a national consciousness, promote unity and strive for social, economic, political, scientific, cultural and technological progress (Afe, 1995).

Training, on the other hand, differs from education. While the skills, knowledge and attitudes acquired in training are directed to improve performance in a specific vocation, those of education include a broad knowledge, skills and attitudes not directed to any particular job. Training does not take place in a vacuum. It involves people, money and material. However, there are five essential factors that affect training output, positively or otherwise: quality teachers and instruction, equipment or facilities and overall management capacity.

Teaching has existed for ages and it is sometimes difficult to trace its origin precisely. It is one of the oldest of human activities or occupations. As an activity, it consists of a body of "actions intended to induce learning, through the conscious and deliberate efforts by a matured or experienced person to impart knowledge, information, skills, attitudes, beliefs, etc. to an immature or less experienced person" (Afe, 1998).

A teacher refers to a person who instructs to provide the teaching and learning process. He or she assumes various capacities as an educator, instructor, tutor, lecturer, counsellor, professor, etc. He or she is the mainstay or prime mover of the educational system. According to Aghenta (1991), "as an input operator into the educational system, the teacher plays a big role in the conversion of raw materials (particularly students) into finished products i.e. graduates".

Teacher education is that component of any educational system that is charged with the education and training of teachers to acquire the competencies and skills of teaching to improve the quality of teachers for the school system (Afe, 1993). Having examined the basic concepts, let us now examine the history of teacher education in Nigeria.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The training and development of teachers vary according to the institutions where teacher training takes place. It is not logical to believe that ethics or codes of behaviour should be part of the curriculum, since there is no harmonised pattern that all institutions can follow to train teachers. Even some of the specialised colleges charged with the responsibility of training teachers do not conform to training with essential codes during the training period.

Perhaps we should ask the question whether it is possible to train teachers in ethical conduct. The term ethical conduct brings to the fore a debate about the difference between codes of conduct and their purposes, ethical principles and their place in the teaching profession. We can argue that codes of conduct mandate specific behaviour in particular situations, but do not promote individual adherence to ethical principles. The grey areas in decision-making that confront most teachers on a regular basis arise in the face of competing interests and values. This is a challenge to the professionalisation of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

We can ask this question: Do student teachers learn through mentors and supervisors after leaving the school? This is necessary since the training acquired may not have contained the necessary standards that can withstand the realities in the field. If the mentors and the supervisors are not ready to provide the mentorship, due to many protests of social inequity, the student teacher will be left stranded in the community school, not having any role models to follow. This will impact negatively on the learning performances of the students. The post-learning demands of the pupil teachers require experienced supervisors and mentors to be stationed to provide additional assistance to the village and community schools. This will make learning of the essential codes easier.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN NIGERIA

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the theory of values. The ethics of the teaching profession are the moral beliefs and rules about right and wrong that influence teachers' behaviour, attitude and ideals. The teacher is a crucial facilitator of knowledge acquisition, hence we take many cues from his or her behaviour in terms of dress, mannerisms in speech, attitude, and private and social life patterns. This is the basic rationale for the introduction of codified ethics to the teaching profession. The code of ethics is meant to guide teachers' behaviour and job performance. The task of education is mainly to guide the total growth and development of young people so that they will be functional, competent, well-adjusted and sociable citizens of their communities in Nigeria. There are some known, acceptable (social) norms that appear to be taken for granted as ethics in teaching. These acceptable (social) norms comprise two categories.

Firstly, moral ethics, such as honesty, loyalty, discipline, not smoking or drinking alcohol in the presence of students and in public places, dressing neatly and decently to school, sexual comportment and punctuality, is one of the hallmarks of teacher professionalism.

Secondly, work ethics, such as continuous learning, the regular preparation of lesson plans, serving *in loco parentis* for students, the regular assessment of learners, reporting on learners, being cooperative with other teachers at work and obedience to authority, is social norms that must be transmitted from generation to generation. The teacher, as a facilitator of learning, must not send inappropriate signals to students. It is to promote the actualisation of these critical attributes of a teacher that the Federal Government of Nigeria took steps towards the professionalisation of teaching and teacher registration to sift the "weeds from the tar".

Professional ethics in teaching, on the other hand, is a statement of the ethical commitments, practices and aspirations that reflect the ongoing articulation of the profession. The practical applications of codes of ethics are expressed in codes of conduct. Teachers in Nigeria are committed to the principles of dignity, respect, integrity, empathy and justice.

In the same vein, the TRCN prepared a code of conduct for teachers in 2004, which was widely circulated.

OBJECTIVES OF A COURSE IN PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

If we cannot teach people to be ethical, then what can we achieve with an ethics course and what should such a course include? The answers to this question vary (Wines, 2007). In an earlier co-authorship with Brinkman, Sims (2001) set out the following seven goals for a business ethics course:

- Know thyself, your own moral values and thresholds.
- Learn to see moral issues, conflicts and responsibilities.
- Learn to identify the specific moral aspects of a situation.
- Learn to share moral understanding.
- Learn how to handle moral issues and conflicts.
- Acquire moral courage.
- Acquire a critical attitude towards the business school curriculum and its disciplines.

They do not set strengthening moral behaviour as an objective. Corey and Callanan (2005) set the following nine course goals:

- Ensure students recognise and appreciate the unavoidable ambiguity in ethics, i.e. of multiple points of view or contradictory possibilities.
- Instil in students the idea that there are multiple pathways to addressing a single ethical dilemma.
- Improve students' self-knowledge.
- Improve ethical sensitivity.

- Improve moral cognition.
- Instil determination to act ethically.
- Teach students the profession's established code of ethics.
- Teach students their legal, ethical and professional responsibilities.
- Teach questioning of the ethical dimensions of their workplace.

In their paper, they ascribe students' determination to act ethically as a result of their courses. This result, which the authors say they achieve, is based on students' self-reporting of changes in their values; not on an empirical measure of changed behaviour.

Webber (2007) says ethics courses in industry should build ethical awareness and promote the company's moral values in order to broaden the criteria used by managers when making decisions with moral implications. He advocates stimulating managers to become more "other oriented" by exercises in which all stakeholders are treated as equals, in contrast to their level of influence on corporate performance. Other aims that Webber espouses are the following:
- To engender trust and confidence among stakeholders.
- To stimulate mutual moral development through self-discovery in peer group discussions of real ethical dilemmas.
- To develop a concrete plan for a career-long, ongoing moral enhancement of individual attitudes and planned business behaviour.

Webber acknowledges research (Ferrell et al., 2002) that shows how the ethical culture of an organisation has a strong influence on ethical business judgments. Therefore, ethics training should also make employees overtly aware of the ethical culture and values of the organisation.

We agree with most of these objectives, but believe that some are subsets of broader objectives; others are a natural outcome of an ethics course. We propose the following four principal objectives for a course in ethics:
- Building ethical sensitivity and moral cognition
- Providing a widened applied teaching content that covers all ethical practices
- Adopting teaching methods that maximise learning impact in relation to ethical knowledge and behaviour
- Developing negotiating and persuasive capabilities (oral and written skills for use in assessing and advocating an ethical position)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Courses in ethics with case problems and lectures on ethical theory increase students' ability to reason their way through moral issues. The following examples of the impact of ethics courses on ethical sensitivity and cognition are drawn from engineering. Self and Ellison (1998) used Rest's Defining Issues Test (DIT) to assess whether there was an increase in moral reasoning from students who took an ethics course. The researchers applied the test before and after the course and found a significant increase in reasoning capability.

Drake et al. (2005), using the DIT to assess capabilities in moral reasoning, also found a significant difference between the capabilities of students at the beginning of a course and those of the students at the end of the course, which manifested a significant increase in capabilities. The class size was 164 students and teaching assistants were employed. The discussion on moral practices and the teaching of ethical theory seemed to increase capabilities in moral reasoning. Whether this reasoning translates into higher levels of moral practice is a separate concern. Such an assessment is difficult to measure, as the Centre for Vocational Assessment and Research concluded after its study into the assessment of attitudes, ethics and behaviour at work (Mossop, 1997). Blasi (1980) reviewed 75 studies that assessed the relationship between moral judgment and behaviour. This classic meta-study found a positive, but strongly qualified relationship in a number of the studies.

The research, however, is almost 30 years old, with some of the original studies now almost 80 years old. We have not found recent studies that correlated courses on ethics with improved ethical behaviour. The most we can be confident about is that courses seem to increase ethical sensitivity and strengthen ability to tell right from wrong. This ability, in itself, may lead to improved practices, but such improvements have not, for the most part, been verified.

THE NEED FOR A COURSE ON ETHICS FOR TEACHERS

Two arguments can be developed that support a course being built around the ethical issues in a profession, discipline or organisation. Firstly, a new graduate entering a profession or organisation may encounter entrenched unethical practices that will be near to impossible for a new entrant without basic knowledge and skills to tackle alone. Continued acceptance of a practice where "everybody does it" can condition the new recruit to accept certain behaviour. Prior classroom encounters

with the issues they are most likely to face, however, will at least have helped clarify the new entrant's ethical assessment and may even provide a core of new graduates with the motivation and skills to resist entrenched unethical practices.

The second argument is that the ethical acceptability or unacceptability of some issues in a discipline can be unclear. A study by Bowden (2006) in the engineering profession identified a number of practices on which opinions were divided – reverse auctions being perhaps the most obvious, but bid-peddling and front-end loading were among some of the more contentious ethical issues. Every profession or industry has similar examples.

TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

There are institutions authorised to give professional training as enunciated by the Federal Government of Nigeria in the Revised National Policy on Education (2004). These include the following:

- **National Teacher Institute (NTI):** This is an institution established to formally train student teachers for primary education. The policy regarding teaching at primary school level now provides that the least qualified teachers for primary education should be holders of the National Certificate of Education. The NTI is now charged with the responsibility of upgrading holders of a Grade II Teacher's Certificate. It provides in-service training for teachers on the job in order to upgrade their skills.
- **National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE):** This commission was established for the specific purpose of prescribing minimum standards for colleges of education that train teachers for primary education in Nigeria. They are responsible for all the components of ethical conduct, while training teachers after secondary education.
- **Institute of Education:** It was established in universities for the training of teachers for the delivery of education at both secondary and tertiary level.
- **National Board for Technical Education (NBTE):** This board coordinates the activities of polytechnics and technical colleges and prescribes minimum standards for post-primary school level training. It also trains teachers for technical and vocational education in Nigeria.
- **National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA):** This institute has the mandate to develop a critical mass of education sector planners and managers for the effective and efficient planning and management of the education system through capacity building, continuous training, action research and information dissemination.
- **Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC):** It develops a curriculum for early childhood care and education, primary education, junior secondary schooling and senior secondary schooling. It also builds the capacity of teachers on the effective utilisation of the curriculums that have been developed.
- **International agencies:** These are united agencies that provide technical support, funding, equipment and services in all sectors of the economy, including the education sector.

Other professional bodies include the following:

- **National Union of Teachers (NUT):** This is a trade union for teachers, particularly at primary school level. It is not a professional organisation. It sees to the welfare of its members.
- **Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN):** This is a body established by law to make teaching a profession (professionalised teaching). The minimum qualification for registration is a National Certificate in Education (NCE). It provides support for the professionalisation of teachers, registering them and ensuring that only qualified teachers are in the education sector. The TRCN reports to the Federal Ministry of Education and provides technical foresight to teachers.

THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

The TRCN, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Education and the NTI, initiated the Special Teacher Upgrading Programme (STUP) with the aim of freeing the school system of unqualified teachers. This programme commenced in 2007. The screening tests were jointly conducted by the TRCN and the NTI, which helped to select suitable Grade 2 teachers to benefit from the programme. A total of 40 000 candidates passed the screening and have since commenced with their studies. The programme is designed to run for two years in order to fast-track the upgrading of the Grade 2 teachers to the level of the NCE, which is the national minimum teaching qualification. The STUP is the final chance and hope for unqualified teachers as the National Council on Education had instructed the TRCN to deal with any unqualified teachers still in the school system after the programme.

The TRCN is the torch-bearer on ethics in the teaching profession. Every registered teacher takes the following oath of allegiance:

I, …, do solemnly affirm that I will be faithful, loyal and bear true allegiance to the teaching profession, that as a registered teacher, I will discharge my duties honestly, to the best of my ability and faithfully in accordance with the provision of the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria, Act 31 of 1993; that I will not allow my personal interest to influence my official conduct or any official decisions; that I will preserve, protect and defend the dignity of the teaching profession, so help me God.

THE DYSFUNCTIONALITIES OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Education, viewed from a social system perspective, comprises three main elements: students, teachers and a curriculum. The efficiency and effectiveness of any educational system depend on the cohesion between these three elements. If one of them has some deficiency or weakness in performing its role, reduced productivity may result in the educational process as a whole. However, it is clear that every one of the three elements has a significant effect on the other two. In this case, the teacher is the basic element that affects the educational process more than the other two. Consequently, we use the concept of dysfunctionality in teacher education against the background of the objectives of teacher education as spelled out in the National Policy on Education:

- To provide highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers
- To encourage further the spirit of inquiry and creativity in teachers
- To help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large
- To produce teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment
- To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession

In assessing the achievement of these objectives, we find that our teacher education programmes have been deficient in providing teachers with an intellectual and professional background appropriate to their assignment in society.

We carried out an intensive study of student teachers' perceptions of teaching and why they have chosen the profession. Some of the results of my study were enlightening. The factors responsible for determining the attractiveness of the teaching profession were those relating to salary, fringe benefits and working conditions, while the converse was true for teachers' poor public image and lack of job satisfaction. These findings are consistent with other studies (Aghenta, 1971, Omoregie, 1994, Ossai, 1995, Awanbor, 1996). Other reasons usually advanced for not wanting to remain in the teaching profession are lack of retirement benefits, lack of regular promotions and the irregular payment of salaries.

THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF TEACHING

Professionalisation of teaching has been a topic of controversy and – in Nigeria – it has been an issue of concern among educators, teachers, administrators, organisations and the public at large. The question of whether teaching is an occupation, a vocation, a calling, a semi-profession or a profession has further complicated the situation to the extent that members of the public have accorded low status and recognition to teachers. As a result, no one is proud to identify or introduce himself or herself as a teacher in the manner a lawyer or a medical doctor would proudly and gladly do. Two examples are cited to illustrate the plight of teachers in Lagos, Delta, Edo, Ondo and probably many other states. Landlords will not lease their houses to teachers. From bitter experience, they know that teachers are sure to fall into arrears on their rent, not because they are congenital debtors, but because they are poorly paid and rarely get paid regularly. Parents do not hesitate to *disown* a daughter foolish enough to fall in love with a teacher. This situation led Legatt (1970) to say that teaching is a profession, but not a highly esteemed one and may never be so.

THE CASE STUDY OF ADEYEMI COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

This college is located in Ondo, in Ondo State, Nigeria. It is mandated to develop and train primary school teachers who will provide the required basic education for the first six grades in the primary school and the first three grades in the junior secondary school. The Head of Department in the primary phase cited the following code of conduct, which forms part of the curriculum for the training of pupil teachers:

Ethics is crucial as far as teacher education is concerned; teacher education involves more than just teaching in the classroom. A teacher is an individual who leads learners to learn using pedagogical methodology.

CONCLUSION

In this contribution, the centrality of the teacher in the education process was emphasised and buttressed with examples of various policies of government implemented to speed up national development. From a historical viewpoint, teacher education was presented as the pivot of the educational system, though constrained by both historical and social factors. We found that when teaching is examined as a profession in Nigeria against the defining characteristics of control of entry, conditions of service, maintenance of standards and autonomy, it does not satisfy all the criteria associated with a profession. To remedy the situation and make teaching a fully fledged profession, a number of recommendations were made, emphasising that a profession should be organised in such a way that the members have a sense of belonging to a particular body, which determines codes of conduct, regulates conditions for entry into the profession, plans for the welfare of members, organises the exchange of ideas and disciplines erring members.

As Hanson (1964) put it: "An important sign of the long-range health of a nation is the spirit and quality of its teachers… the future of the nation rests in the hands of its teachers, for the qualities they possess today will inevitably be reflected in the citizens of tomorrow."

The challenge for the 21st century is that the education and training of Nigerian teachers must top the list of priorities of government, because the services of teachers are indispensable to any nation and they, more than any other professionals, influence the lives of the nation's youths and the nation's future.

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