Education Law and Management Teacher's Professional Ethics in Secondary Schools Delta State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: This study focuses on education law and teacher ethics management in Delta Public Secondary Schools in Nigeria. In this study, a descriptive technique was used. The study group consisted of 473 principals and 14,482 teachers from 473 public high schools in Delta. A sample of 825 respondents (75 principals and 750 teachers) was drawn using a simple random sampling method. This study was based on two research questions and two hypotheses. A 15-item questionnaire was used as a means of data collection. For the data collected for the analysis, the mean and standard deviation of the research questions were analyzed at the average acceptance level of 2.50, the null hypotheses were verified through the Z-test, and the significance level was set at 0.05. This study's findings show that school boards and principals, especially after elementary school, manage teachers' integrity issues under the Delta Public High School Education Act and Code of Ethics. Among other things, teachers should be encouraged to purchase a copy of the Educational Services Manual to know their rights, their responsibilities to staff, and the fundamental rights of their students.


Keywords: Education Law, Education Management, Teacher Professional, Ethics Management.
I. INTRODUCTION

For an organization to achieve organizational effectiveness, there must be established rules and regulations that employees must comply with. An organisation's lack of rules and regulations creates chaos and negatively impacts students. Schools, as essential places, have many issues with legal implications that school administrators should not ignore. Obi (2004) argued that without rules in the school system, teachers would be ignorant of their legal and moral rights to employers, peers, students, and parents (Akpan & Udofia, 2015);(Udofia & Uduigwomen, 2022). Also, regulations are essential to the education system as they provide individuals with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities and protection from arbitrary actions by managers. The Blackstone Laws are rules of civic conduct that command doing right and forbidding wrong (Udofia & Alexander, 2017);(Nabiebu & Enyia, 2019).

According to Igwe and Obasi (2005), education law is a code of conduct created by the government to maintain harmony, stability and equity within the school system. It can be defined as jurisprudence focused on educational activities- the operation of public and private primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Education law is designed to protect teachers' and students' human rights and responsibilities (Ossai & Nwabuwe, 2023). Therefore, the Education Act provides protection and the necessary framework and processes for organizational management. Beyond education law, other carefully established staff policies and codes of conduct or ethics form the basis of how the education system works (McCabe, et al., 1996);(Nabiebu, 2022). This means that the behaviour of teachers conforms to the accepted principles and standards of ethical work behaviour established by the Ministry of Education, the National Teachers Institute (NTI), the Union of Teachers of Nigeria (NUT) and the Nigerian Teachers Registration Council.

In Nigeria, teaching is considered a demanding profession requiring effective interpersonal relationships due to the unique nature of their clients, such as students, parents and society (Bednarz et al., 2010). This, therefore, requires ethical standards that regulate the behaviour of teachers when dealing with clients. Ethics is the study of the science of morality, and morality must deal with acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Teachers are the catalysts of the education system, so rules and regulations should be established to guide their behaviour. The Federal Republic of Nigeria credits the National Policy on Education when stating that the operation of a school system should grow out of the lives and social ethics (customs) of the communities it serves (Chimezie & Prince, 2016).

According to Kizza (2007), professional ethics are standards established by professionals to regulate members' professional behaviour and review practices that may occur in professional activities. Asodike and Ejiogu (2014) also see professional ethics as the profession expected of members to meet the needs and aspirations of society. In other words, it can be considered an acceptable standard of behaviour expected of teachers in the school system.

In Nigeria’s public secondary school system, particularly in Delta State, teachers have ethical obligations when dealing with students, principals, peers, parents, the government, communities and even the profession. Therefore, school leaders must demonstrate ethical values to faculty and staff to pass on cultural heritage to students.
whose behaviour society expects to be desired. Therefore, this study examines the education law and professional ethics management of teachers in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria.

The Nigerian secondary school system establishes educational laws, professional ethics and codes of conduct that must be adhered to by principals, teachers and students (Nabiebu & Enyia, 2019). Ethics sets out the responsibilities of employers and governments in motivating and enforcing ethics or codes of conduct. However, recent developments in the country show that many teachers need more professional, ethical standards. In “Delta”, for example, teachers are calm about learning. Many are absent from school, and some are late for school and leave whenever they want. The professional illegality of these teachers negatively affects students and society as a whole. Professional misconduct on the part of teachers can lead to poor discipline, poor academic performance, low morale, failing grades, poor school image and absenteeism. It is important to note that students view teachers as role models. If not dealt with promptly, this situation can foster immorality and lawlessness, ultimately undermining the teaching profession. How do we deal with this unethical behaviour of teachers? Therefore, this study examines the education law and professional ethics management of teachers in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria.

The primary objective of the study is to investigate educational law and teachers’ ethical management in public secondary schools in Delta State. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to find out what the education law requires regarding the professional ethics of Delta public secondary school teachers; and to determine how the Post Primary Schools Board will determine how to administer the integrity of Delta Public Secondary School teachers.

II. METHOD

A descriptive study design was used in this study. The population consisted of principals and teachers from 473 Delta Public Secondary Schools. A simple random sampling procedure determined sample sizes of 750 teachers and 75 principals. The data collection tool was a 15-item Educational Law and Professional Integrity Questionnaire (ELPIQ) questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of a 4-point modified Likert rating scale of strongly agree=4, agree=3, disagree=2, and strongly disagree=1, and two experts in test and measurement validated it. To test reliability, Cronbach’s alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the survey items by obtaining coefficients of 0.81 and 0.78 for the two clusters, respectively. In collaboration with four other researchers, the researchers provided the devices to teachers and principals. This ensures fast delivery and return of the instrument equipment. The research questions were answered with mean and standard deviation. The acceptance criterion was 2.50, while a Z-test with a significance level of 0.05 was used for hypotheses testing.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Teachers should be interested in law. This concern stems from school personnel being legally bound and subject to strict responsibilities. School administrators operate in a complex environment with many legal implications and must know the requirements imposed by courts and state legislatures. In the Nigerian school system, teachers have
a complex duty of dealing with the principals, students, peers, parents, communities and their professions. Because of this, the Nigerian Teachers Union felt it necessary to develop a code of professional ethics to regulate their conduct.

Additionally, the Nigerian Teachers Registration Council (TRCN) has produced a handbook that must be owned, read and digested by all teachers in Nigeria. Peretomode & Chukwuma (2012) emphasise the need for teachers to be aware of the rules and regulations governing their employment and the school system in which they work to make them aware of the legal implications of their actions. School leaders are therefore expected to observe and behave ethically when dealing with teachers and students within the framework of the Education Act, the Code of Ethics for Teachers and other relevant laws.

The Delta State Education Ordinance recognizes the following professional ethics for teachers: treat students fairly and equitably, regardless of their physical, mental, emotional, economic, social, racial, or religious characteristics; refraining from obscene acts towards students; loyalty to the authorities; the dignity of labour; good conduct in examinations; community values; respect for norms and traditions; accuracy of records, etc. (Obi, 2004; Udofia, 2021). Also, the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) has a set code of ethics for teachers as follows: every teacher must be committed to the students and must avoid all defamatory comments upon a student or his home; all teachers are expected to respect parents and provide them with information that will serve the interest of their children, and to make careful use of information received by them (Egboro, 2019); every teacher in fulfilling his obligation to the community, shall adhere to a responsible pattern of behaviour acceptable in the community; in fulfilling teaching obligations, the teacher should adhere to the conditions or terms of appointment; in fulfilling his obligation to his profession, the teacher shall deal justly with other members in the profession as he wishes to be treated.

The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria states that all teachers in Nigeria must maintain professional standards of practice and conducts that are universally acceptable and meet the demands of TRCN regarding ethics and quality of professional practice (Okon, 2015). The professional conduct of teachers includes compliance with relevant laws; respect for both junior and senior colleagues; loyalty; punctuality at work; record keeping; professional development; integrity in all dealings; teamwork with colleagues; respect for learners’ rights and dignity (Stillman, 2011); non-involvement in examination malpractice; maintenance of good relationship with parents; obligations to union agreement; professional independence; active participation in the development of both their immediate and broader communities; obedience to law etc.

In the same vein, Murtaza et al. (2016) posit that some work ethics that employees are expected to exhibit in an organization in order to maintain a smooth working environment include being punctual at work; talking about initiatives; working diligently; being responsible; being honest and loyal; co-operating with colleagues; working hard to achieve productivity having a good inter-personal skill and remaining at the workplace until closing hours. In addition, Igwe (2015) opined that teachers must respect students’ rights to dignity in their dealings with them. Iroegbu and Adeleke (2017) argue that teachers must receive regular ethics training to comply with these rules. Therefore, teachers must be aware of their work ethic because they need to

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know the rules and regulations that apply to their activities to achieve their educational goals.

Educational management includes effectively planning and coordinating teaching and non-teaching staff activities to use available material resources to achieve educational objectives effectively. Zwalchir and Buenyen (2009) argue that school human resource management is critical. It is intended to bring together other resources to help the school system achieve its goals. Therefore, school administrators must operate schools with appropriate knowledge and skills in administrative ethics. Manga (2015) argues that effective and efficient education management is only possible with adherence to ethical principles. To effectively lead schools, TRCN (2012) defines ethical expectations for school leaders towards subordinates as a set example, demonstrating charisma, justice, empathy, vision, pride, selflessness, honesty, consistency and moral integrity. Owning these properties, therefore, minimizes litigation between principals, teachers, supervisors, and students.

Again, the Delta State Education Act enumerates teachers` misconduct, including students’ immorality, exam-related misconduct, and teacher misconduct, falsification of school records, involvement in commercial or trade activities while in school, proven acts of disobedience to direct superiors and consequent dereliction of duty (Peretomode, 2004). Similarly, TRCN (2012) postulated that teachers` disciplinary committees should be established in all schools. The council stresses that teachers must be found guilty of professional misconduct after an investigation by a disciplinary committee. To this end, Obi (2004) argues that every teacher should have a teacher’s handbook because it guides them to teach ethically, effectively and efficiently. Manga (2015) posited that school administrators should use best practices of management ethics in taking disciplinary action against teachers. Regardless of these management tactics, school leaders must use their discretion to find new and better ways to deal with teachers’ unethical behaviour.

**Delta State Education Law Governing Teacher Work Ethics**

**Table 1. Responses on the education laws for Teacher's Professional ethics in public secondary schools in Delta state**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Teachers are obligated to be punctual to school activities</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Every teacher must have a copy of the service manual that guides his/her behaviour in the school system</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Teachers are required to respect the values of the community they are employed to serve</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Teachers are expected to respect students’ fundamental rights while instituting discipline</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5. Teachers are expected to keep up to date records of the students all the times 3.54 0.41 Agree 3.30 0.12 Agree

6. Teachers have ethical obligations of dealing with students equitably 3.60 0.41 Agree 3.23 0.12 Agree

7. Teachers are expected to complement the work of principals in attaining the educational goals 3.56 0.14 Agree 3.40 0.12 Agree

8. Teachers as role model are obligated to act responsibly so as to produce functional citizens for the society 3.45 0.39 Agree 3.52 0.13 Agree

Grand mean & SD 3.39 0.39 2.93 0.12

The data in Table 1 reveals the mean score and standard deviations of the opinions of principals and teachers on the education laws that govern teachers’ professional ethics in public secondary schools in Delta state. The principal and teachers agreed on all the items with mean scores more significant than the benchmark of 2.50. The grand mean scores of 3.39 and 2.93 for principals and teachers showed that they are aware of what education law stipulates on teachers’ professional ethics. These include teachers being obligated to be punctual to school activities; every teacher must have a copy of the service manual that guides his / her behaviour in the school system; teachers are required to respect the value of the community they are employed to serve; teachers are expected to respect students fundamental rights while instilling disciplines; teachers are expected to keep up-to-date records of all students; teachers have ethical behaviours of dealing with students equitably; teachers are expected to work in collaboration with principals in attaining the education goals; and teachers as a role model are obligated to act responsibly to produce functional citizens for the society.

The Post-Primary Management Board Administers the Professional Ethics of Teachers

Table 2. Responses on how Post Primary Schools Board manages teachers’ professional ethics in Delta State Public Secondary Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X  SD RMK</td>
<td>X  SD RMK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Teachers’ school records like registers, diaries, lesson notes etc are marked regularly</td>
<td>3.36 0.38 Agree</td>
<td>3.56 0.13 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Teacher are encouraged to be conversant with relevant laws in education services manual, code of conduct etc that regulate their behavior</td>
<td>3.42 0.39 Agree</td>
<td>3.45 0.13 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Teachers are constantly supervised to ensure they</td>
<td>3.34 0.38 Agree</td>
<td>3.48 0.13 Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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teach students dedicatedly

12. Powers are vested on principals to query teachers who got involved in indecent dealings with students
   3.59  0.41  Agree  3.11  0.11  Agree

13. Ethics training programmes are conducted periodically in every school
   1.63  0.58  Agree  1.79  0.06  Agree

14. Before salaries are paid, principals write monthly reports on the level of teachers’ job commitment to the government
   1.68  0.19  Agree  1.60  0.05  Agree

15. There is a disciplinary committee that is set up in every school that investigates into any professional misconduct before punishment is meted out to defaulted teachers
   3.78  0.43  Agree  3.02  0.11  Agree

   Grand mean & SD  2.97  0.25  2.85  0.10

For items 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15 of the table, both principals and teachers agreed and showed an average score of 2.50 or higher, the control average, while they disregarded items 13 and 14, which are lower than the benchmark of = 2.50. The overall grand mean scores for principals and teachers were 2.97 and 2.85, respectively, indicating that the Post Primary Education Board agrees with administering teachers’ ethical issues in Delta’s public high schools. This includes maintaining regular teacher records and encouraging teachers to familiarize themselves with applicable education laws, staff regulations, and codes of conduct. Teachers are continuously monitored to ensure they are engaged in student learning, establishing disciplinary committees in each school to investigate professional misconduct by teachers and authorising principals to interrogate teachers involved in improper dealings with students.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the perception of principals’ and teachers’ on the education laws that govern the teachers’ work ethics in Delta’s State Public Secondary school.

Table 3. Z- tests of difference between principals and teachers on established education laws on professional ethics for public secondary school teachers in Delta State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Z cal</th>
<th>Z critical</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant at 0.05

This result shows that the calculated Z value of 0.96 is lower than the limit value of 1.96. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference
between principals and teachers concerning the Delta State public secondary school
teacher’s compulsory education law regarding professional ethics.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between principals and teachers’
perceptions of how the post-primary education board manages the teachers’
professional ethics at Delta State public secondary school.

Table 4. Z-test of the difference between principals and teachers on how post-
primary school board manages teachers’ professional ethics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Z cal</th>
<th>Z critical</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant at 0.05

The results show that the calculated z-value of 0.96 is below the critical value of 1.96
at the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states there is no
significant difference between principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of how post-
primary School Board manages the ethics of public secondary school teachers in Delta
State is at this moment accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The results of this study in Hypothesis 1 showed no significant difference between
principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of the compulsory education law regarding
professional ethics for public secondary school teachers in Delta State. Thus,
principals and teachers agreed to the standard managerial ethics in discharging their
duties. These ethics implies that every teacher is obligated to be punctual about school
activities; teachers are required to respect the values of the communities they are
employed to serve; teachers are expected to keep up-to-date records of the students;
teachers are expected to work in synergy with the principals in attaining the
educational goals; teachers as role models, are required to act responsibly to produce
functional citizens for the society. This finding agrees with TRCN (2012), which
states that all teachers in Nigeria must maintain professional standards of practice and
conduct that are universally accepted and meet the ethical demands of the TRCN. It
also aligns with Igwe (2015), who maintains that schools exist because of students;
therefore, teachers must respect their right to dignity.

Similarly, the second hypothesis showed no significant differences in principals’ and
teachers’ opinions about how post-primary schools board manages the integrity of
public secondary school teachers in Delta. These include encouraging all teachers to
maintain regular school records, familiarize themselves with appropriate teaching
methods, continuously monitor classes, and establish disciplinary committees to
investigate occupational misconduct before sanctions are imposed. This finding is
consistent with TRCN (2012), which states that every school should have a teacher
discipline committee. This is consistent with Obi (2004), who argued that all teachers
should be familiar with service manuals. Peretomode (2001) succinctly added that
teachers need to be informed about the rules and regulations governing the school
system in which they are employed and in which they work so that they are aware of
the legal consequences of their actions and omissions.

However, it was noted that ethics training programs for teachers need to be regularly
implemented in schools. This is inconsistent with a study by Iroegbu and Adeleke

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(2017) on raising awareness of Nigerian teachers’ ethical code. This finding also contrasts with Manga (2018), which argued that school principals should produce monthly reports on their engagement in government work before paying teachers’ salaries.

IV. CONCLUSION

Study results concluded that legal knowledge of education law improves conscientiousness management among Delta public secondary school teachers. For a teacher to apply the law, such a teacher must know this law and check it daily. It is also important to note that one of the characteristics of all professionals is that they are members who adhere to a code of ethics that establishes professional values and responsibilities. This way, service manuals enable teachers and school leaders to meet professional expectations.

Based on research findings, we recommend that: The government should encourage all teachers to attend training on the do’s and don’ts of the teaching profession. Efforts should be made to organize ethics training for teachers in the session. Teachers should be encouraged to purchase the Instructional Services Manual to know their rights, their responsibilities to their employers, and the fundamental rights of their students.

V. REFERENCES


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