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ETHICAL ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY TEACHER PREPARATION FOR THE NEW GENERATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION

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Abstract

This study examines the perceptions of educators and pre-service teachers on the ethical problems prevalent among them. The study adopted survey research design. A researcher's designed face validated questionnaire tagged Ethical Issues among Educators and Pre-Service Teachers (EIEPTQ) was used to collect data. 45 educators and 150 pre-service teachers, making a total of 195 respondents were used as sample. The study raised two research questions and formulated two research hypotheses. The research questions were answered by descriptive statistics of mean ratings while the hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics of t-test at 5% level of significance. The results established the existence of 14 and 17 unethical practices among educators and pre-service teachers respectively. 27 and 29 proposed ethical principles were endorsed by educators and pre-service teachers respectively as being efficacious for curbing unethical practices among them. The results of the t-test analyzes revealed that pre-service teachers' involvements in unethical practices are deeper than those of the educators. It also shows that pre-service teachers seemed to possess better sense of the efficacy of ethical principles than the educators. Among other things, the paper recommends that appropriate sanctions should follow violation of any ethical codes, either by educators or pre-service teachers.

Keywords: Ethics; Teacher Preparation

Introduction

Education is the process of transmitting information/ideas that can enhance all round development of a person in terms of intellect (cognition), emotion (affection) and skill

(psychomotor). Uyagu (2012) opines that education describes the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted and faculties trained and skills developed. Citing Denga (2004), Ringim (2012) asserted that education is seen as a complete development of the individual from cognitive, affective, and psychomotor perspectives in a positive direction. Education involves a process of teaching, training and learning that lead to acquisition of new information, values, attitude and skills so as to produce people who will be useful members of society (Adeniyi, 2012).

Teaching is the process of imparting knowledge in order to bring about behavioural change. A teacher, according to Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) (2002) cited in Alutu and Alum (2007) is a person who has undergone approved professional training in education at an appropriate level and is capable of imparting knowledge, attitude and skills to the learners. Teaching involves a teacher, a learner, content in form of knowledge, facts, information and a skill to be imparted (Adeyemi and Okewole, 2012). The authors cited NTI (2007) which defined teaching as many activities and processes by which human beings are assisted to learn what are regarded to be useful and worthwhile as determined in the context of literacy or western type of education.

In this paper, teacher preparation or teacher education refers to training of pre-service teachers which is very vital to the educational system. This is because no nation can rise above the quality/level of its teachers (FRN, 2012). No nation can be morally/ethically developed beyond the moral/ethical conditions of its teachers. This shows the need for moral/ethical preparation of teachers under Nigerian educational system. This also brings to the fore the importance of inculcating ethics (code of conduct specifying 'dos' and 'don'ts') of the teaching profession into pre-service teachers. Generally, teacher preparation/education can be in terms of quality and quantity (Jekayinfa and Okpanachi, 2012). However, the authors noted that quality in education can be measured by input of teachers and output of learners. Qualitative moral/ethical input of teachers and output of learners is the right kind of education for teacher preparation; and this is the burden of the paper.

Teacher preparation is defined as that aspect of education which deals with the acquisition of practical and applied skills in the teaching job (Ringim, 2012). Teacher preparation refers to the education, training and preparation (of pre-service teachers as well as in-service teachers) in specialized area of knowledge known as education particularly philosophy of education, sociology of education, history of education, psychology of education, some administrative techniques as well as in subject contents and in actual practice of the work of a teacher (Shuaibu and Agene, 2012). Citing Wikipedia, Rabi and Idris (2012) defined teacher education as the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitude, behaviour and skill they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. This paper is posed to address the problem of moral/ethical competence and disposition of educators and pre-service teachers. Moral/ethical preparation of teachers in general deserves a major emphasis, especially now in the face of national moral decadence. This is the gap this paper intends to fill.

Presently in Nigeria, teacher quality and quantity is low, which is the reason for falling standard of education and poor academic performance. It is equally a truism that quality is usually more preferable to quantity in the teaching profession. Quality of teachers determines to a greater extent the quality of teaching and learning taking place in school. Qualitative teaching and

learning contribute in no small measure to students' good achievement/performance in schools. Morality and ethics shall be used synonymously in this paper because both refer to custom, manners, character, proper behaviour, conformity to ideal of human conduct/standard. The main purpose of the paper is to show the imperative of moral and ethical training/preparation of educators and pre-service teachers for the new generation. In pursuant of this, two research questions were asked and answered while two research hypotheses were formulated and tested.

Statement of the Problem

It is pertinent to note, from the preceding section, that unethical practices in the teaching enterprise/profession is one of the problems confronting Nigerian educational system in general and teacher education in particular. Teacher education, in colonial Nigeria, was primarily religious as moral and character was prized above the three Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic). Then, Nigerian teachers in general (regardless of area of specialization) exhibited high degree of religious ethical principles/values. But things took a different turn during the post colonial Nigeria, especially with the government take-over of schools in the country. Thereafter, moral and character training has been on the decline. Nonetheless, it is still in the expectation of the society that teachers should exhibit a better by far standard of morality/ethics by virtue of their vocation. It is however worrisome that contemporary lecturers and pre-service teachers cannot even match the moral/ethical standard displayed by teachers during the colonial era not alone surpassing it. The problem of the paper is to examine ethical issues in teacher preparation for the new generation with its implications for the teaching profession.

Research Questions

The following research questions were asked to guide the study.

1. What are the unethical practices among educators and pre-service teachers as perceived by them?
2. What are the proposed ethical principles for combating these unethical practices among them?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between the views of educators and pre-service teachers on unethical practices among them.
2. There is no significant difference between the views of educators and pre-service teachers on the proposed ethical principles for combating unethical practices among them.

Methodology

Survey research design is used for this study in that it describes a given state of affairs at a particular time through the use of questionnaires to collect data from a population based on appropriate sampling techniques (Olayiwola, 2007). Nigerian educators and pre-service teachers constitute the population of study. However, a randomly selected sample of 195 respondents consisting of 45 lecturers (educationists) and 150 student-teachers from the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, were used in the study. The instrument for data

collection was a researcher made questionnaire tagged Ethical Issues among Educators and Pre-Service Teachers (EIEPTQ) which was face validated by three experts in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin. Mean rating was used to answer the two research questions with criterion mean of 2.50, which implies that mean value less than 2.50 indicate disagreement while mean value above 2.50 indicate agreement. The hypotheses were tested using t-test at 5% level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the unethical practices among educators and pre-service teachers as perceived separately by them?

Table 2: Mean Rating of Respondents on Unethical Practices among Educators and Pre-service teachers

N=195

s/no.	Unethical Practice	Mean Response	
		ED	PST
1.	Aiding, abetting or engaging in examination malpractice.	3.70	3.62
2.	Aiding, abetting or engaging in admission fraud.	3.60	3.56
3.	Irregular attendance of lecture.	3.66	3.98
4.	Use of abusive/indecent languages such as idiots, stupid, block-head, etc, especially on students	1.67	2.94
5.	Subjecting student to ridicule and psychological intimidation.	1.22	2.72
6.	Rushing classes towards examination period.	3.47	3.80
7.	Sale and purchase of handouts.	1.40	1.70
8.	Forcing students to buy handout as a condition for passing examination.	1.67	1.89
9.	Victimization of brilliant students.	1.45	2.96
10.	Sexual harassment of female students.	3.00	3.45
11.	Rape of female student.	1.32	1.40
12.	Altering/modifying examination result to favour or victimize students.	3.21	3.49
13.	Demand for sex or money for mark.	2.10	2.98
14.	Plagiarism.	3.12	3.18
15.	Holding forged or fake certificates.	2.71	2.78
16.	Gossiping and criticizing fellow educators/pre-service teachers.	3.76	3.89
17.	Indecent dressing especially among female educators/pre-service teachers.	3.02	3.55
18.	Misappropriation of fund.	1.34	1.65
19.	Slurring the teaching profession.	2.49	3.77
20.	Holding more than one full-time paid job, especially on the part of lecturers.	1.72	1.47
21.	Romantic relationship between lecturers and students.	2.44	2.64
22.	Lack of interest in students' tutorial.	2.79	3.21
23.	Banning tutorial among students.	1.00	1.22

KEY: ED=Educator, PST=Pre-service teacher

Data in table 2 shows the mean ratings of educators and pre-service teachers on unethical practices among them. It should be recalled that mean rating greater than or less than 2.5 (criterion mean) indicate agreement or disagreement respectively. Hence, ED column reveals that educators expressed agreement on 14 out of the 23 unethical practices and disagreement on the remaining 9 items. Thus, 14 items were accepted while the remaining 9 items were rejected. However, item 16 (gossiping and criticizing) with the highest mean value of 3.76 is the leading unethical practices among educators while item 23 (banning of tutorials) with the lowest mean value of 1.00 is the least unethical practices among them. Moreover, the PST column reveals that pre-service teachers expressed agreement on 17 out of the 23 unethical practices and disagreement on the remaining 6 items. Thus, 17 items were accepted while the remaining 6 items were rejected. However, item 3 (irregular attendance of lecture) with the highest mean value of 3.98 is the leading unethical practice among pre-service teachers while item 23 (banning of tutorials) with the lowest mean value of 1.22 is the least unethical practice among them.

Research Question 2: What are the proposed ethical principles for combating these unethical practices among them?

Table 3: Mean Rating of Respondents on the Proposed Ethical Principles for Combating Unethical Practices among Educators and Pre-Service teachers

N=195		Mean Response	
s/no.	Ethical Principle	ED	PST
1.	Love of the teaching profession.	4.00	4.00
2.	Be industrious and committed to the teaching profession.	3.38	3.68
3.	Reciprocal respect for lecturers, constituted school authority and fellow student-teachers.	3.51	3.89
4.	Always engage in discrete, tactful and ethical communication.	3.67	3.94
5.	Be accessible to and approachable especially by student-teachers.	3.22	3.72
6.	Give prompt attention to student-teachers.	3.40	3.70
7.	Be honest, truthful and courteous to student-teachers.	3.40	3.72
8.	Give/attend lectures regularly and apologize for late coming or non-attendance of lectures.	2.67	2.89
9.	See student-teachers as partners-in-progress and not as threat or burden.	2.45	2.67
10.	Recognize intellectually talented student and motivate them	3.00	3.12
11.	Refuse unjust gratification from student-teachers or their parents.	3.32	3.40
12.	Accord student-teachers positive regard and empathic understanding.	3.45	3.55
13.	Be in good frame of mind.	3.17	3.98

s/no.	Ethical Principle	Mean Response	
		ED	PST
14.	Be neat, clean and reflect good appearance.	3.15	3.46
15.	Display good/positive sense of humour.	2.21	2.76
16.	Discourage boot-licking, praise-singing and ostentatious allegiance, especially on the part of student-teachers.	2.76	3.63
17.	Be just and fair in dealings, especially with student-teachers.	3.04	3.57
18.	Discipline and temperate.	3.34	3.65
19.	Be chaste (Don't be promiscuous).	3.49	3.78
20.	Love and help student.	3.70	3.85
21.	Honour and help fellow lecturers and students.	3.44	3.64
22.	Set a good example.	3.79	4.00
23.	Don't do anything illegal.	3.00	4.00
24.	Be worthy of trust.	3.65	3.67
25.	Fulfil your obligations.	3.75	3.88
26.	Be competent.	4.00	4.00
27.	Respect the religious beliefs of others.	3.47	3.60
28.	Do to others what you would want them to do to you.	4.00	4.00
29.	Cultivate spirit of forgiveness and compassion.	2.96	3.00

Data in table 3 shows the mean ratings of educators and pre-service teachers on the proposed ethical principles for addressing the identified unethical practices among them. ED column reveals that educators expressed agreement on 27 out of the 29 proposed ethical principles and disagreement on the remaining 2 items. However, items 1, 26 and 28 with the highest mean value of 4.00 are the leading ethical principles for combating unethical practices among educators while item 15(display good/positive sense of humour) with the lowest mean value of 2.21 is the least ethical principle among them. Moreover, the PST column reveals that pre-service teachers expressed agreement on all the 29 ethical principles. Similarly as well as coincidentally, items 1, 26 and 28 with the highest mean value of 4.00 are also the leading ethical principles for combating unethical practices among pre-service teachers while item 9 with the lowest mean value of 2.67 is the least ethical principle among them.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the views of educators and pre-service teachers on unethical practices among them.

Table 4: Summary of t-Test Analysis on Unethical Practices among Educators and Pre-service teachers

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degree of Freedom	Calculated t value	Critical t value	Decision
Educator	45	1.24	1.07	193	25.29	1.97	Significant
Pre-service teacher	150	0.44	1.00				

The data in table 4 reveals that calculated t (which is 25.29) is greater than the critical t (which is 1.97); hence, there is significant difference in their views. Therefore, the null hypothesis that no significant difference exist between the views of educators and pre-service teachers on unethical practices among them is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. Hence, the views of pre-service teachers on the aforementioned unethical practices are stronger than those expressed by the educators. Therefore, these unethical practices are more serious among pre-service teachers than among educators. This finding implies a higher need for ethical/moral improvement among pre-service teachers.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the views of educators and pre-service teachers on the proposed ethical principles for combating unethical practices among them.

Table 5: Summary of t-Test Analysis on the Proposed Ethical Principles for Combating Unethical Practices among Educators and Pre-service teachers

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degree of Freedom	Calculated t value	Critical t value	Decision
Educator	45	2.14	1.15	193	36.1	1.97	Significant
Pre-service teacher	150	0.69	1.29				

The data in table 5 reveals that calculated t (which, in this case, is 36.1) is greater than the critical t (which is 1.97); hence, there is significant difference in their views. Therefore, the null hypothesis that no significant difference exist between the views of educators and pre-service teachers on the proposed ethical principles for curbing unethical practices among them is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. In other words, pre-service teachers attached deeper sense of value to all the proposed ethical principles. Therefore, the efficacy of the proposed ethical principles is more recognized and appreciated by pre-service teachers than by the educators. This

finding implies the need for educators to cultivate a deeper sense of ethical principles in the teaching job.

Discussion of Results/Implication for the Teaching Profession

The results established the existence of 14 and 17 unethical practices (out of 23-items) among educators and pre-service teachers respectively. 27 and 29 proposed ethical principles (out of 29-items) were endorsed by educators and pre-service teachers respectively as being efficacious for curbing unethical practices among them. The results of the t-test analyzes revealed that pre-service teachers are guilty of more unethical practices than the educators. It also shows that pre-service teachers have a better sense of the efficacy of the proposed ethical principles than the educators.

Unethical practices, among educators and pre-service teachers, as established in this study are responsible for the declining standard in education as well as societal disregard for the teaching profession. Examination malpractices, as an example, have been identified by Jekayinfa (2009) and Agnes (2012) as one of the problems facing teacher education/preparation as well as affecting standards in Nigerian educational system. Unethical practices, according to Nwala, Nwosu and Nzokurum (2012), are one of the grave challenges facing professionalization of the teaching in Nigeria. The authors asserted that "most teachers in our school system are cheats and morally decayed without the welfare of the students at heart". They mentioned cases of teachers sacked for offences such as rape, alteration of examination results, demanding for sex for marks, holding more than one full-time paid job, abandonment of duty due to exploitation and intimidation of students. They also mentioned cases of teachers who hold fake certificates. They asserted that these unethical problems have reduced teacher quality in this country; and asked: "How can anybody think about quality in education when most of our teachers are rapists, proponents of gross examination malpractices, and fake?" Unless these unethical practices are curbed, the teaching job will remain bastardized. Hence, there is an urgent need for the inculcation of the proposed ethical principles, through values education as proposed by Jekayinfa (2009), for a better preparation of teachers for the new generation.

The proposed ethical principles, established in this study, for addressing the identified ethical problems among educators and pre-service teachers are supported by Abimbola (2009) who identified similar ethical principles for combating ethical problems in contemporary Nigerian society. Moreover, some religious ethical principles identified by Ayantayo (2009) further corroborate those of this study. When imbibed, these ethical principles can transformed the teaching profession and restore its lost glory.

Conclusion

This study has examined the perceptions of educators and pre-service teachers on unethical practices or the ethical problems common among them. The views of the two categories of respondents (that is, educators and pre-service teachers) have been analyzed using mean ratings and t-test analyses. The results have established the existence of 14 and 17 unethical practices among educators and pre-service teachers respectively. 27 out of the 29 proposed ethical principles were established by educators while all the 29 ethical principles were established by pre-service teachers as being efficacious for curbing unethical practices among them. Moreover,

the results of the t-test analyzes have demonstrated that pre-service teachers' involvements in unethical practices are deeper than those of the educators. It also shows that pre-service teachers seemed to possess better sense of the efficacy of ethical values than the educators.

Recommendations

The following are recommended based on the findings.

- 1) Education of character should be emphasized and promoted by all, especially parents, teachers and other members of the Nigerian society. Democratic Citizenship Education as well as Values Education can be used as a tool for inculcating ethical principles such as justice, integrity, patriotism, love of the teaching profession, competence, etc. in educators and pre-service teachers. Education for moral choice is in dire need in Nigeria. All hands must be on deck to ensure value reorientation of modern Nigerians educators and pre-service teachers.
- 2) Ethics of the teaching profession should be included in teacher education curriculum and its inculcation, especially in pre-service teachers, should be intensified. Appropriate sanctions should follow violation of any ethical codes, either by educators or pre-service teachers.

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