

**PROFESSIONALISM OF TEACHING: PROBLEM AND
PROSPECTS**

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ABSTRACT

Teaching is the act of impacting knowledge, skills, attitude, belief and value system from somebody that possesses these attributes to those that does not, and these functions are to be performed by a professional Teacher. But in Nigeria it is not the case, and that is why teacher want their services professionalized because of their discomfort about their status, social image and condition of service. This paper belief that professionalization is important, bearing in mind that, the overall performance of any teacher depends on the nature and quality of his training as well as the conditions of services under which he operates. The papers therefore, focus on the concepts and professionalization of mod LING, problems militating against teaching in Nigeria and suggest some possible solutions.

INTRODUCTION

There are many ways of looking at this interesting subject of professional idea. The of being regarded as "a professional" immediately conjures up in one s mind all sorts of things: prestige, power, influence money, security etc. The idea becomes particularly attractive and appealing if we are thinking in terms of certain professions, such as Medicine ,Law, Architecture, Accountancy, Engineering etc, which have powerful organizations and exert a great deal of influence in society. Of course, people have a notion about "a professional", about what he does and what they think about him. While some people may think of legal and medical professions as being highly prestigious occupations, others may dislike the unprofessional behavior of legal/medical practitioners.

According to Advanced Learner Dictionary the word "profession" is the occupation which one professes to be skilled in and follow. Therefore, a professional is such an individual who is learned or skilled in the particular lob in which he has specialized and which he intends to practice throughout his working career.

According to A. Ozigi (1979) until the eighteen century, the word profession was restricted in its usage to four groups of occupations, the Clergy, the Doctors, the Lawyers, and the Army or Naval officers. At that time it was associated with the idea of a gentleman. Thus a professional person was supposed to behave like a perfect gentleman in the practice of his progression, and anybody who failed to show this type of gentlemanly behavior was excluded from the professional body.

The idea of gentlemanly behavior has been carried over, consciously and unconsciously, by the many professional bodies which exist today, and is embodied in their code of ethnic behavior. There are numerous professional bodies in Nigeria, today, having widely varying functions, aims and degree of strength and prestige, in medical profession alone, we have Pharmacists, Nurses, Midwives, Doctors and medical consultants. Legal practitioners, accountants, bankers, engineers, surveyors, architects and teachers all also have their professional organizations. While some are mainly concerned with trade Union activities, others are simply concerned with the advancement of the standards of their particular profession.

A. Ozigi (1979) opined that the following are at least three basic elements are involved in the distinguishing characteristics of a true profession. They are:

- (a) Exercise of some measure of control of those qualified to enter it;
- (b) Admission to members on equal footing;
- (c) The need to maintain high standards of professional practice and ethics.

Teaching really is supposed to be performed by individuals that are specially and specifically trained to provide the unique service, that is, professional teacher. In Nigeria this is not the case and experience has shown that teachers want their service professionalized because of the unease about their status, and social image, compared to the indispensable nature of their service. Therefore it is hoped that a review of the problems facing professionalization of teaching and consideration of the suggestions made thereafter will go a long way to ensure for the nation amore qualitative teaching by qualified and motivated teachers.

TEACHER TRAINING/PREPARATION

The National Policy on Education (1981) clearly states the philosophy and services of teacher education programmes for Nigeria. The policy in Article 9 sub-section 58 a-e outlined the objectives of providing Nigerians with teacher education thus (a) to provide highly motivated .conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system.(b) to encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.(c) to enhance teachers commitment to the teaching profession.

Government concern about the provision of adequately qualified teacher for all levels of education system, is a response to the warning note sounded by the Ashby Commission which has observed that, there was "a gravely inadequate supply of trained and educated teachers". In Nigeria Secondary Schools (Adeyinka 1990) following the release of both Ashby commission and the National Curriculum Conference of 1960 and 1969 reports, there was a rigid expansion of institutions aim at providing teacher education in the country. In Kwara State between 1974 and 1981, not less than eighteen teachers training institutions and facilities both in the Colleges of Education and at the Institutes of Education of the various Universities came into being.

With the two already in existence between 1952 and 1953 give a total of 20 teacher training institutions in the State alone. Out of this 16 were for Grade II Teacher training and of the three meant for the award of NCE Certificate, Kwara owned only one as of 1981, while the last one is a faculty of education in the University of Ilorin (Adeyinka, 1990). The trend in Kwara State is virtually a replica of what operates all over the country. For as at October, 1994, there were ninety eight Institutions / Facilities or departments of education charged with the responsibility of training teachers for Nigerian School. With NCE awarding Institutions alone standing at sixty nine, it means that more Nigerian could be trained to carry out teaching and learning in our schools thus saving us the trouble of having to employ the service of expatriates at more exorbitant cost for our schools. The programme of teacher training education cut-across four main areas namely: Academic discipline, Professional courses, General studies and Teaching practice.

Professionalization of Teaching

The urge for agitation for the professionalization of teaching anywhere in the world, including Nigeria is a reflection of the understanding that the teaching profession is unique while the demand for teacher's service reflects the aspiration and philosophy of the society they are to serve (Salami, 1994). Teaching ought to be professionalized bearing in mind that no nation can rise above the quality of the teachers.

A profession is any occupation founded on specialized training and intellectual study, the purpose of which is to supply skilled service or advice others for a definite fee of salary (Hoyle 1980).

For a profession to develop the following must be considered,

- (a) The uniqueness of the services rendered by such organization must be identified in a manner that will differentiate it from other such related service.
- (b) There must be a means of accrediting those institutions and the professionals that are trained through them.
- (c) They must possess and enforce a code of conduct and institute ethics that governs the professional conduct of its practitioners.
- (d) The professional as practitioner must possess reasonable competence to perform the task and certificates must be based on more valid estimate of such minimum competence.

Characteristics of Professionalized Teaching

To fully understand the nature of professionalized Teaching, it is important to outline briefly the basic characteristics of a true profession. This will make for easy assessment whether a teaching process is professionalized or not, the features of a true profession in the opinion of Ozigi and Canhan (1979) and Salami (1994) are:

- That the performance of this specific social service (Teaching) is primarily based upon intellectual Techniques.
- The members involved, possess a common body of knowledge which can be identified and can be communicated through intellectual process.
- That admission for membership is on equal footing and emphasis is on the need to maintain high standards of professional practice and ethics.
- Members place emphasis on service to the society rather than upon economic gain in their behavior and the performance of this specific social service.
- Those members always take positive step to update their competence by keeping abreast or relevant technical literature, research and participation in meetings of the corporate group.

It should therefore be noted that only process of impacting knowledge and skills that meets these features could be regarded as professionalized teaching. Teaching as presently done in Nigeria lacks the features of a true profession. There is need to professionalize Teaching in Nigeria because of the indispensable nature of the service, since teachers more than any other professional exert greater influence on the lives of

our youths and the developmental future of our country (Fafunwa Adaralegbe (ed) 1972 .

It is important that those charged with the responsibility of formulating and implementing educational and political policies must restrain from paying lip-service to the development of a worthwhile teacher education and time tested professionalization of teaching. This is the only way to prevent the destruction of the bedrock of our stable social-political and economic future. As teacher, the reform of present unwholesome situation rest more on our shoulders, for we are the products of the system in which we work, and it is only through our concerted efforts that whatever abnormalities are observed can be redressed (Derby, 1966).

According to the National Policy on Education (1981)section9; 59 'All teacher in our educational Institutions from pre-primary to University, will be professionally trained' This is not real, looking at the quality and quantity of Teachers employed in our public schools There is therefore the need to reiterate the call for total professionalization of teaching in Nigeria. This more so because, while the overall performance of any teacher is a function of the nature and quality of his training plus conditions of service under which he operates, the attainment of quality education is said to be predicted reasonably on the morale of the teacher visa-a -visa his social image and his conditions of service.

PROBLEMS FACING PROFESSIONALIZATION OF TEACHING IN NIGERIA

From the fore-going discussion, is obvious that many problems have to be overcome if the idea of making teaching a true profession in Nigeria is to become a reality. But first problem to be tackled is the need to up-grade a large proportion of primary school Teachers to ensure that only those in possession of at least a Teacher Grade 11 Certificate are allows to teach in primary schools. It is the aim of the National Policy that only candidate whose minimum qualification is Grade 11 should be trained as teacher for primary schools. This is now possible since the proposed New Educational system had become a reality.

The other problem that has to be tackled is that of discipline. It is a fact that Teacher from primary up to University level, are sometimes guilty of profession mal-practices (MUSANI.1985).

Another problem of great importance is the condition of service of teachers. The question is whether they are good enough to attract suitable candidates into the profession. This is an important question because without good salary structures, satisfactory conditions of service and good promotion prospect (Fafunwa.1974) the profession will certainly not attract suitable people and will therefore not command the respect it deserves. On the other hand, any review of Teachers' salaries will have to take into account not only the salaries of other comparable jobs but also the effects on the economy. The last salary reviewed 1994 tried to improve Teachers salaries compare to their pre-1994 salary structure and conditions of service. However, discontent still remains, especially among primary school Teachers who feel that their conditions of service are not attractive enough. It is also argued that past salary

reviews did not take into proper consideration a Teacher many heavy responsibilities, the time spent in contact with pupils, extra-curricular activities, lesson preparation and marking.

One other problem is the Teachers professional organization. To some authorities, the professional organizations for Teachers are to be blamed for the non-professionalization of teaching in Nigeria. There is the need for Nigeria Union of Teachers (N.U.T) for instance to behave more like a professional organization and less like trade union. The N.U.T presently, neither has the power to control the quality of entrance into the profession, nor the ability to defend the integrity of the professionals in the field. Teaching in Nigeria tends to lack ethical consideration. For instance, many Teachers could be accused of unprofessional conduct such as involvement in examination malpractices, sexual harassment secret cultism, among others. If the organization have been doing its duties, all culprits against professional ethics ought to.

One other problem is the issue of lack of political commitment; our Government lacks the political power to enforce its policy of professionalizing teaching. At times, it is not uncommon to hear of situations where teaching appointment are giving to unqualified individuals by some (other) state government on contract basis. By so doing, the Government is in the name of quota system and equal participation in government sacrificing quantity in the employment of teachers. Professionalization of teaching can only materialize if the three tiers of government formulate and implement educational policies that accord teachers the honours, consideration and privileges they deserve (Oniye,1997).

Lastly the storage of manpower is another serious problem confronting the professionalization in this great country. This tends to be the main feature of most levels of our education system. At ratio 1:80 instead of 1:40 as stipulated in the National Policy of Education (FGN,1981), the Teacher/pupil ratio is grossly affected by population explosion with its attendant problem is now the characteristics of most of our schools. With this ratio, the need arises for extra hands to handle the excess student's populations, thus the employment of unqualified personnel in the absence of qualified ones. The dearth of qualified Teacher in a way reflects our inability to plan adequately for the future. This is because, although Nigeria is growing, but she lacks essential statistics on the future (needs) of her citizens (Fafunwa, 1969: Oniye, 1994).

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO TEACHERS PROFESSIONALISATION

Base on the problems earlier discussed, the following solutions are proffered to improve the teaching profession in Nigeria.

The government and the entire populace of Nigeria should value the work of teachers. They should see teaching as the mother of other profession that is, teacher are needed to train other people for their profession. As much as teaching profession should be held in high esteem, teachers should also have good self efficacy. Situations that may lead to teachers strike should always be avoided.

Older teachers should be good models to new entrance into the profession. Even children of University professors in Nigeria do not like to study Education at

the University since they do not aspire to take after their parents. This goes a long way to show the magnitude of the problems of teaching profession in Nigeria.

Another consideration in the professionalization of teaching is the need to set up a professional register of teachers for different categories. For example, one category will be for primary level teachers, another for secondary level, and a third for the higher level. Within each category, further division can be made. Though this may give rise to some administrative problems, such a register should not prove too difficult to compile.

CONCLUSION

In concluding this paper. It should be emphasized that we shall be helping not only the present generation of Nigerians but even the unborn generation if we earnestly pursue the professionalization of teaching.

Thus, it is suggested that our government should boldly enforce its policy on making teaching an exclusive reserve of only the qualified teachers. Efforts should be intensified to train and re-train both the untrained and uncertificated teachers already in the profession. Furthermore, government and its agencies concerned with employment of teachers should not hesitate to lay off 'non professionals' in the field not willing to update their qualification who may want to cling to the professional as a last resort.

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