

# PROFESSIONAL ETHICS: AN EMERGING ISSUE IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

The emergence of professionalization of teaching in Nigeria is a step forward to teaching profession. Professional ethics as standard rules and regulations governing the conduct of a profession is an issue in teaching profession in Nigeria, its status and place as it relates to standard is the focus of this paper. Professional ethics and teaching profession is discussed as it operates in Nigeria. Conclusion and recommendation were drawn and suggestions were proffered for further research in the field of our discussion.

## **Introduction**

For any organization, governmental or non-governmental, a firm or an industry, a factory or a company, social or political, economical or even school organization, it must have standard rules and regulation. An industry for instance that aims at producing high quality products in order to compete well with its competitors in the market has to take a number of measures, its to ensure that it produce high quality materials be it raw materials, expertise, machines, and the control unit of the organization ensures that raw materials or the final products gel screened before any production goes out for sale in the market.

In order to achieve the above target position, they need constant supervision by superior officers to ensure compliance with laid down rules / regulation were (ethics). Thus, the same things apply to education industry.

The education industry like any other organization has raw materials in forms of tools, apparatus instruments and other instructional materials. This industry has targets, and a production process in form of selection, admission procedures, teaching staff, and non teaching staff in order to process their products for marketing in the public. These products (student's teachers) must meet the set standard before they can be marketable. This paper takes the position of professional ethics as the main issue in the profession and production of teachers.

## **Professional Ethics (Conceptualization)**

The concept profession and ethics came to be important issue in the teacher education programme in order to standardize the teaching profession. A profession going by its literal definition is a type of job that needs special training or skill. This makes one cherish for a profession Aliyeodano (1992), stated that, a profession is characterized by specialize training, pursue common goals or objectives standardized rules and regulation (ethics) long period of training and service to the people (public) while ethics is a Greek word (ethical from ethos meaning character, custom). In principles it refers to standard of human conduct sometimes called morals (Reymond, 2006). Thus, the term professional ethics can be defined as generally accepted rules and regulations standard and working conditions or quality control device. Generally, professional ethics refer to accepted rules, standard and working conditions meant for ensuring efficiency of work quality and reliability of product or services rendered.

From the above definition we can say that, a professional is someone who does his work efficiently by producing high quality products or service with a predictable level of reliability of products or services rendered, as well as competence and integrity among professional.

A professional body called Profession Australia, conducted a study on ethic education and development for members of the associations using focus group discussion attended by a total of twenty seven (27) participants with the Chief Education Officer (CEO) of professions Australia. The discussants were grouped into three (3) focus groups. The discussions were taped and analyzed using Nvivo, a quantitative research software tool, to identify common themes. Some of the findings were that the participants accepted and generally acknowledge the complexity of the ethics education concept and the possibility of ethical conflicts in its application. They also agreed that the code of conduct and the supporting rules and regulation are very important aspects of a profession. Other professional qualities regarded important in the study include maintaining ones' credibility and that of the profession mandating confidentiality, autonomy, courage to do what is right, exercising due professional care, objective, integrity, respecting (he right of stakeholders with informed consent, etc (Professions Australia Phase 1 Report, June 2006).

The above findings suggested the components of profession (ethics) identified by the participants in the reported study. In another studies conducted by other associations and professional

organizations stipulated that, professional ethics are code of conducts, principles that guide the members of (he profession.

The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) (2007), and the society for teaching and learning in higher education (1996) all agreed that professional ethics indicates competence of the members, service to the public, development and growth of the members etc.

### **Issues in Teaching Profession**

(TRC 2004 : 2) stated that, the status of teachers as in 1984. the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNESCO issued a document titled "the status of teacher". An instrument for its improvement, the international recommendation of 1996 joint commentaries by the ILO and -UNESCO; The -document-has more than +42 recommendations, containing principles (professional ethics) educational objectives and policies, preparation for the profession of further education for teachers, employment and career, right and responsibilities of teacher's conditions for effective teaching and learning, teacher's salaries and social security, among others. The document further recommended professionalization, discipline, right and responsibilities of teachers. UNESCO. (1996)

The National policy on Education (2004), has the expectations that teaching in Nigeria shall attain the highest standard possible, to achieve the above goal the policy further outline the objectives to be attained some of these objectives include;

- i. To produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all level of our educational system,
- ii. Help teacher to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.
- iii. Enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession all these objectives serve as the basis for professional ethics or conduct. NPE (2004:39).

Teaching is a legally .recognized profession in Nigeria, in this regard, government has setup the teacher's registration council to control and regulate the practice of the profession. The council was established in Act no 31 of 1993. The Act charges the council with the following functions among other;

- i. Determine the teachers for the purpose of this Act.
- ii. Determining what standards of knowledge and skills are to be attained by persons seeking to become registered as teachers under, the Act and raising those standards from time to times and circumstances may permit etc.

The TRC. Act section 9(6) empowers the council to make rules (Teachers Code of Conducts) which are not inconsistent with the act as to acts which constitute professional misconduct. All these policies are step forward to issue of professional ethics.

### **The Professional Needs**

The challenges of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot be fully met until they are translated in the school and classroom, what may be referred as "do-ables" the translators are the teacher's with progressive ideas who implement all the planned ideas and objectives (curriculum). Progressive ideas can be implemented only by person who have been deeply involved in the development of such ideas and who can therefore, analyzed and internalize the objectives and basic principles involved in the area. This is the reason why the 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher in Nigeria has to be a professional teacher in every sense of the term. Being a professional involves five (5) components. (Obanya) (1999:87), outlines them as:-

(a). Aptitude (b). Education (c). Training (d). Comportment (c). Social Status. All these components will have to be imbibed by the future teachers and indeed the current teachers.

The framework for the 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher is based on seven points of references.

These points are:-

- i. Selection of who is capable to be admitted into teacher education programme.
- ii. Initial preparation which include training, drilling, coaching and development of creativity and analytical skills.
- iii. Internship; this is a systematic supervised apprenticeship in various teaching tasks.
- iv. Certification. Being licensed to teach or being refused licence if need be.
- v. Career development technique to meet the challenges and changing nature of

education.

- vi. Comportment gives pride to the profession, professional code of ethics/behaviour, subscription to a professional oath.
- vii. Status, social recognition, social prestige, self esteem, professionally specialized role of the teacher etc.

All these seven points of reference provide bases for professional ethics or code of conduct. These issues must be taken into cognizance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher education.

### **Recommendations**

Going by the discussion of the paper and looking at the conceptual frame-work of professional ethics coupled with the status of teaching profession in Nigeria, we can say that the following should be a way forward toward the attainment of professional conduct in Nigeria:

- ^ Teachers should be organized and united to arm themselves, with knowledge and analytical skills needed to face the changing situations and trends in education and other aspect of life. ^\* The government should take steps to fully professionalize teaching and teacher should struggle hard for societal recognition of the status of teachers.
- > The teachers of today must organized themselves, and be involved in educational development from the grassroots level (individual schools, community participation, policies making and decisions in education in the state and federal levels).

### **Conclusion**

In a nutshell, the paper looked into the professional ethics as an issue which must see to the training of Nigerian teacher, the status of teaching profession, professional outlook recommendations in form of suggestion were advanced and conclusion is drawn based on the discussion.

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