

Critical Professional Misconducts of Teachers in The Educational System and Way Out.

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Abstract

Critical professional misconducts among teachers especially at the secondary level of education is a universal challenge that is facing every school in all parts of the world. Based on this realization, the purpose of this paper is to examine the expected roles of teachers, to highlight what constitute teacher's professional misconducts, to explain the effects or consequences of teachers misconducts and to suggest ways of curbing the teacher's professional misconducts. It was also gathered that several factors like immoral relationship with female students, increase in examination malpractices, extortion of money from students, poor records keeping, involvement in commercial activities within and outside school were causes of misconducts among teachers in Nigeria. It was also found that poor condition of services, irregular promotion and payment of salaries, poor professional training, societal negative influence, inadequate facilities and instructional supervision were responsible for the misconducts among teachers in Nigeria, the study recommended among other things that thorough screening of candidates being recruited into teaching, regular payment of salary, alleviating poverty of teachers, motivation of teachers and regular supervision and monitoring of teachers.

Keywords: teachers; misconduct; Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is the specialized application of knowledge, skills and attributes designed to provide unique service to meet the educational needs of the individual and of society. The choice of learning activities whereby the goals of education are realized in the school is the responsibility of the teaching profession.

Any act or behaviour or performance contrary to approved rules and regulations is known as misconducts. Professional misconducts among teachers are their acts of behaviour that affects effective teaching, learning and administration of the school. Common misconducts behaviour by teachers include; absenteeism from school and lesson, lateness, non-preparation of lesson notes, failure to mark students exercise books, non-completion of school records such as diaries, registers, student results, involvement in examination malpractices, illegal collection from parent and students, unapproved study leave with pay, drinking, drug taking and sexual immorality. These are serious threat to all level of our educational system, because teachers are the expected professionals, entrusted with the responsibility to conserve the future and destiny of the nation. (Okeke, 2004:10) "the teacher belongs to a special class (sub-group) saddled with" the responsibility of molding the child into a functional adult that will contribute to national development with the following qualities; knowledge of the subject matter being taught far ahead of that of the pupils; professional

skill or know-how to awaken a child's interest in what is being taught and to rekindle in his pupils a love of learning and a good moral character (Anyamebo, 2005:41-42).

Misconduct is a multifaceted phenomenon regarding its displays and causes as well as its meanings and functions in the social, psychosocial and pedagogical fields. Concerning its displays, Amado and Freire (2009) believed that the major situations are framed in what they point out as the first level of misconduct and which are those incidents of disruptive nature whose disturbance affects the good classroom functioning. The incidents that might be framed in the second and third levels are conflicts among peers and conflicts within teacher – student relationship which might be taken on proportions of violence and even delinquency. The problem of indiscipline according to Yaroson (2004) permeates all facets of the life of man and has brought man down to the knees. School discipline according to Gaustard (2005) has two main objectives. The first is to ensure the safety of staff and students and the second to create an environment conducive to learning. Acts of indiscipline occasioned by students' misconducts involving violent and criminal behaviour defeat the goals of education.

Acts of misconduct if allowed to incubate under current favourable conditions by education providers and consumers could hatch a monster that will be difficult to exterminate (Idu & Ojedapo 2011, Tunor 2002).

The problem of professional misconduct affects all schools irrespective of gender and school type though the degree and magnitude vary from school to school. Cases of violence though less common, occur more often outside than on school premises.

The measures taken to deal with indiscipline are barely adequate given the fact that there exist no administrative or legal guidelines which could be referred to in such cases. Actions taken are often ad-hoc and uncoordinated both within and across schools of the same type.

1.1 objectives of the paper

The broad objective of this study is to critically examine what constitute professional misconduct among our teachers and ways of correcting the anomalies.

Arising from these broad objective are these specific objectives

- i. To examine the expected roles of teachers
- ii. To highlight what constitute teacher's professional misconducts
- iii. To explain the effects or consequences of teachers misconducts on the part of pupils/students the parents and the society at large
- iv. To suggest ways of curbing the teacher's professional misconducts

2.1 EXPECTATIONS FROM A TEACHER

Teachers are the main determinants of education. If they are apathetic, uncommitted, uninspired, unmotivated, immoral, and anti-social, the whole nation is doomed. If they are ignorant in their disciplines and impart wrong information, they are not only useless but dangerous. The kind of teachers trained and posted to schools may determine what the next generation would be.

There is a saying that 'where there is no law, there will be no sin'. In any organization, there are ethics for guiding the behaviour/conduct of members. Violation of such ethics by any member will attract sanction. Ethics thus serves as 'checks and balances' in an organization. Like other professions, teachers are expected to observe certain rules and regulations, to keep them above board and discharge their duties conscientiously in such a way that the society, parents, and students will regard them as role models. Although each country in the world has code of ethics for teachers, which are peculiar to teachers in such country, generally, based on experience of the author, teachers are expected to:

- Set good example for their pupils/students, particularly in their dressing manner, speech and the way they perform their duties.

- Be loyal to the school, the head of the school as well as their colleagues.
- Live within their means to avoid financial embarrassment.

- Recognize and respect the authority of the head
- Accept responsibilities, which the head delegates to them and also discharge these to the best of their ability.
- Be punctual in school and classes
- Keep confidential school's matters secret
- Participate in school's activities
- Avoid making defamatory statements or comments about fellow teachers, head of school, pupils/students, or members of general public.
- Shun the conduct of classes for students/pupils outside the normal school hour for a fee.
- Not belonging to organizations whose activities are inimical to the progress of school and cooperate with the head in preventing the introduction of such organization in school.
- Attend professional conferences that are relevant to their work when officially required to do so.
- Not exploiting their pupils/students.
- Keep up to date and relevant school's records for which they are responsible.
- Shun activities that are unrelated to their school's duties except with express permission of the principal/headmaster.
- Administer corporal punishments on pupils/students, in accordance to the prevailing rules and regulations.
- Not misappropriating funds, take bribe or engage in corruption.
- Not absenting himself/herself from school without express permission of the head.
- Not revealing examination questions (be it internal or external) to anyone prior to the conduct of such examinations.
- Be fair to all pupils/students in the marking of examination scripts.
- Avoid condoning or conniving at examination malpractices
- Avoid having carnal knowledge of any person known to be a pupil/student of a school or be involved in any indecent relationship with such person.
- Avoid taking any form of alcoholic drink during official school hours.
- Avoid smoking in classroom or school premises.
- Avoid participating in or condoning/encouraging acts of indiscipline in school, and
- Avoid using their position to further political aspirations or spread the ideology of any political party (Ajayi & Shofoyeke, 2003).

2.2 PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCTS OF TEACHERS

According to Raegan Miller (2014) Teachers are special people in the educational system who supposed to be above board in all ramifications, in particular, be committed to the job and show good moral conduct to the pupils/students always. They are also supposed to serve as role models/mentors to their pupils/students. Any bad behaviour noticed in a teacher can be copied by his/her pupils/students. Such pupils/students can grow with those behaviours and may take several years before the habits can be corrected. Many misconduct could be noticed among teachers these days, which are not only disturbing but reduces the status of teachers and teaching. These include:

2.2.1. *Absence from School and Classes*

According to Harry A. Partriwo (2013), teacher's absenteeism is one of the most serious forms of corruption in education. Regardless of the reason, the system is failing the child when there are high levels of teacher absences. Many teachers take delight in failing to show up in class under the pretext of being engaged in personal/extra-curricular activity(ies). There are those who usually stay in staff common room to gossip about fellow teachers, a habit that encourages conflicts in schools. When a teacher is absent from school and class, it will make his/her pupils/students unattended to during the period of such absence which can lead to their indulgence in acts of indiscipline such as noise making, fighting, vandalism, and bullying. There is also

the tendency for subject's syllabus not to be covered for the pupils/students at the end of the term or session, particularly, when the period of absence is prolonged, which can result to poor academic performance of the pupils/students.

2.2.2 Lateness to School and Classes

It needs not be overstretched that a teacher is expected to be punctual in school to be able to discharge his/her daily routines. While in school, he/she is also expected to attend to all lessons for the day, as indicated in the Time Table. When a teacher comes late to class or school, such teacher may find it difficult to teach effectively within the limited time left for a lesson, in other words, lesson will be hurriedly taught which will not give room for proper understanding of the contents of lesson by the pupils/students. According to Ali (2007), lateness inhibits the process of achieving the goals of the school.

Corruption/Extortion of Money from Pupils/Students

In some cases, the income of workers in many countries in the world today is inadequate for their needs. This is not helped by inflation which has reduced the purchasing value of such income, and led to increase in prices of goods and services. The desire to garner additional income to augment the salary from government, has led many teachers into the habit of extolling money from pupils/students, for example, many teachers regard examination period as period of harvest, owing to the illegal money they hope to collect from gullible and desperate pupils/students. Lucas Seiler (2014) reported that a former math teacher in Charlotte Country will never be able to teach in the State of Florida again after accepting bribes from students in exchange for better grades. Many teachers also lured pupils/students into parting with money in exchange for free marks at the end of examinations. There are those that take delight in collecting pocket money of pupils/students put under their care, all which these have led to the diminished status of teachers in the society.

2.2.3 Immoral Relationship with Female Pupils/Students

According to Ajayi and Shofoye (2003), a school is characterized by teachers and pupils/students from different socio-economic and cultural background. There is thus bound to be interaction between teachers and pupils/students in school. Such interaction should however not be the type that can bring dishonour to either or both parties. In a school, teachers supposed to act 'in loco parentis' that is, as disseminators of knowledge and parents. Unfortunately, many teachers these days are having relationship with female pupils/students under their care, who are in most cases favoured during tests and examinations. The issue of pregnancy, which often results from this ignoble act, has sent many female pupils/students out of school prematurely.

2.2.4 Involvement in Examination Malpractices

According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (6th edition), the word 'malpractice' mean a careless, wrong, or illegal behaviour. 'Examination malpractice' is thus an examination that fails to conform to the norms, that is, examination that not properly conducted. It is a fact that teachers are major stakeholder in the conduct of examination. Before examination can be conducted in school, teacher must be involved. Examination malpractice has however become 'a demon with more than a thousand faces'. This is because, the more an attempt is made to curb it, the more it spreads like 'harmattan fire' (Adeyemi and Ige, 2002). Teachers have been one of the 'dramatis personae' in the perpetration of examination malpractices menace. Studies and reports (Nanna, 1997; Azuka, Alutu & Aluede, 2006; Awe, 2004; Olamusi, 1998) have linked teachers to this menace. Adelusi (1998) observed that poor condition of service of teachers, coupled with unstable economic situation, has made teachers to renounce the popular saying that 'their reward is in heaven'. Many teachers now want their reward on earth which is why they indulge in different kinds of unwholesome practices, in an attempt to make money at all cost and by whatever means. The involvement of teachers in examination malpractices is a matter of concern, embarrassment and disappointment to the education stakeholders. In an ideal situation, teachers who are at the centre stage of teaching-learning process in schools, supposed to have and show good moral etiquette and be role models to pupils/students. The behaviour of many teachers these days, fall short of what the society expects from them. Some teachers now

aid and abet examination malpractice in a very high esteem.

2.2.5. *Non-keeping of/Inappropriate Keeping of Records*

Records are germane in schools/educational institution's administration. Records can help to assess what has been achieved in the past, to show the rate of progress at present and the direction in which the overall development of a school's education is moving; promote greater cooperation between schools by enabling detailed discussion of mutual problems; record the rate of progress in a child's physical and social development; and study a child's progress record in order to discover academic flaws requiring remedial treatment (Akinwumiju, 1996). In spite of the importance of records, many teachers fail to keep them. During inspection/monitoring exercise, teachers are fond of running into bushes anytime the inspectors are around for inspection, particularly, when their records are improperly kept. Records are also kept haphazardly by some teachers. For example, Lesson Notes, Diaries, are usually not scrutinized and endorsed. Falsification of records is another habit among teachers. Olaleye (1995) reported that during registration of pupils/students for external examinations such as the Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE), Record Officers (who are mostly teachers) do prepare over blotted marks for examination's agency to ensure that their schools record one hundred percent success in such examination.

2.2.6. *Engagement in Business Activities within and Outside School*

Many workers, teachers inclusive now find it difficult to sustain themselves and their families with their income. Many teachers thrive on different kinds of loans in order to survive. What some teachers receive as net income at the end of each month after loan deduction is meager, which makes it difficult for them to survive till the end of the month. It is thus not surprising that a lot of teachers these days die of common diseases due to inability to afford medical care for themselves, as a result of over indulgence in bank's loans. To make ends meet, many teachers combine different kinds of activities with their primary assignment. According to Famade (2000), staff common room in some schools, are mini-shops where jewelries, clothes, baby shoes, mineral drinks, and cake are sold by teachers. Some teachers are commercial drivers while some shuttle between school and outside shops/kiosk/boutique to attend to their businesses.

2.2.7. *Sending Pupils/Students on Errand(s)*

There are some teachers who are fond of sending pupils/students on errands within and outside schools. Some are fond of engaging the female pupils/students in selling food items to other pupils/students during and after official school hour. In the rural areas, some teachers make use of male pupils/students for cultivation, particularly in making heaps, planting and removal of weed on their farms. Some are also fond of sending pupils/students to their homes to carry out domestic activities for them, such as cooking, washing of clothes, and caring for their babies. According to Ouma Wanzala (2016), sending students errands deny them learning opportunities. All these make pupils/students involved to miss lessons and likely contribute to their poor academic performance in schools

2.2.8. *Drinking and Smoking*

A teacher is expected to stay in school to perform his/her duties conscientiously within the school period. After closing hour, a teacher has the right to enjoy himself/herself in a way he/she feels convenient. It can however be observed that some teachers, particularly those in the rural areas, do drink alcohol and smoke during official school period thus sending wrong signal to pupils/students who look up to them as role models. According to Ouma Wanzala (2016), pupils are more likely to be treated rudely, neglected by a drunk teacher. Many pupils/students also imbibe this habit after graduation to become alcohol and drug addicts in the society.

3.0 CONSEQUENCES OF TEACHERS' MISCONDUCTS

The issue of professional misconducts of teachers cannot be fully discussed without taking into cognizance the consequence, such as:

- i. *Cancellation of Results of Pupils/Students:* Examination malpractice often leads to cancellation of results of schools where innocent candidates suffer along with the perpetrators. Awe (2004) reported that in the maiden (i.e. year 2000) edition of National Examinations Council of Nigeria (NECO) administered

SSCE, 41,000 results were cancelled. Cases of mass cancellation of results and delay in the release of results do cause setbacks for students who rely on the results to secure admission into tertiary institutions. It also constitutes loss to government because additional money has to be spent to organize and administer another examination.

- ii. **Loss to Parents:** Parents/guardians have to spend more money on the re-registration of their children/wards for another examination when results are seized or cancelled.
- iii. **Reduction in the Value of Certificates:** Examination malpractice also reduces the credibility of certificates of institutions of learning at national and international levels.
- iv. **Non Recognition of Certificates:** Adeyemi & Ige (2002) reported the subjection of intending candidates for admission into higher institutions in some countries to humiliating qualifying tests prior to admission.
- v. **Poor Learning by Pupils/Students:** According to Jem (1996), when a teacher absented himself/herself or comes late to school, this will impair school's work and interfere with the daily routines of other staff, which may give rise to poor instruction, work, duty, frustration and work imbalance. Anukam (2001) added that the cost of a teacher one-day absence from school is significant while the cumulative effect of long period of absence may amount to missing a reasonable part of pupils'/students' curricula which is capable of marginalizing such pupils/students learning achievement.
- vi. **Increased Vices in the Society:** There have been cases of social vices such as armed robbery, swindling, advanced fee fraud (aka 419) among others in the society which are traceable to teachers' attitudes. It is unfortunate that teachers that supposed to serve as role models to pupils and students are now found wanting in the discharge of their duties, which prompted Nwadiani (1999) to suggest the urgent need for re-education of the so-called 'educators'.
- vii. **Withdrawal/Dropout of Pupils/Students from School:** Presently, the issue of out of school children has been a nightmare in many countries in the world. Quite unfortunate is the fact that while efforts are being made to achieve sustainable development goals enrolment of school age children into schools is a top priority, many children of school-going age are still not having access to education in many countries in the world. However, to aggravate this situation, many youths had been frustrated out of educational institutions due to the attitudes of teachers. Cases of sexual abuse of female students by teachers, pregnancy, absence from school and classes, extortion of money from pupils/students, will promote dropping out from schools. Report (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2006) indicates that the number of out-of-school children in twelve countries in the world was 8,110, an indication that dropout is prevalent in the educational system. Unfortunately, many dropout youths end up as armed robbers, swindlers, prostitutes, pick pocketers, motor park touts, political thugs in the society, just to mention a few.
- viii. **Reduction in Teachers' Image:** The role which professional misconducts of teachers are playing in the lowering of teachers' image and status in the society cannot be under-estimated. Unlike in the past, teachers today do not command respect in the public. One can imagine situations where teachers compete with traders in the open market, with professional drivers in motor parks, where teachers are having immoral relationship with female pupils/students; these will make the public to have negative view of them (Jem, 1996)

4.0 THE WAY OUT

Curbing the misconducts of teachers is imperative in view of the importance of teachers in the educational system and the multiplier effects of the misconducts. It is a task for the education stakeholders. Various measures can however be adopted to arrest these misconducts and improve the status of teaching, such as:

- i. **Thorough Screening of Candidates Being Recruited into Teaching:** There is a wise saying that 'prevention is better than cure'. Rather than focusing on ways to curb these misconducts, their roots can be attacked at the onset. During the process of recruitment of candidates into teaching, candidates should be

subjected to thorough screening while interview should be conducted for such candidates to ascertain whether they are of good behaviour and ready to observe the code of conduct/ethics of teaching rather than giving them appointment letter on a platter of gold.

ii. *Alleviating Poverty of Teachers:* That poverty is a major factor which influences the misconducts of teachers is to be re-echoing the obvious. Many teachers now find it difficult to afford their needs and sustain their families. Many teachers live below poverty level. When compared to those in professions such as banking, medicine, law, engineering among others, the conditions of service of teachers shows gross mismatch. In view of the disparity in the wages and conditions of service of teachers, there is need for special package to be approved for the teachers as applicable in other professions. Other benefits such as medical assistance can be provided for teachers after all, these professionals were trained by teachers.

iii. *Orientation of Teachers:* It is imperative for teachers to be re-orientated for better service delivery. They should be given opportunities to attend workshops, conferences, and seminars so as to enhance their competency.

iv. *Provision of Manual for Teachers:* Government should ensure that Teachers' Manual, which contain the rules and regulations for serving teachers are distributed to teachers. Institutions' administrators should enforce the rules rather than leaving them on paper. Erring teachers should be disciplined to serve as deterrent to others.

v. *Enforcing Discipline among Teachers:* Schools administrators should reprimand erring teachers to serve as deterrent to others. Where a teacher has committed an act of misdemeanour, such teacher can be warned verbally, issued query, and when the gravity of the offence is heavy, the salary can be stopped meanwhile until the teacher show remorse for his/her action. Where a teacher has proved recalcitrant to corrective measures, such teacher can be suspended from work.

vi. *Motivation of Teachers:* school's administrators and even Government should endeavour to motivate teachers, through several measures, such as regular promotion, regular payment of salaries and allowances, involvement of teachers in decision making, just to mention a few. This will go a long way in boosting their morale for enhanced productivity.

vii. *Regular Supervision and Monitoring of Teachers:* The Inspectorate Division of Ministry of Education and other relevant agencies should improve on the act of supervision and monitoring of schools and teachers so as to improve the quality of education they provide for their clients.

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Some decades ago (around 1950s and 60s), teachers in Nigeria were well revered among all professionals. During this period, teachers at the pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels were treated with much dignity, honour and respect. Today, in view of the lapses in the management, administration, supervision and financing of schools, colleges and universities, there is a serious dislocation of our educational systems resulting in indiscipline on the part of teachers, examination malpractices and other vices mentioned in this paper.

In addressing the situation, there should be a campaign towards cleaning up and restoring the lost glory of the teaching profession at the pre- primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Enhanced salary package should be considered to boost teachers' morale, motivate them, enhance their commitment and help them to fit into the social life of the society.

Furthermore, awards should be given to deserving teachers at all the tiers of government in Nigeria. It will not be out place, if school halls, buildings, libraries and so on, are named after retired or dead teachers who had served meritoriously.

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