

JEM

Journal of

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

A Bi-annual Publication of

**THE INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL
PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION
(IEPA)**

University of Cape Coast, Ghana

ISSN 0855 - 3343

Vol. 6

Nov. 2012

Teaching as a Profession in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects

R. W. Okunloye

Abstract

This paper examines the ranging controversy about the professional standing of teaching in Nigeria and the factors that contributed to the prevailing status and rating of teaching as a profession in Nigeria. It further examines the challenges and prospects of its becoming a highly rated profession of comparable standing to other well established profession in the future. The paper also proffers suggestions on how to effect a positive turn around in the professional status of teaching in Nigeria.

Introduction

There are lots uncertainties about whether or not teaching is a profession in Nigeria. The uncertainty about the professional standing of teaching in Nigeria is traceable to the concept of teaching as an activity or occupation, the conception of who a teacher is, and the partial presence or absence of those characteristics associated with other established professions, such as Law, Medicine, Engineering, among others. This problem is further compounded by conflicting conception of a profession. The term, profession, has been defined in the generic, symbolic, ideological and specialist occupation or pragmatic perspectives. From the generic

viewpoint, a profession can be defined as a field of economic activity requiring academic preparation above the high school level (Encyclopaedia of Education, 1971). A profession from the symbolic perspective, is a symbol for a desired conception of one's work and by extension of one's self (the worker) (Hughes, 1958). From the ideological conception, the term profession is used as a bargaining position in an occupation's efforts to improve its status, rewards and condition (Halmos 1971; Reiff, 1971 and Haug, 1973;). From specialist occupation or pragmatic viewpoint, a profession refers to a body, a field of economic activity, a job description that provides a specialised service based on the acquisition of specialised knowledge and skill by members who subscribe to a recognized regulatory body and code of ethics governing practitioners and control or admission of new members (Jimoh, 2004; and Konoye, 2005).

Antagonists and protagonists of the professional standing of teaching have made reference to the presence or absence of the characteristics of which a profession can be distinguished by teaching. These characteristics include:

1. an occupation which performs a crucial social function.

2. the exercise of this function requires a considerable degree of skill.
3. the skill is exercised in a situation which are not wholly routine but involve the handling of new problems and situations.
4. members of the profession possess and draw on a systematic body of knowledge to meet professional demands, in addition to the knowledge gained through experience.
5. the acquisition of the required expertise and systematic body of knowledge and the development of specific skills require a lengthy period of higher education.
6. the period of education and training also involves the process of socialisation into professional values.
7. the professional values, which members imbibe and took oath of allegiance to, are predominantly clients interest centred and they are stated in a code of ethics.
8. by virtue of the requisite expert knowledge and skill demanded for professional practice, entry qualifications and work standard of members are controlled by a recognised, certifying, regulatory and profession affiliated institutional agency.
9. the registered and recognised professional bodies tend to have greater autonomy over professional practice and

exhibit high degree of commitment to professional development by sponsoring continuing education programmes for new and old members.

10. members of the profession are usually rewarded by high prestige adequate remuneration and general condition of service which also motivate them to remain on the job (Hoyle, 1980; Farrant, 1998; Ciwar, 2002; Olorundare, 2003; Jimoh, 2004; and Konoye, 2005).

This paper examines the state of teaching as a profession in Nigeria against this background. It also examines the problems facing its professional standing and discusses the prospects of teaching becoming an established profession in Nigeria.

The State Of The Teaching Profession In Nigeria

The claim and perception of teaching as a profession in the generic symbolic and ideological senses are undisputable. From a generic viewpoint, anybody involved in teaching with any certificate above high school can rightly claim to be a teacher. Also when by way of self-esteem or self-concept teachers regard themselves as professionals and their work as one of the most dignified profession, they are said to have a symbolic perspective of teaching and themselves as teachers. Ideologically speaking, in labour employer relations or collective bargaining, teachers can rate their profession as indispensable in the society and therefore demand the best

remuneration package from their employers in private or public schools. However, its claim as a profession in the specialist occupation and pragmatic sense has generated much controversy. Established professions, such as law, medicine and engineering buttressed their claims of being a profession on the basis of near or complete possession of those ten characteristics of a profession as identified above.

Teachers, Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) and others who have put up an advocacy about teaching as a profession have identified those characteristics of a real profession which are true of teaching in Nigeria. Firstly, teaching as an occupation is a very crucial, if not the most crucial social function in any given society. The followers, leaders and all other experts in any given society are products of teaching and teachers in as much as such individuals must have passed through a school setting to acquire the minimum education possible.

Secondly, teaching as an activity requires basic skills such as communication, explaining, questioning and organising which are learnt and not unborn (Farrant, 1998). Thirdly, teaching requires the acquisition of systematic body of knowledge in specialised teacher training education institutions for effective and successful practice (such as Teacher Training Colleges, Colleges of Education and University).

Fourthly, teaching has a code of conduct (COC) for teachers as enunciated in Teachers Registration

Council (TRC) of Nigeria's Teachers' Code of Conduct (2004). However, the code of conduct still lacks binding force on members because other enforcement agencies and processes that are spelt out by the TRC Acts 31 of 1993 have not been implemented in each state of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Ciwar, 2002). Specifically, Teacher Investigation Panel (TIP) and Teachers Disciplinary Committee (TDC) are yet to be established. Neither has a single case been tried nor punitive measures meted on erring member(s) at state or federal level in Nigeria. This is not the case in other established professions such as medicine. For example, the Nigeria Medical and Dental Council openly tried and pronounced judgement in cases of professional misconduct involving their members in 2006.

Fifthly, the Local Education Authorities, State Ministries of Education and Federal Ministry of Education have distinguished between professionally qualified and unqualified teachers of different levels of education in Nigeria. Grade Two Teachers Certificate used to be the minimum professional qualification recognised at the Primary School level. It was in recognition of the professional standing and requirement of teaching that Nigerian Educational Research Council (1980) declared that 'those who do not possess the Grade II qualification will be eliminated in due course and that by 2000 AD every Primary School Teacher will have to possess the Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE)' (p.67) to practice in Nigeria.

The most recent step towards the standardisation of the entry requirements into the profession was introduced in 2004 by the TRC (2004). The TRC recognised and categorised four professional classes or grades of teachers in Nigeria, namely, A,B,C, and D as follows:

Class A: Holders of Ph.D in Education or Masters in other field plus certificate in education (e.g Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) and NCE)

Class B: Holders of Masters degree in Education or Masters in other field plus Certificate in Education (e.g. PGDE, NCE)

Class C: Holders of Bachelors degree in Education or Bachelors in other field plus certificate in education (e.g. PGDE, NCE)

Class D: Holders of NCE or equivalent.

The TRC also stipulated NCE as the minimum entry qualification into the profession, while giving professional registration to holders of grade II certificate or equivalent. It also gave this category of teachers (grade II) a two-year moratorium to acquire higher teaching qualification that will qualify them to be registered in class D stated above. This moratorium expired in 2006 and holders of the certificate were deemed to be unqualified to teach at the primary school level. In spite of these remarkable efforts which started in the year 2000 and subsequently improved upon by the TRC (2004), no other enforcement measures have been taken to ensure adherence to the recognised entry requirements into

teaching in Nigeria apart from the registration of teachers by the TRC.

While it is commendable that conscious effort are being made by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the establishment of the TRC and the systematic implementation of professionalization of teaching, the job is yet to be accorded its proper and deserved recognition as a profession in Nigeria. This is because the TRC Act of 1993 has not been fully implemented. More pathetic is the predominant use of non-professionals in teaching by private school proprietors in Nursery and Primary schools in Nigeria. More importantly, the failure of practicing teachers to meet significantly those enumerated criteria of a profession have pointed to the clients' (learners) interest centeredness of teachers even at the expense of their individual and collective welfare. Teachers, over the years, have shown great restraint in embarking on industrial action to prevent the interruption of pupils' education.

Each of the criteria of professional characteristics of teaching highlighted above will be examined more closely with reference to the prevailing concept of teaching, the amorphous conception of a teacher and the predominant use of non-professionals in teaching in private Nursery and Primary schools.

The concept of teaching is much less exact than other concepts that are descriptive of professional activities. For instance, this is revealed by the fact that almost any activity, including ordinary conversation, parental guidance, sermon, and so forth, are regarded as teaching (Musgrave &

Taylor, 1969; Judge, 1974; Cremin, 1976; and Langford, 1978). The implication is that the real teaching activities of professional activity.

By extension of the general concept of teaching, is the amorphous conception of who a teacher is. The vague conception of a teacher is that he or she is someone paid to instruct (Musgrave and Taylor, 1969, Hoyle, 1969). Hence, just anybody can claim to be a teacher. This misconception has portrayed teaching as more or less of a non-professional job.

Also, the predominance of unqualified individuals in teaching, particularly in private Nursery and Primary schools in Nigeria had greatly eroded the professional standing of teachers; given the substantive role such individuals play in the school system.

In addition, teaching has not been accorded real professional standing because its members have failed to meet in a significant manner, those criteria or characteristics of a profession. Teachers neither have control over the services, which they offer, nor the training and work standards of their members (Hoyle, 1980; and Farrant 1988).

The teachers' code of conduct prepared by the TRC of Nigeria is not administered on members as some other professions do when admitting new members and it has no binding force on teachers as applicable to those other established professions as earlier highlighted. Major steps to ensure that the present COC of teachers issued by the TRC must be taken. For instance, the oath of allegiance to the COC must be legally administered on members at

the point of entry into the profession as applicable to Medicine and Law among other established profession. In addition the enforcement agencies namely the TIP and TDC are yet to be established at the state level. While the present trade union body of teachers at primary and post primary levels – NUT lacks the capacity and structure to function as a COC enforcement agency unless reconstituted and re-registered as a professional body. The problem of enforcement of the standardized entry requirement into teaching had persisted over the years even in the face of current efforts by the TRC to regularize or abrogate the proliferation of entry points into teaching. In the same vein, the length of training of teachers, particularly those making entry at grade II and N.C.E. points are comparatively shorter than what obtains in other established professions.

Finally, the poor remuneration of teachers and condition of service still persist in teaching, as it is true of the public sector in Nigeria. The long expected and NUT advocated Teachers Salary Scale (TSS) that was to be approved by the Federal Government seems to have been abandon in the course of the introduction of a unified wages and salaries in the public sector in Nigeria under the recent approved Consolidated Salary Scale (CSS). The poor remuneration of teachers has turned teaching into a stopgap or stepping stone job in search of other lucrative jobs. The poor condition of service has also turned a sizeable proportion of teachers to part-time teachers on account of involvement in other part-time economic activities e.g. trading, farming, among others further eroded among professional teachers.

Problems and Prospects of Teachings in Nigeria

Teaching has remained a lowly recognized profession in Nigeria because some of the problems that had attended the conception, treatment and practice of teaching in the country have remained largely unresolved.

The extent to which these problems are drastically and urgently addressed by teacher, teachers professional association, government and other stakeholders in the Nigerian educational system will determine whether a bleak or bright future will attend teaching in Nigeria. Therefore, the prospect of teaching becoming a profession of comparable status to other well established professions in Nigeria depends on how the situations and circumstances that had persistently depreciated the status and practice of teaching in Nigeria are addressed.

If teachers rightly perceive teaching and private and government concerns in Nigeria recognised teaching as a specialised job description and regards teachers as professionals then a bright future awaits teaching and teachers in Nigeria. This new thinking about teaching may put an end to the incessant intervention of government in the certification and admission of new entrants into the profession. It may also end the regime of multiple and loose entry points in the profession when the prescribed minimum entry qualification into teaching at primary school level of education (NCE) as recommended by the Bagauda Report and stipulated by the TRC of Nigeria is implemented (NERC, 1980; TRC, 2004).

If the Union is re-registered as a professional body as against its present trade union status and given adequate autonomy to regulate entry, training and work standards of teachers, teaching may become a highly rated, recognized, remunerated and profession.

If a good remuneration package that is peculiar to teaching is introduced, self-concept of teachers will positively improve and the profession will cease to be a transit point for those engaged in teaching pending the availability of other desired well paid jobs. This is evident in the enrolment trend in Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programmes in Faculties of Education in Nigeria that improved significantly in the last two years when the much-publicised Teachers Salary Scale (TSS) was on the drawing board. When an improved and exclusive TSS is introduced, the prevailing high rate of turnover of teachers into other lucrative professions may significantly decline if not completely eradicated. More importantly, serious minded prospective teachers may be attracted to make a career in teaching.

Conclusion

The earlier the problems confronting teaching as a profession in Nigeria are addressed the better. If the problems are adequately tackled, teaching may eventually become a highly rated profession in the nearest future. However, if the problems are allowed to persist or tackled peripherally, teaching may yet degenerate into an all-comers job where quacks would outnumber qualified teachers. This will not augur well for the nation as no nation or educational system can

develop beyond the quality of its teachers. The time to take decisive action is now.

Reference

- Ciwar, A.M. (2002). *Teachers registration council hand book*.
- Cremin, L.C. (1976). *Public education*. New York: Basic Book.
- Farrant, J.S. (1988). *Principles and practice of education*. Essex: Longmans.
- Halmos, P. (1971). *Sociology and the personal service professions*. In E. Freidson, (Ed). *The professions and their prospects*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Haug, M.R. (1973). *Deprofessionalisation. An alternative hypothesis for the future*. In P. Halmos, (ed). *Professionalisation and social change*. The sociological review monograph 20 Keele, University of Keele.
- Hoyle, E. (1980). *Professionalism and deprofessionalisation in education*. In E. Houle and J. Megarry (Eds.) *World yearbook of education professional development of teachers*. New York: Kopan page, London: Nicholas publishing company.
- Hughes, H.C. (1958). *Men and their work*. London: Free press.
- Jimoh, S. A. (2004). *University teaching as a profession: issues and problems*. In E.A. Ogunsakin (Ed) *Teaching in tertiary institutions*. Ilorin: Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin.
- Judge, H.C. (1974). *School is not yet dead*. London: Longman.
- Langford, G. (1978). *Teaching as a profession*. Manchester: Manchester University press.
- Musgrave, F. and Taylor, P.H. (1969). *Society and the teacher's role*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Nigeria educational research council (1980). *Perspectives of quantities and qualities in Nigeria education: A synthetic report of Bagauda seminar (September 1-5)*.
- Konoye, R.W. (2005). *Deprofessionalisation of teaching and teachers' productivity in Nigeria*. *Africa Journal of Information Technology and Educational Media (AJIT-EM)*, I(3)2005.
- Olorundare, A. S. (2003). *The teaching profession ethics and problems*. Lead paper presented at the Nigerian Army Education Corps Conference, Nigerian Army School of Education, Sobi, Ilorin, April, 2003.
- Reiff, R. (1971). *The danger of the techni-pro: Democratizing the human service professions*. *Social policy* 2, 82-4.
- Teachers Registration Council (2004). *Teachers Code of Conduct*.