

# Extent of Adherence to Ethical Codes of Teaching by Primary School Teachers in Nsukka East Local Education Authority

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## **Abstract**

*The study was conducted to assess the extent of adherence to the ethical codes of teaching by primary school teachers in Nsukka East Local Education Authority of Enugu state. Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) Act promulgated in Nigeria in 1993 recognizes teaching as a profession. This has given rise to the document "Teachers' Code of Conduct" which among others stipulates expected teachers' relationship with colleagues, learners, parents/guardians, employers and the society at large. Most teachers, regrettably, derail from the stipulations of the codes. Two research questions and two hypotheses in line with the specific purposes guided the study. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Questionnaire titled "Ethical Codes of Teaching by Primary School Teachers" (ECTPST) was developed by the researchers from literature materials reviewed and the teachers' code of conduct (2013). Two experts from Measurement and Evaluation and Childhood Education units validated the instrument. Data were collected from all the 225 primary school teachers in the area and were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while t-test was used to test the formulated hypotheses. Findings revealed that many teachers administer corporal punishments to pupils and flout different professional conducts with impunity. On the basis of the findings, recommendations were made. Among others, it was recommended that primary school teachers' activities should be regularly supervised by the Local Education Authority.*

**Keywords:** Ethical codes, primary school teachers, teaching

## **I. Introduction**

Every game has a rule just as every profession has its professional ethics. Professional ethics have to do with standards set to regulate members' behaviours. Until 1993, when Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) Act was promulgated in Nigeria, teaching profession was virtually everybody's business. However,

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given the importance of education and the responsibilities of teachers in the education and development of people; especially the responsibility of moulding young people, a development of ethical codes for teachers became imperative. This recognition gave rise to the document “Teachers’ Code of Conduct” (TRCN, 2013) which among others stipulates expected teachers’ relationship with colleagues, learners, parents/guardians, employers and the society at large. This development corresponds with the submission of Hinds (2005) that every profession considers the development and application of a code of ethics as a means of maintaining acceptable professional standards among its members. Corroborating this, Fredriksson (2004) observes that codes of ethics or conduct are established in order to contribute and ensure the prestige of the profession and the exercise of professional duties in accordance with the agreed principles. It is against this background that a study on the extent of adherence to the ethical codes of teaching by primary school teachers is considered relevant.

## **II. Literature review**

Since teaching is recognized not only as the oldest and noblest of all professions (TRCN, 2013) but also as the most indomitable profession in the world (Agih, 2013), it is only suitable that it should have its ethics. Hornby (2000), refers to ethics as the moral value of human conduct and moral principles that control or influence a person’s behaviour. It was to restore and maintain the enviable status and qualities of teachers that the need for ethical code of conduct became more urgent. The code which appears in a written form, among other things, stipulates expected teachers’ relationship with colleagues, learners, parents/guardians, employers and the society at large. It equally defines the minimum standards expected of professional teachers in terms of their thoughts, words and actions. In clear terms, the emergence of the code, according to TRCN, was in the hope that it will meet the yearnings and aspirations of the nation to build a veritable standard of education through a dedicated, competent and dependable teaching force. Some studies (e.g. Iroegbu & Adeleke, 2017) revealed that a substantial percentage of practitioners demonstrated a high level of awareness of the code of ethics for teachers while Agih (2013) showed a low level of awareness of the code of ethics for teachers.

The objectives of the code are clearly spelt out in the first chapter to include re-awakening the sense of self-esteem, dignity, honour, selfless services and moral rectitude in the teacher; protect the teachers’ age-long position of nobility and leadership; build a strong moral foundation; boost public confidence in teaching profession; provide objective yardstick for assessment of teachers’ conducts; spell out relationships that should exist among teachers and with others; and above all to clarify teacher’s rights, privileges and obligations with their legal bases (TCRN, 2013). Over the years, especially since the enactment of the code, things still appear not to have improved remarkably with regard to teacher behaviour. Most teachers, regrettably, derail from the stipulations of the codes either ignorantly or intentionally. While there is evidence that the teaching profession is generally prone to widespread abuse, there are scarce studies on ethical and professional commitment. Anangisy (2008) shows among other things teachers’ incidences of sexual harassment and abuse of pupils, coming to school drunk, and dressing immodestly.

The provisions of the teachers’ code of conduct are quite comprehensive and attractive to ensure proper professionalization of teaching. According to the document, to be legally recognized as a teacher in Nigeria, an individual must register with Teachers’ Registration Council of Nigeria, pass the required

examinations, be of good character, attain the age of twenty-one and not have been convicted of an offence involving fraud or dishonesty (TCRN). On the obligations of teachers, the code emphasizes professional standards, professional commitment, efficiency, periodic evaluation of learners' performance and dedication and faithfulness in all professional undertakings.

Furthermore, the ethical code of teaching (TCRN, 2013) is emphatic about teachers' relationships with colleagues, parents/guardians, employers, society at large and most importantly with learners. The document encourages among others, mutual respect and symbiotic relationship with colleagues, loyalty and integrity, and warns against discrimination, defamation of colleagues, touting, canvassing and plagiarism. Very importantly, the document encourages healthy relationship with learners by reminding teachers about learners' rights and dignity, being empathic and ensuring confidentiality, fair in asking for remunerations, shunning all forms of examination malpractice, acting as role models, abstaining from corrupt practices and avoiding corporal punishments without express permission from the school authority.

Lofty and noble as the provisions of the code of conducts for teachers may be, studies have consistently affirmed the existence and manifestations of all dimensions of psychological and physical abuses among students and pupils in schools cutting across gender, class, school type, and age. These dimensions cover isolation, degradation, exploitation, rejection, corrupting, ignoring, and terrorizing among others (McEachern, Aluede & Kenny, 2008). This is the situation whereas in the school settings, teachers are expected to serve not only as educators but also as important socializing agents whose responsibility will include fulfilling basic socio-emotional needs, such as belongingness and esteem needs of students. In this vein, El Bcheraoui, Kouriyé and Adib (2009) observe that the duty of adults in educational settings is to provide a safe environment that is capable of supporting and promoting children's dignity and development but unfortunately children, for centuries, were abused under the guise or excuse of corporal discipline. It has even been reported that some students have their first experience of emotional abuse in schools (Nesbit & Philpott, 2002). Similarly, Agih (2013) stated that there is dismal awareness and compliance with the ethics of the teaching profession by teachers.

Furthermore, in a related study conducted in Edo State by Okoza, Aluede and Ojugo (2011) it was shown that male students unlike their female counterpart experienced more emotional abuse dimensions of terrorizing, isolating, ignoring, and verbal assaulting. While senior secondary school students more than junior secondary students experienced dominating and terrorizing, the junior students more than senior students suffered from isolation. Also, in Nigeria, Umobong (2010) gives instances when teachers/school authorities intentionally/unintentionally indulge in physical and psychological abuse of students. For instance, he makes reference to schools where teachers address learners with sinister words or phrases such as "idiots, never do well, I knew you will never perform well". At times, students are confined to dark rooms as a form of punishment or locked up for inability to pay school fees. In Zimbabwe, just like Nigeria, Shumba (2002) has also established the fact that female teachers use vulgar language, shout and scold, humiliate, and label learners as stupid, ugly, foolish than their male counterparts.

In Nsukka East Local Education Authority, the story is not different. Pupils are subjected to all forms of ill treatments in the name of instilling discipline. Some teachers extort money from school children through illegal levies, administer preferential treatments to pupils of richly endowed parents, force pupils to

work in their private farms outside school hours, abscond from schools arbitrarily and hardly evaluate learners' performance as and when due. These concerns raise serious doubts about teachers' adherence to their ethical code of teaching. In fact, these concerns, according to Seretse (2013), are coming at a time when the standards of teacher behaviour and approach to work are issues of concern to schools' leadership and society in general. It is against this background that a study on the extent of adherence to the ethical codes of teaching by primary school teachers in Nsukka East Local Education authority is considered relevant.

### **Research questions**

1. To what extent are primary school teachers aware of the ethics of teaching profession?
2. To what extent do primary school teachers adhere to the ethics of teaching profession?

### **Hypotheses**

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female primary school teachers on the extent of awareness of the ethics of teaching profession.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female primary school teachers on the extent of adherence to the ethics of teaching.

## **III. Methodology**

Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 225 primary school teachers sampled from all the primary schools in Nsukka East Local Education Authority of Enugu state participated in the study. This sample was selected using simple random sampling technique. Questionnaire titled "Ethical Codes of Teaching by Primary School Teachers" (EAECTPST) was developed by the researchers from literature materials reviewed and the teachers' code of conduct (2013). Two experts from Measurement and Evaluation and Childhood Education units validated the instrument. A four-point scale will be provided for the respondents to indicate the weight of the response modes. Response will be Very High Extent (VHE) 4, High Extent (HE) 3, Low Extent (LE) 2 and Very Low Extent (VLE) 1. Data were collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while t-test was used to test the formulated hypotheses. Decision on the extent of adherence was based on mean scores of 3.50 - 4.00 represent Very High Extent (VHE), 2.50 - 3.49 represent High Extent (HE), 1.50 - 2.49 represent Low Extent (LE) and 1 - 1.49 represent Very Low Extent (VLE)

## **IV. Results**

**Research Question One:** To what extent are primary school teachers aware of the ethics of teaching profession?

**Table 1:** Mean and standard deviation analysis of the extent to which primary school teachers are aware of the ethics of teaching profession?

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	I shall show self-respect and conduct myself in exemplary manner	1.92	1.153	LE
2.	I will cooperate with other colleagues to achieve goals	1.77	1.153	LE
3.	I will not intimidate pupils	2.03	1.257	HE
4.	I will be responsible for diagnosing, advising, prescribing, implementing and evaluating educational programmes and instructions	1.78	1.155	LE
5.	I will encourage group decision making	1.76	1.100	LE
6.	I have respect for the learner's right and dignity	1.75	1.052	LE
7.	I will not take undue advantages of the learners	1.67	1.035	LE
8.	I will not accept pay for services already paid for by the employer.	1.79	1.114	LE
9.	I will not engage in corrupt Practice like having indecent relationship with a learner, etc.	1.70	1.093	LE
10.	I will respect the right of all learners	1.70	1.113	LE
11.	I will keep learners' private information confidential	1.92	1.117	LE
12.	I will be fair to all the learners	1.83	1.154	LE
13.	I will keep all examination records entrusted to me safe	1.78	1.146	LE
14.	I will not administer corporal punishment.	1.83	1.188	LE
15.	I ensure that learners behave in a civil and disciplined manner.	1.80	1.191	LE
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>1.801</b>	<b>.707</b>	

Table 1 shows the mean ratings of primary school teachers on the extent of awareness of the ethics of the teaching profession. It shows that the mean ratings of the teachers to all the items except for item 3 are below 2.00 implying that there is a low extent of awareness of the ethics of the teaching profession with respect to those items. On the other hand, the mean ratings to item 3 is above 2.00, meaning that there is a high extent of awareness with respect to that item. However, the overall mean rating of 1.801 with standard deviation of 0.707

shows that there is a low extent of awareness of the ethics of the teaching profession among primary school teachers.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female primary school teachers on the extent of awareness of the ethics of teaching profession.

**Table 2:** t-test analysis of the difference between the mean responses of male and female primary school teachers on the extent of awareness of the ethics of teaching profession.

Gender	N	Mean	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Remarks
Male	117	1.8308	.666	223	.506	NS
Female	108	1.7679				

Result in table 2 showed the t-test analysis of the significant difference between the mean responses of male and female primary school teachers on the extent of awareness of the ethics of the teaching profession in Nsukka-East Local Government Education Authority of Enugu State. Result showed that the t-value of 0.666 with a degree of freedom of 223 and a significant value of 0.506 was obtained. Since the significant value of 0.506 is greater than 0.05 set as level of significance, this means that the null hypothesis is not rejected. Inference drawn therefore is that the views of male and female teachers in primary schools did not differ significantly on the extent of awareness of the ethics of the teaching profession.

**Research Question Two:** To what extent do primary school teachers adhere to the ethics of teaching profession?

**Table 3:** Mean and standard deviation analysis of the extent to which primary school teachers are aware of the ethics of teaching profession?

Item	Statement	Mean	S D	Decision
1.	I show self-respect and conduct myself in exemplary manner	1.73	.950	LE
2.	I cooperate with other colleagues to achieve goals	1.49	.936	LE
3.	I do not intimidate pupils	1.62	1.020	LE
4.	I am responsible for diagnosing, advising, prescribing, implementing and evaluating educational programmes and instructions	1.33	.756	LE
5.	I encourage group decision making	1.41	.841	LE
6.	I respect the learner's right and dignity	1.41	.819	LE
7.	I do not take undue advantages of the learners	1.60	.813	LE

8.	I do not accept pay for services already paid for by the employer.	1.52	.851	LE
9.	I do not engage in corrupt Practice like having indecent relationship with a learner, etc.	1.28	.700	LE
10.	I must respect the right of all learners	2.93	1.255	HE
11.	I must keep learners' private information confidential	2.75	1.200	HE
12.	I must be fair to all the learners	2.31	1.187	HE
13.	I must keep all examination records entrusted to me safe	2.25	1.228	HE
14.	I do not administer corporal punishment.	2.12	1.299	HE
15.	I ensure that learners behave in a civil and disciplined manner.	2.68	1.088	HE
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>1.895</b>	<b>.216</b>	

Table 3 shows the mean ratings of primary school teachers on the extent of adherence to the ethics of the teaching profession. It shows that the mean ratings of the teachers to items 1 to 9 are below 2.00 implying that there is a low extent of awareness of the ethics of the teaching profession with respect to those items. On the other hand, the mean ratings to items 10 to 15 are above 2.00, meaning that there is a high extent of awareness with respect to those items. However, the overall mean rating of 1.895 with standard deviation of 0.216 shows that there is a low extent of adherence of the ethics of the teaching profession among primary school teachers.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female primary school teachers on the extent of adherence of the ethics of teaching profession.

**Table 4:** t-test analysis of the significant difference between the mean responses of male and female primary school teachers on the extent of adherence to the ethics of teaching profession

Gender	N	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remarks
Male	117	.1277	.623	223	.534	NS
Female	108	.1250				

Result in table 4 showed the t-test analysis of the significant difference between the mean responses of male and female primary school teachers on the extent of adherence to the ethics of the teaching profession in

Nsukka-East Local Government Education Authority of Enugu State. Result showed that the t-value of 0.623 with a degree of freedom of 223 and a significant value of 0.534 was obtained. Since the significant value of 0.534 is greater than 0.05 set as level of significance, this means that the null hypothesis is not rejected. Inference drawn therefore is that the views of male and female teachers in primary schools did not differ significantly on the extent of adherence to the ethics of the teaching profession.

## **V. Discussion**

The result of the study showed that the extent of awareness of the ethics of the teaching profession among primary school teachers in Nsukka-East, Local Education Authority of Enugu State, Nigeria is low. The finding of this study corroborates that of Agih (2013) who found that there is dismal awareness and compliance with the ethics of the teaching profession by Secondary School teachers in Bayelsa state. This finding is also at variance with the study conducted by Iroegbu and Adeleke (2017) which revealed that a substantial percentage of early childhood education practitioners demonstrated a high level of awareness on the code of ethics for teachers. The result of this present study showing low extent of awareness could be explained from two viewpoints. First, the present economic hardship occasioned by recession has made many people go into the teaching profession as a means of survival while waiting for an alternative source of livelihood without bothering to know about the ethics of the profession. Second and more fundamental is that teachers who are employed are sometimes not given orientation on the ethics of the teaching profession, thus many are not aware of this code of ethics. It is therefore the belief of the researchers that if unemployment rate is reduced, only persons interested in the teaching profession will be employed who will make efforts to know the ethics of the profession.

Result of the study showed that the extent of adherence to the ethics of the teaching profession among primary school teachers in Nsukka-East, Local Education Authority of Enugu State, Nigeria is low. The finding of this study corroborates that of Agih (2013) who found that there is dismal awareness and compliance with the ethics of the teaching profession by Secondary School teachers in Bayelsa state.

Result of the study showed that male and female primary school teachers did not differ significantly on the extent of awareness and adherence to the ethics of the teaching profession. This finding is at variance with the study conducted by Shumba (2002) who established that female teachers use vulgar language, shout and scold, humiliate, and label learners as stupid, ugly, foolish than their male counterparts. Meaning that there is a difference in the mean responses of males and females.

## **VI. Conclusions**

A code of ethics is indispensable to the teaching profession. The results showed that many teachers are not aware of the existence of the code of conduct showing the ethics of the teaching profession. The results of the findings also revealed that many teachers do not adhere to the ethics of the teaching profession as they administer corporal punishment to pupils and flout different professional conducts with impunity. Findings of the study

showed that male and female primary school teachers did not differ significantly on the extent of awareness of the ethics of the teaching profession.

## VII. Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- a. Ongoing formation and orientation programmes on ethics of teaching profession should be regularly carried out.
- b. Primary school teachers' activities should be regularly supervised by the Local Education Authority.
- c. Teachers who do not adhere to the ethical codes of teaching should be sanctioned after having been first warned.

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