



TEACHERS' COMMITMENT TO THE CODE OF ETHICS OF PROFESSION AS PERCEIVED BY PRINCIPALS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author AHC designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author RFDN managed the analyses of the study and generally guided the whole study. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at determining the extent of teachers' commitment to the code of ethics of profession as perceived by secondary school principals in Enugu State. Two types of ethical practices were identified. This study was a descriptive research. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. A questionnaire of 25 items was used to gather information from secondary school principals. The questionnaire was face validated by 3 experts in Faculty of Education from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. The reliability of the instrument was established using cronbach alpha technique which yielded a coefficient alpha of 0.86%. The instrument was based on a four point likert scale and was administered to 92 principals of Enugu and Nsukka education zones of Enugu State. The data obtained were analyzed using mean score and standard deviation for the research questions. For analysis of the hypotheses the t-test statistic was used. The result showed that the teachers to a great extent were committed to ethical practices of the profession in the perception of the principals. Gender and the fact that some principals headed a boarding school and some did not were not significant factors in the study.

A major recommendation of the study is that government should organize seminars, conferences, workshops and refresher courses for teachers in which the ethical practices expected of the teachers should be stressed.

Keywords: Code of Ethics; honesty; discipline; principals.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ethics is a long life activity that directs the human behavior. This is also a safety line for society stability and progress. Ethics ensures social control by individuals where their manners should comply with the traditions and habits of the society [1]. Ethics is the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation [2]. It is also the principles of conduct governing an individual or group. Every profession has its own code of ethics. Without code of ethical principles, one can be quick to react to unethical behavior in the making of choices. This would prevent someone from making good choices in life [3]. Operating any organization without code of ethics is not good for individual behavior, it is even worse when it is not practiced in an institution, like a secondary school. It leads to people acting without understanding the values they are supposed to subscribe to [4]. Starratt [5] observed that ethics is the principles, beliefs, assumptions and values that characterize a moral life. The code of ethics in education profession aims at enhancing the positive behaviours and restricting the negative ones. It also tries to provide a safe and violence-free environment in schools that enables students, teachers and administration to play their roles effectively and efficiently [1].

Kritsonis [6] pointed out that ethical conduct inspires a quality of behavior that exemplifies honour and dignity for oneself. In a school situation, teachers, non-academic staff and administrators need to understand the importance of ethical conduct in the educational arena. An effective educational institution entails the need of individual people in maintaining integrity and good morals. According to Holloway [7], character education promotes ethical values, creates a caring school community and engages the group leader to instill moral values in their subjects.

Kritsonis [6] added that ethical norms supply rules which serve as guidelines to be used as a basis for making decisions in a particular situation. Ethics in leadership deals with what leaders ought to do. The way leaders respond to a given situation and the choices they make are led by ethical norms. The concerns of school leaders in ethics are issues of justice, fairness and truthfulness. One must be sensitive to the needs of others care for them and treat them in a way that is just and fair [3]. In Nigeria the code of ethics that governs teachers' behavior ensures that the school environment supports and nurtures students and employees in school. The fact that a child has a right to education, this means that teachers need to place students' welfare as a priority. Association of American Education [8], reported that

teachers are ethically bound to perform better at job than other employees. They also should strive to learn new techniques of behavior in everyday life, ideas and ideals to guide their conduct as they serve as role models to learners [3].

According to Barret [9], ethical practices are deteriorating and weakening, with teachers engaging in immoral acts ranging from verbal harassment to rape while others have sexually abused female and male students. Different studies on code of ethics have revealed the following attributes as depicting ethical practices: Integrity and moral rectitude, discipline, loyalty, honesty, tact, helpfulness, courage, industry, cooperation, courtesy, tidiness, kindness etc. These lead to normal behavior of people. Absence of normal behavior according to Pednekar [10] leads to indiscipline in any system.

Reyad [11], opined that the principal as a leader in the secondary school must work very closely with the teachers to ensure that the teachers show serious and sincere commitment to their work by adhering to ethical practices. For the purposes of this study attributes of teachers that portray honesty and discipline will be investigated to show how principals in secondary schools in Enugu State perceive them. Civil Service Handbook [12] on the topic honesty states that, civil servants should be honest in doing their duties and in their dealing with the public. They should realize that they are paid salaries for the duties they perform. This means that they should be conscientious on duty and demand or receive nothing in money or in kind from anyone in the performance of their duties.

Also on discipline: The civil servant must be well disciplined. Rules and regulations should be adhered to and the interest of the service must be paramount. Senior officers should prescribe code of conduct which they themselves can and should comply with. Those who wish to lead other people should always remember that effective leadership involves exemplary character, hard work and integrity. Good conduct is one of the criteria for promotion. Junior officers should be familiar with government regulations and rules regarding good conduct. They must learn to obey lawful orders and constituted authorities [12].

In this regard Oghuvbu and Okpilike [13] opined that disciplined and honest teachers produce disciplined and quality graduates. They continued to state that moral rules set by teachers promote those things thought of as good and minimize or avoiding those things thought as bad learnt at early age at home and at school. Unethical conducts disturb the minds of

teachers and students this also interferes with teaching and learning [14]. According to Nwobodo [15], one way to end indiscipline in schools and beyond is through guiding the teachers by principals to be disciplined and honest in the discharge of their duties.

The code of ethics of the teaching profession has a positive impact on the whole teaching process. It is considered as an important ground for school success. The commitment of teachers to the code of ethics of profession will improve their performance and development in the school [16]. Teachers differ among themselves to the degree they are committed to the profession, this in turn affects negatively or positively the whole teaching process [9].

This paper therefore sought to find the qualities a teacher will have to depict disciplined and honest behaviours that will portray them as role models to the students under the guidance of the school principal. It also sought to find the degree of commitment of teachers to the code of ethics as perceived by the principals of the secondary schools.

1.1 Statement of Problem

There is a general notion that there are cases of professional misconduct amongst school teachers [9]. He pointed out cases where some teachers were implicated in sexual related behaviours with their students. Some were involved in theft and academic dishonesty. The problem of this study is that ethical principles are deteriorating and weakening, resulting in decline in quality of education. The question now is how can principals of secondary schools enforce ethical principles in the area of discipline and honesty on the teachers? This study, therefore, tried to answer this question by identifying some behaviours of teachers that will portray discipline and honesty. It also aimed at identifying the degree of teachers' commitment to the code of ethics of profession as perceived by principals of secondary schools in Enugu State.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the code of ethics of teaching profession in the areas of teachers' discipline and honesty.

Specifically the study intends to:

1. Identify some specific behaviours of secondary school teachers that portray discipline and how the principals perceive the teachers' commitment to that code of ethics.

2. Examine some specific behaviours of secondary school teachers that portray honesty and how the principals perceive the teachers' commitment to that code of ethics.

1.3 Research Question

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of teachers' commitment to discipline as code of ethics of profession as perceived by secondary school principals?
2. What is the level of teachers' commitment to honesty as code of ethics of profession as perceived by secondary school principals?

Hypothesis: In further pursuance of the study, the null hypotheses were formulated:

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the responses of male and female principals on how they perceive the commitment of teachers to code of ethics of the profession.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the responses of principals who head boarding schools and those who do not on how they perceive the commitment of teachers to code of ethics of the profession.

2. METHODS

The descriptive research was adopted for the study. The rationale for adopting this design was that it helped the researchers gather reliable information for the study. This research design was also adopted by Youze et al. [3] for similar studies and it was successful.

The study was carried out in Enugu State Secondary Schools. The study is one of the thirty six (36) states that make up the Federal Republic of Nigeria and it consists of six education zones. These zones are Enugu, Awgu, Agbani, Nsukka, Obollo-Afor and Udi [17]. The researchers adopted sample random sampling to select two education zones for the study namely: Enugu and Nsukka education zones. Enugu education zone has thirty two (32) principals and Nsukka Education zone has sixty (60) principals. The population of the study, therefore, is the ninety two (92) principals of the two selected zones.

The instrument for data collection was a 25-item structured questionnaire adopted from the research works of Oghuvbu and Okpilike, [13], Youze et al.

[3], Reyad, [1] and Nwobodo, [15]. The questionnaire termed Teachers' Discipline, Honesty Ethics (TDHE) is of modified four point scale with the following response mode: Very Great Extent (VGE), Great Extent (GE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). The following scale was used to interpret the mean scores:- 3.5 – 4.0 Very Great Extent, 2.5 – 3.49 Great Extent, 1.5 – 2.49 Low Extent and 1.0 – 1.49 Very Low Extent for the research questions and hypotheses. The face validity of the instrument was done by 3 experts in measurement and evaluation in the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu.

Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the study. This involved conduct of pilot study with a sample of thirty (30) principals randomly selected from secondary schools in Abakiliki education zone of Ebonyi state. Ebonyi state is a close neighboring state to Enugu state. This yielded a coefficient of 0.86%. The questionnaire has two parts, an introductory part which called for the respondents' personal information such as his/her sex, location of school, boarding or non-boarding and experience in years. The second part has two sections; section A is on scale items on code of ethics depicting discipline and section B is on code of ethics depicting honesty. Four research assistants trained by the researcher helped to administer and retrieve the questionnaires thereby giving a return rate of 100%.

Data collected was analyzed using mean scores (x) and standard deviation (SD) for research questions 1 and 2. The t-test statistic was used to analyze the two hypotheses. For decision making for research questions 2.50 was used as a bench mark, any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as positive those with less than 2.50 was said to be negative for hypothesis, if the calculated t (t-cal) is greater than the t-critical (t-crit), the null hypothesis is rejected whereas the reverse means that the null hypothesis is not rejected but accepted.

3. RESULTS

The result of the study was presented in line with the research questions in Tables 1 and 2 and hypotheses in Tables 3 and 4.

3.1 Research Question 1

What is the level of teachers' commitment to discipline as code of ethics of profession as perceived by secondary school principals?

Table 1 shows that the highest commitment to discipline was that of item 6 which is teachers dress decently to school with an average mean score of 3.60 and standard deviation of 0.49. The lowest commitment to discipline was that of item 4 which is, teachers do not absent themselves from school and classes without permission with a mean score of 2.36

Table 1. Mean scores and standard deviation of the responses of respondents on what is the level of teachers' commitment to discipline as code of ethics of profession as perceived by secondary school principals

S/N		Enugu 32 Principals			Nsukka 60 Principals			Overall		
		X	SD	D	X	SD	D	X	SD	D
1.	Teachers are early to school.	2.51	0.55	VGE	2.49	0.75	GE	1.50	0.65	GE
2.	Teachers attend assembly on time.	3.30	0.98	GE	3.50	0.56	VGE	3.40	0.77	GE
3.	Teachers mark the class register in class during form business.	2.58	1.19	GE	2.60	0.68	GE	2.59	0.94	GE
4.	Teachers do not absent themselves from school and classes without permission.	2.42	1.79	LE	2.30	0.93	LE	2.36	1.36	LE
5.	Teacher do not play truancy.	2.48	1.01	LE	2.68	0.82	GE	2.58	0.92	GE
6.	Teachers dress decently to school	3.78	0.49	VGE	3.60	0.49	VGE	3.6	0.49	VGE
7.	Teachers respect students' personality	3.00	0.56	GE	3.21	0.88	GE	3.11	0.77	GE
8.	Teachers go for classes early and leave at the right time	2.60	1.11	GE	3.07	0.73	GE	2.84	0.92	GE
9.	Teachers do not encourage students to cheat in examinations	3.10	0.83	GE	2.87	1.19	GE	2.99	1.01	GE
10.	Teachers encourage students to comply with school rules and regulations.	3.57	0.57	GE	3.49	0.69	GE	3.53	0.64	VGE
11.	Teachers appearance portray positive image of professionalism.	3.52	0.79	VGE	3.45	0.81	GE	3.49	0.80	GE
12.	Teachers do not sexually harass students.	2.82	1.07	GE	2.92	1.68	GE	2.86	1.38	GE
13.	Teachers do not ask for favours from parents before helping their wards.	2.35	1.8	LE	2.98	1.17	GE	2.67	1.49	GE
	Overall	2.77	0.98	GE	3.01	0.87	GE	2.96	0.93	GE

and standard deviation of 1.36. The total commitment of teachers to discipline was medium with overall mean score of 2.96 and standard deviation of 0.93.

3.2 Research Question 2

What is the level of teachers' commitment to honesty as code of ethics of profession as perceived by secondary school principals?

Summary of result on table 2 indicates that the lowest commitment of teachers is on items 6 and 8 with overall mean scores of 1.9 and standard deviation of 0.88 and mean score 2.40 and standard deviation of 0.81 respectively. This follows that the teachers are not committed to prepare their lessons very well and do not teach with relevant teaching aids, also teachers may hold two jobs or trade in the school. In these two items the teachers show low commitment to code of ethics. On all other items the principals agreed to a great extent that the teachers are committed to code of ethics. The total commitment of teachers to honesty

was medium with an overall mean score of 2.76 and a standard deviation of 1.02.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the responses of male and female principals on how they perceive the commitment of teachers to code of ethics of the profession.

Table 3 shows that both male and female principals had mean scores above 2.50. This means that they agree to a great extent with each of the items. For further analysis of the overall mean scores for both sexes the t-test statistics was calculated, the decision was found to be non-significant this shows that the null hypothesis was upheld.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the responses of principals who head boarding schools and those who do not on how they perceive the commitment of teachers to code of ethics of the profession.

Table 2. Shows mean scores and standard deviation of the responses of respondents on what is the level of teachers' commitment to honesty as code of ethics of profession as perceived by secondary school teachers

S/N		Enugu 32 principals			Nsukka 60 principals			Overall		
		X	SD	D	X	SD	D	X	SD	D
1.	Teachers mark and record students' scores truthfully.	2.69	1.07	GE	3.33	0.49	GE	3.01	.78	GE
2.	Teachers do not falsify school records and data	2.31	1.80	LE	2.82	0.82	GE	2.57	1.31	GE
3.	Teachers do not collect gratification for doing their job.	2.1	1.01	LE	2.52	1.76	GE	2.31	1.39	GE
4.	Teachers do not report classified school records to outsiders.	2.89	0.99	GE	2.96	0.98	GE	2.93	0.99	GE
5.	Teacher judge cases involving students with fairness	3.12	0.79	GE	3.32	0.56	GE	3.22	0.68	GE
6.	Teachers prepare their lessons very well and teach using the relevant teaching aids	2.00	0.76	LE	1.80	0.99	LE	1.90	0.88	LE
7.	Teachers motivate students to do better	3.18	1.01	GE	3.01	1.12	GE	3.10	1.07	GE
8.	Teachers do not hold two jobs and do not trade in the school	2.30	0.98	LE	2.49	0.76	LE	2.40	0.87	LE
9.	Teachers do not lie to cover their wrongs.	3.4	1.05	GE	3.04	0.56	GE	3.22	0.81	
10.	Teachers do not assign to students jobs that is supposed to be done by teachers	2.76	1.98	GE	3.06	0.96	GE	2.91	1.47	GE
11.	Teachers mark assignments, tests and exams.	2.5	0.75	GE	3.10	1.11	GE	2.80	0.93	GE
12.	Teachers give feedback of tests and exams with corrections.	2.70	1.04	GE	2.83	1.07	GE	2.77	1.06	GE
	Overall	2.66	1.10	GE	2.86	0.93	GE	2.76	1.02	GE

Table 3. Comparing the responses of male and female principals on how they perceive the commitment of teachers to code of ethics of the profession

Group	No.	Mean	SD	Mean Diff	T-value	T-Crit	DF	P	Decision
Male	12	2.94	0.60	0.41	1.42	1.701	28	0.05	Not Significant
Female	18	2.53	0.50						

Significant $P < 0.05$ DF = Degree of Freedom

Table 4. Comparing the responses of principals who head boarding schools and those who do not on how they perceive the commitment of teachers to code of ethics

Group	No	Mean	SD	Mean Diff	T-value	df	T-Crit	p	Decision
Principals who head boarding schools	10	2.88	0.69	0.13	1.28	25	1.708	0.05	Not significant
Principals who do not head boarding schools	17	2.75	0.56						

Table 4 indicated that principals who head boarding schools and those who do not had a mean score of over 2.5. This follows that principals agreed to a great extent that teachers are committed to their duty. For further analysis of the hypothesis was calculated. The t-test value of 1.28 is less than the critical t-test of 1.708 at a 0.05 level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis is upheld. This shows that there is no significant difference on how principals who head boarding schools and those who do not perceive the commitment of the teachers to code of ethics of the profession.

4. DISCUSSION

The results suggest that teachers in the perception of principals were committed to instruct the students to respect authorities, mark assignments, test, examinations and record their scores fairly, teachers do not report classified school information to outsiders and teachers motivate students to do well in their academics. In this aspect of ethics, teachers appeared to do well. These positive ethical behaviors of teachers have been supported by the study of Youze et al. [3]. The study further revealed that teachers dress decently to school, they judge cases involving students with fairness and they do not assign jobs they are to do to students. This is in line with the study of Reyad [1] who pointed out that the teachers may be aware of the importance of honour as the base for all works. However, the study found out that some teachers absent themselves from school and classes without permission some do not prepare their lessons very well or teach with the relevant teaching aids, some teachers hold two jobs and some trade in the school and some teachers particularly from Enugu education zone play truancy. The failure by teachers to accomplish ethical obligation to teaching have been supported by other studies such as those of Youze et al. [3], Fullan [11] and Nwobodo [15]. Above all this study has tried to establish that most teachers are committed to a large extent to the code of ethics of the profession. The teachers to a great extent live up to good ethical practices. They therefore are honest and disciplined in the discharge of their duties.

5. CONCLUSION

This study tried to identify the extent to which teachers are committed to code of ethics of the profession from the perception of principals of secondary schools. The study therefore has established that most teachers lived up to good ethical practices with regards to most of the elements of their behavior and relationship with students. The study also revealed that teachers were deficient in some elements of ideal ethical practices in their obligation to attendance to classes, preparation of their lessons with relevant teaching aids and truancy.

6. RECOMMENDATION

Recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

They are as follows:

1. Teachers should be disciplined in the school by not absenting themselves from school, classes and playing truancy.
2. Teachers should be honest by preparing their lessons and deliver them very well with relevant teaching aids.
3. Government should organize seminars, conferences, workshops and refresher courses for teachers in which the ethical practices expected of the teachers should be stressed.
4. The school administrators should give out handouts containing the ethics required of teachers to every teacher in the school.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist

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