

CODE OF ETHICS IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION

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Introduction:

It is widely accepted that Education is a master key to rapid social, economic and political development of a nation. Thus, it is a sure process of developing the citizenry cognitively, affectively and psychomotively. The teacher is the pivot on which the educational process rests. In fact no educational system can rise beyond the quality of its teachers. This underscores the need for adequate training and constant skill development for our teachers. Teaching is a process of transferring knowledge from the teacher to the learner for the sake of changing behaviour and skill acquisition.

The paper is aimed at briefly examining the concept of ethics in the teaching profession and the essence of a codified ethics for teachers with a view to enhancing their professionalism and job performance in schools.

The Rationale for Ethics in the Teaching Profession.

Obviously, there are several sources of knowledge acquisition. These include books and other instruments, mass media, intuition, revelation, empirical source, rational source and autodidactic source (Durosaro and Durosaro, 1986). The teacher is a crucial facilitator of knowledge acquisition hence he takes a lot of cue from his behaviour in terms of his dressing, his mannerism in speech, his attitude, his private

and social life' patterns. This is the basic rationale for the introduction of codified ethics to the teaching profession. The code of ethics are meant to guide teaches' 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.

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the theory of value. The ethics of the teaching profession are the moral beliefs and rules about right and wrongs that influence teachers behaviour, attitude and ideals. In most communities in Nigeria, there are some known, acceptable (social) norms that appear taken for granted as ethics in teaching. These acceptable (social) norms are of two categories. First, moral ethics such as honesty, loyalty, discipline, not smoking in presence of students and in public places, not drinking alcohol in the presence of students and in public places, dressing neatly and decently to school, sexual comportment and punctuality. Secondly work ethics such as continuous learning, regular preparation of lesson plans, serving in loco Parents of students, regular assessment of learners, reporting on learners, being cooperative with other teachers at work and obedience to authority. These are social norms that must be transmitted from generation to generation and the teacher being a facilitator of learning must not send a wrong signal. It is in realization of this critical attributes of the teacher that the Federal Government of Nigeria had taken steps towards professionalization of teaching and teacher registration to sift the "weeds from the tars". In the same vein, the Teachers Registration Council (TRC) prepared a code of conduct for teacher (TRC, 2004) for wide circulation. This code of ethics is examined in the next section.

Code of Ethics for Teachers:

In the appreciation of the critical role the teachers play in social, economic and political growth of the nation, the Nigerian Government devised 'some strategies to reposition teaching as a noble profession and to sanitize the profession in Nigeria. The establishment of the Teachers Registration Council with a mandate to ensure only professionally qualified teachers are employed in our schools and the production of a teacher code of conduct are milestones in the bid to ensure the teaching profession attains a lofty height of operation.

The Teachers code of conduct (2004) is presented in nine chapters. The introductory chapter has five sections. These sections include preamble, objectives of teachers code of conduct, UNESO/ILO position on status of teachers, provision of National policy of Education for professionalization of Teaching and Teachers Registration council Nigeria Act 31 of 1993.

The next chapter dwelt on principles of professionalization of teaching, touching on items like categorization of teachers, legal requirements, other requirements, obligations of teachers, Right and Privileges of registered teachers, professional conduct and other relevant laws.

Chapter three dealt with relationship with colleagues in terms of respect, symbiotic relationship, responsibilities of senior colleagues responsibilities of junior colleagues, loyalty, discrimination, defamation of colleague, touting, canvassing and team work.

Chapter four focused on the role of a teacher as an Administrative/Academic leader. It specifically touched on inspiration, motivation, personality, objective, emocratic, behaviour, academic development and ensuring all-round development of learners.

Chapter 5 touched on relationship with learners in terms of child's right and dignity, responsibility for education programme, empathy, confidentiality, fair remunerations, sexual misconduct and related abuse of office, Examination malpractice, patronage of learners groups, role-model, corrupt practice, corporal punishment, discipline and ideological influence.

Chapter six covers relationship with Parents/Guardians. It focused on communication, respect for Parents/Guardians, favoritism and association with Parents/Guardians.

Chapter seven concerns the relationship with employers in terms of professional independence, areas of competence, respect of contract and obligation to union agreement.

Chapter eight dwelt on relationship within the society in terms of the role of the teacher in the society, advice to Government/stakeholders, obedience to law, tolerance and personal habit.

Chapter nine covers general issues like liability of the teacher, constructive criticism, open mindedness, incentive for good behaviour and interpretation of teachers code of conduct.

Precisely, the code of ethics in the teaching profession in Nigeria is fashioned after the UNESCO/ILO recommended codes of conduct. The ethics demand as follow:

- Teaching should be professionalized and teachers must have undertaken some approved courses appropriate for teacher preparation before being employed.
- Teachers should be disciplined and there should be sanctions and penalties for misbehavior. To this end a Teacher Disciplinary Committee and a Teacher Investigating Panel had been provided for by TRCN.
- Teachers should enjoy academic freedom particularly in deciding what to teach, materials to use and the appropriate methodology.
- Teachers assessment should be objectively done and there should be right of appeal against such assessment.
- The relationship among teacher and between teachers and parents should be that of mutual cooperation.
- Teachers should strive to ensure high professionals standards.
- Teachers should show allegiance to the profession body such as NUT.
- Teachers should take active part in extra-curricular activities for the benefit of their pupils.
- Teachers should maintain cordiality with administrative and other staffers in the schools for good working relationship.

- Teachers should participate in social and public life of the community in the interest of teachers personal development and for them to be socially relevant.
- Teachers should also be free to exercise their civic rights and be eligible for public office.
- Teachers should not show any form of discrimination in their operation in or out of school.
- Teachers should not engage in any form of defamation of to colleagues.
- It is unethical for a teacher to engage in tauting or using dubious means such as deception or misinformation to take away clients and learners from colleagues.
- Teacher should respect child's right and dignity with out any
- Prejudice to sex, race colour, creed or religion.
- The teachers should also ensure confidentiality of personal information and other records of the learner disclosed to him.
- The teachers should have a right to fair remuneration but should avoid over-pricing of services. -
- It is against the ethics of the teaching profession to sexually harass a learner.
- Teachers should not be involved in any form of examination malpractices.
- It is against the ethics of teaching for teacher to engage in cultism, bribery and corruption.

- It is unethical for a teacher to give corporal punishment unless duly authorized to do so.
- Teachers are also barred from influencing the learners ideologically.
- It is ethical for teachers to respect contractual obligations and the rule of law.

Conclusion

Obviously, teaching is noble profession and teachers must operate with set professional standards. These set standards are prescribed in form of ethics. These ethics are derived from the joint recommendations of UNESCO/ILO. They are the reflection of the values of the teachers and their profession. Professional development of teachers must fulfill certain needs which must include the social need for an efficient and humane educational system capable of adaptation to evolving social needs, finding ways of helping staff. to improve and encouraging teachers to have desire to live a satisfying and stimulating personal life.

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