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The Lagos Journal of Educational Administration and Planning is the official publication of the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos, Nigeria. Its major aim is to disseminate information and findings on articles and researches in the area which include but not limited to Educational Administration and Planning and other related fields. The Journal’s operational purpose is to publish original and scholarly works in the areas of "Leadership Effectiveness, Principalship, School Climate, Job Satisfaction, Leadership Behaviour, Human Resource Management, School Plant Planning, Structure of Educational Management, Demographic Analysis of Educational planning, Educational Financing, Budgeting, Politics of Education, Policy Making in Educational Administration and Planning, Economics of Education, Development Economics and School Business Administration and Management Information System in Educational Administration and Planning.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. School Principals’ Managerial Skills and Teachers’ Effectiveness in Osun State High Schools - Ajadi, Olugbenga Timothy 1
4. Conditions of Service and Attitude to Work Performance of Staff in National Examinations Council (NECO), Nigeria - Atanda, A. I. & Iloani, I. U. 43
5. Universal Basic Education Act in Nigeria: A Reality or Fiction? - Jacob Adeyanju 57
6. Re-Examining Teaching as a Profession in Nigeria - Patrick O. Akinsanya 69
7. Socio-Economic Factors as Determinants of Leisure Utilization among Residential Students of University Of Lagos - Ige, Lawrence Olusola & Ajibola, G. S. 80
10. Effects of Cultural Arts and Traditional Festival Promotions on Socio-Economic and Tourism Development of Communities in Oyo State, Nigeria - Oyekunle Oyelami Ph.D. 114
11. Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability: Implications for Educational Attainment in the Niger Delta Region - Ngozi, E. Uzoka & Jeremiah A. Adetoro. 128
12. Information Sharing and Awareness on Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) among Emerging Adults in Ogun State - Adewuyi Elizabeth Abosede & Adegoye Adeboye Johnson. 142
13. Innovative Directions for Effective Educational Policy Implementation In An Era Of Economic Recession - Professor John I. Nwankwo. 153
14. Teacher Education at a Distance: Quality Technology Strategies for Higher Education Lecturers in Nigeria – Martha Nkechinyere Amadi 165
Abstract

Teaching as a profession in Nigeria has attracted a lot of criticisms from inception. At this contemporary times, when it should be taken for granted that such debates have been finally put to rest, certain features and practices in teaching still compel researchers to query if teaching has been fully professionalised in Nigeria. This paper, thus, attempts some conceptual clarifications on teaching as a profession. It examines the principles and characteristics of a real profession, and tries to situate teaching as practised in contemporary Nigerian society within the context of the considered principles and characteristics. The writer avers that the present-day teaching in Nigeria does not satisfy most of the professional criteria considered, as witnessed in other professions such as medicine, law, engineering, etc. The problems militating against the full professionalization of teaching in Nigeria were analysed and some recommendations were made such as fostering a pragmatic synergy between Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) and Teachers' Union for collaboration on such issues as training of teachers, teaching practice, internship, certification, registration, accreditation, and other important issues relating to full professionalization.

Key words: Teaching, Profession, Contemporary Nigeria, Principles and Characteristics of a profession.

Introduction

The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) was established in 1993. Its purpose was to transform the teaching profession to the highest standards possible with particular respect to the quality of teacher-education programmes, registration, licensing, professional development, professional demeanors, and overall social status of teachers at all levels of the education system. Despite these efforts, the profession still leaves much to be desired, especially when compared with other professions such as medicine, law, engineering, surveying, etc. The features which distinguish professions from occupations are still conspicuously missing in teaching. There are still records of unqualified and unprofessional teachers in classrooms in large numbers, and most of the qualified teachers are not yet registered or licensed. It seems that not much re-training for professional development is going on especially at the primary and secondary tiers of the system. There are so many
infiltrations and unfavourable external influences. Remunerations, albeit better than before, but not yet commensurate with efforts dissipated. Other problems observed are poor working environment, low self-esteem, weakened esprit de corps, and a host of other challenges. So, one can justifiably ask: is teaching really a profession in present-day Nigeria? To attempt an answer to this question, it is pertinent to clarify some key concepts.

Conceptual Clarifications

What is Teaching?
Teaching is the art of a teacher done to disseminate knowledge to a group of learners. It implies a knowledgeable and experienced individual transferring in a systematic way, the knowledge arranged in the curriculum to another individual who predisposes himself to learning (Akinsanya, 2013). It is a deliberate activity whose function is to assist or guide people in skills, right attitudes, ideals and propensities needed to fit in into the society. It is an art requiring some dexterity, principles, protocols and methods between two parties—the teacher and the learner.

What is Profession?
According to Adebajo (1999), a profession is an occupation which claims exclusive technical competence, and adheres to the “service ideals” and avowed ethics of conduct. It is a higher form of occupation with respect to specialization of trading and quality of organization. It is one wherein members acquire knowledge on which their occupation is based. They also develop the spirit of togetherness, “belonginess” and responsibility, as they assume a feeling of moral concern towards clients/customers, with the spirit of advancement of the profession. Examples of occupations that fall within this context are medicine, law, surveying engineering, inter alia. They are characterized by some principles such as:

1. Humanitarian service: This means that professions are meant to ensure the general welfare of people.
2. Uniqueness of service: The type of service rendered in a profession is special to that profession, and no occupation or job offers the same type of service.
3. Strong commitment: It is a career.
4. Responsibility: There is acceptance of liability for carrying out a duty.
5. Total independence: Each profession is controlled by itself. There is no chance for external interruption or commanding influence (Akinsanya, 2008).

Characteristics of Professions
Every profession has certain characteristics distinguishing them, and according to Akinsanya (2008), the list includes:

1. Life-long professionalism: Every profession is a career which lasts all through life. Once professionalized, a person always remains a professional till death. For instance, a medical doctor remains so even without practice or after retirement.
2. Services to the public: A profession is made up of people who render some specific services which no other person in another field may render to the public.
3. Training: Long period of training in educational institutions.
4. Duration of training: Such training must have a particular duration.
5. Minimum entry qualifications into the field: It is not often open to every Tom, Dick and Harry.
6. Specialization: Because there are different aspects to a profession, specialization is required of adherents. In this case, one chooses a delineated aspect of the profession, after having undergone the rudiments of such a profession.
7. Hierarchy: There is a line of hierarchy.
8. Certification: Every professional is certified before going into practice.
9. Internship: Before practice, there is a period of internship. This will enable members to blend the theoretical training with the actual practice on the field.
10. Comprehensiveness: There is comprehensiveness of organizational set up.
11. Formal registration: This is always typical of a professional organization.
12. Belongingness: The spirit of ‘esprit de corps’ radiates strongly among members of a profession.
13. Responsibility: There is acceptance of responsibility.
14. Intellectual work: Involvement in some amount of intellectual work and brainstormy sessions.
15. Autonomy: There is autonomy of profession. This is the liberty to control or determine the practice and the modus operandi of a profession, with restrictions to any undue interference or interruption from outside the field.
16. Code of ethics: There is a code of ethics/conduct which regulates the demeanours of practitioners, especially in their interactions with clients or customers as the case may be.
The question which begs for an answer at this juncture is: Does teaching in contemporary Nigerian society fit into the above enumerated characteristics of a profession? This question is delineated to Nigeria because teaching in most parts of the world (e.g. Britain, U.S.A., France, Germany and other developed countries) is regarded, observed and practised as a profession. This is mainly because teaching readily satisfies the tenets of a profession in those countries. Can the same be said of Nigeria?. A quick examination of teaching in Nigeria vis-à-vis the considered characteristics is useful here.

Teaching in Nigeria: A Profession?

Succinctly, teaching is not thoroughly regarded as a career in Nigeria. The reasons for this are based on not-too-rewarding remunerations and conditions of service given to teachers. These situations make Nigerian teachers (even the highly trained ones) to take teaching as mere stepping stones to greater heights or as the last resort (Olori, 2007). So, once there is a better offer in politics, in the corporate milieu or even in the ministry, teachers begin to switch jobs.

Second, teaching provides basic services to the public. Through teaching, certain values, norms, etiquettes and the general tradition of the Nigerian society is passed from one generation to the next. Teaching helps to prepare the younger generations for the task of taking Nigeria to a higher level of development.

In the teaching profession, there is a long period of training in institutions of learning. To produce an NCE holder (which is at present, the minimum qualification in teaching), it takes nothing less than fifteen years, that is, six years in the primary school, six years in the secondary school and three years in the College of Education; while a degree holder will also spend nothing less than sixteen years. To begin a National Certificate in Education (NCE), Bachelor Degree in Education (B.Ed, BSc.Ed., B.A.Ed); Master Degree in Education (M.Ed), even Post graduate Diploma in Education (P.G.D.E) programmes, or Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D), there are laid down requisites. Teaching is not an all-comers' affair. There are durations for these trainings.

Fourthly, there are specializations in teaching. Teachers are not jack-of-all-trades. After some basic introduction to the profession, some specialize in psychology, sociology, philosophy, management, business education, primary education, et cetera. These follow a long period of specialized training according to the levels:

- NCE - 3 years
- B.Ed / B.Sc (Ed.), B.A (Ed) - 4 years
- P.G.D.E - 1 year plus the 4 years which it takes to earn a degree outside of Education (for non-education graduates).

In the teaching profession, there is a line of hierarchy. Every subject teacher has a Coordinator, who has a Head of Unit, who has a Head of Department, who has a Dean or Vice-Principal or Assistant Head Teacher as the case may be, and the Vice-Chancellor or the Principal or Headmaster, and so on.

Not all those who parade themselves as teachers in Nigeria are certified. We often have cases of graduates of other disciplines outside education, who, out of no job security or job availability, stray into teaching. Such have not been tutored in the art of pedagogy or andragogy, but we still have them in our schools. Another related issue is that the process of certification of teachers is wrongly done. A situation where the government and educational institutions certify practitioners, without the involvement of the body in charge of Teachers is certainly wrong. This is contrary to what operates in other professions. Even in Nigeria, professions like medicine, law, engineering, surveying, etc, are deeply involved in the process of certification and accreditation of their members.

Internship is observed for the teacher trainees, As a matter of fact, education graduates are always made to pass through teaching practice where they are expected to apply the knowledge they have learnt in the classroom. Non-education graduates are not trained in the art of teaching.

On registration, one can confidently say that there is registration of teachers. But this should not be done by the NUT or ASUU or COEASU, but solely by Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) which is a body constituted by the Federal government. Other professions subject new entrants to test/examination, after which they could be registered and inducted by the professional bodies themselves. Such registration certificates could be withdrawn by the bodies if the registered member is found to have committed some misdemeanours against the ethics of the professions. This is not the case with teaching. Although the TRCN has recently announced that it will begin to subject applicants for admission to qualifying examination, one finds much interference by the government in teachers' affairs.

Teaching profession enjoys some sort of esprit de corps. To some extent, there is togetherness. Teaching in Nigeria is a mixed bag of education graduates and non-education graduates; interested fellows and uninterested fellows; by committed and not so-committed people. This affects togetherness to a large extent.
There is an acceptance of responsibility for mistakes committed in the system. Teaching is a service that is not rendered in isolation. Other stakeholders like home, peer group, religious organisations, media houses contribute to the process of moulding a child. This situation does not give chance to lay direct blame on teachers for any mistake or failure detected in the system.

There is an involvement in serious intellectual work, albeit we may not have a generalization on this issue. The fact is that some teachers are dedicated to academics (they carry out research works, publish articles and books, organize nourishing intellectual programmes, etc); while some others are do not.

There is no autonomy in teaching profession in Nigeria. It is a field which has suffered and continues to suffer interference from the government. This is one of the reasons why teaching is frequently regarded in some quarters as a mere occupation, and not a profession. Every profession must be able to control all matters which involve its practitioners in relation with the clients or customers. Teaching has codes of conduct. But interestingly, these codes appear to be one of secrecy because they are not readily available to practitioners in the field. This gives room for claims of ignorance on the expectations and duties of teachers and those acts which constitute an offence and what sanctions to apply in teaching.

From the foregoing, therefore, it is easy to conclude that teaching in Nigeria does not yet reflect a good number of the features of a profession, and thus, cannot really be said to be fully professionalized, unlike what obtains in other climes. This means that there are some problems which militate against the full professionalisation of teaching in Nigeria.

Problems Militating Against Full Professionalization of Teaching in Nigeria

Some of the challenges affecting teaching in Nigeria are:

The Standing of Teachers' Unions
The autonomy which teachers' association does not have, has not given it free-hand to censor what goes on among members of the association. Relatedly, the split into groups/associations denies teachers of formidability. Unlike medicine which has only one body regulating its activities – NMA (Nigerian Medical Council); Law has NBA (Nigerian Bar Association), Teaching has NUT, ASUSS, COAESU, ASUP, ASUU, each taking care of a tier in the education industry. The different bodies do havoc than good.

A Journal of the Department of Educational Management, University of Lagos

Mode of Recruitment
The mode of recruitment in teaching allows for quacks to creep in into the system. This may be due to the fact that certification, registration and recruitment/selection of teachers are often done by the government through TRCN.

Work Environment
Teacher's work environments in Nigeria are mostly unconducive for teaching-learning processes. This begins from the jam-packed staff rooms to the stuffy classrooms. This creates problems. First, the teacher feels discouraged when compared with his counterparts in Banking, Hospitals, etc; Second, it does not elevate the person of the teacher in the eyes of the outsider who comes visiting (the way one appears is the way one is addressed).

Public's Perception
According to Afe (2001), although teachers' remuneration seems to be getting better these days, the impression the public still has about Nigerian teachers tilts towards negativity. Teachers are most times seen as workers whose rewards are piled-up in heaven. The negative impression which the public has about teaching does not create room for its quick acceptance as a profession.

Teachers' low estimation of themselves
The bulk of the public's impression rests solely on the teachers' carriage of themselves. The teacher is a role-model, an example to be followed, a light in darkness, knowledgeable with experience and the tutor. Teachers should not entertain any feeling of shame, inferiority or discontentment. The day when every teacher is able to proudly say - 'I'm a teacher', and carry placards, stickers and other identity labels, without any feeling of shame, is the day the full professionalisation of teaching will be stamped.

Poor remuneration and other conditions of service
One of the goals of teacher education, as reflected in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) is to 'produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system'. This is stated because the policy-makers realize that no education system can arise above the quality of its teachers, and thus, teacher education and welfare would continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development. In reality, however, this yet to be fulfilled.

Erratic and frequent changes in education policies and practices
It is talking in tandem with reality that our policies and educational practices
continue to experience frequent changes owing to the fluctuations. Rather than political system in Nigeria complementing one another, they stand in flagrant contradictions to one another. Hence, Nigeria's education continues to experience a kind of disjointed incrementalism. This definitely has its import on teaching as a profession.

Quality of Education in Nigeria
The quality of education in the country continues to dwindle on daily basis. Thanks to erratic and frequent changes in education system and practices (Olori, 2007). As such, this level of education naturally produces less qualified teachers who in turn produce incompetent learners. This situation may go on ad infinitum.

Economic situation of Nigeria
Nigeria continues to go through economic crises manifesting in economic recession, caused by mismanagement by the political class and their collaborators. This situation results in a big gap between the 'few rich' and the 'large poor masses'. The poverty level of the country drives everybody into education system. It, then, becomes a field typically filled by mostly the not-so-technically grounded in teaching.

Secrecy of Code of Conduct
Members could only abide by the code only when they have it and live by its contents. In fact, if regular lectures are organized based on the teaching code, it would be a step in the right direction. Although the TRCN has made it available on the internet, yet efforts could be made to ensure that hard copies are given to every teacher the day he/she assumes work.

Training and Re-training Programmes
Teaching, in an ideal sense, involves rigorous intellectual exercises. A teacher is to be updated on contemporary issues on one's subject area. Keeping updated entails undergoing training and re-training programmes. The system we have on ground, however, does not give much support for teachers to embark on such programmes, and this definitely affects the quality of instruction and educational output.

Recommendations for Full Professionalization of Teaching in Nigeria
1. Teachers' associations need total autonomy so as to help them register and maintain discipline among members. Also, the splitting of Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) into ASUSS, ASUU, ASUP, COAESU is counter-productive. All these unions should come together under one umbrella to create a formidable front. If for instance, there is a strike action involving all teachers at all levels, the government will be forced to look into the matter in few days, as against a particular ASUU strike which began on July 1, 2013 only to end in December of the same year.

2. There should be a pragmatic synergy between Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) and Teachers' Union. They should collaborate on such issues as training of teachers, teaching practice, internship, certification, registration, accreditation and other important issues that relate to full professionalization.

3. Government should ensure provision of good conditions of service to attract the diligent hands into the profession.

4. The working environment of teachers should be conducive and edifying enough to attract concentration and integrity from the public.

5. Teachers should develop a good public image. They should not underrate themselves. This could be done when they dress modestly and maintain discipline in all facets of life (in talking, eating, celebrations/feasting and other channels through which modesty and discipline could be displayed). In this wise, they would be seen as role-models which they really are.

6. Mode of recruitment and registration should be standardized. If it is left in the hands of Teachers' Associations, it may be better.

7. Government and stakeholders in education should ensure the regulation of educational policies and practices.

8. The government and stakeholders should also ensure investment in teacher education programme. This will help improve the quality of education in the country.

9. Sensitization programmes may be constantly organized for the public to promote the image of the teaching profession.

10. Professional examinations for prospective teachers, which TRCN is about to commence, should be done before such are registered. This is the practice in other professions like law, medicine, engineering, accountancy, to mention but a few.

11. There should be a period of internship, where prospective teachers are made to watch and learn from the experienced teachers before being allowed to practice.

12. Code of conducts should be made available for free on employment, and made enforceable on all teachers.

13. Teachers should be encouraged to explore opportunities of undergoing
training and re-training programmes for updates. This requires some financial assistance and permissions where necessary.

14. Teachers should be fully engaged in intellectual exercises like subscribing to journal articles and studies, publishing of books, attending lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences. These will keep them abreast of contemporary issues as they bear on their specific tasks in the system.

Conclusion
The way teaching profession has been handled in Nigeria instigates concern for continuous examination and re-examination of its status. This paper has considered the issue as to whether teaching is really a profession or not. This paper has highlighted the problems confronting effective professionalization of the teaching profession in Nigeria. The paper, thus, recommended, among other things, that there should be a workable synergy between Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) and Teachers' Union; that teachers should develop a good image of themselves in the society. Government should also adequately fund education. It is hoped that if these recommendations are taken seriously by all stakeholders in education, teachers would finally be rated as professionals just like their colleagues in the fields of medicine, law, engineering, surveying, etc.

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