

An Investigation Into Students' Disposition Towards The Teaching Profession As A Career

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between the attitude of students and their course of study at the University. It also examined the disposition of students who study Education as a course of study towards teaching as a career; and established the relationship in the attitude of male and female students towards teaching careers. These were with a view to addressing the negative attitude students have on teaching profession. The research design adopted descriptive survey research design for this study. The population of the study comprised all the Faculty of Education students in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and University of Ilesa, Ilesa both in Osun State, Nigeria. The sample of the study comprised 120 students (males and females) randomly selected from two institutions understudy. The institutions were purposively selected while the students were selected based on simple random sampling technique. Two instruments were used to collect data in this study. These are self-designed questionnaire and Interview Guide (IG). The questionnaire was titled "Questionnaire on Perception Towards the Teaching Profession" (QPTTP). The questionnaires were administered on respondents who are NCE students in the College of Education, Ilesa (now the University of Ilesa) and students in the Faculty of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. An Interview Guide (IG) was also used to interview some of the students in the institutions. Three research questions were raised. The study revealed that majority of the respondents were positively disposed towards the teaching profession as a career. The study therefore recommends among other things that the teachers' remuneration should be made more attractive to improve the disposition of teachers in training towards the teaching profession.

Keywords: *Investigation, students, disposition, teaching profession, career, college, university*

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I. Introduction

Teachers are trained to inculcate and impart knowledge, the right values and attitude to learners. In fact, teachers are cogent stakeholders in achieving human capital development worldwide. In Nigeria, teachers, or whatever names they are called, are essential elements upholding the system for its continued existence. It will not be out of place if one says, "No teacher, no knowledge". This is because a system can only be in a continuum when knowledge is improved upon and passed on from generation to generation, which is the teacher's major occupation. The teacher serves as both guide and facilitator in the teaching-learning process.

The teacher turns raw materials into finished and useful goods. No matter how raw and rustic a child is, the teacher uses his/her professional acumen, competence, and knowledge to reshape and remodel the life pattern of the child to something good and acceptable in society. There is no limit, no end to when the services of the teacher are needed since learning begins from the cradle and ends in the grave. Apparently, this is the reason why there are refresher programmes and in-service or on-the-job training for those already working. Of equal importance is the fact that other professions also end up teaching, as is the case in the medical line, law firms, engineering and a host of other professions do engage in teaching their new intakes to enable them to be fully integrated into the system for professional competence. Findings have even shown that Nigeria has more qualified teachers, especially in her primary and secondary schools, than ever before (Adewuyi & Ogunwuyi, 2002).

However, the status of the teaching profession in the country is nothing to write home about; as such, any candidate seeking admission into tertiary institutions does not, in most cases, willingly choose Education as a course of choice to study, except the institutions put them there as a result of their inability to meet up with the required scores in their course of choice such as it applies to courses like Medicine, Law, Engineering and the like. Realizing this, The Minister for Education, Adamu (2017), reiterated the effort of The Federal Ministry of Education to enhance the status of Teaching and to make teaching attractive to the best brains, which he said will

be achieved with the launch of the National Teacher Education Policy. In the words of Falore (2016), the reasons why teaching among youth is waning at great speed, inter alia, are that:

- i. Teaching as a profession involves a heavy workload. It is both brain-tasking and time-consuming.
- ii. Teaching demands that teachers should be lifelong learners as this is the only way they can have a sound mastery of their subject matter, and Nigerian youths would rather read to pass examinations than read as a way of life.
- iii. Teachers are known to be role models. They are known to “walk the talk”. Most Nigerian youth would prefer to choose professions where they will be free to express themselves. She further added that teachers' poor condition of service is also a major deciding factor why intelligent, young persons are forsaking the teaching profession.

Similarly, an analysis by the Learning Policy Institute states that 55% of teachers are quitting because they are dissatisfied with their job; 43% gave family/personal reasons for quitting their teaching job; 31% are quitting for the reason of retirement; 31% are quitting in search of another job while 18% give financial reasons for leaving the teaching profession.

Teaching Profession: Example from Finland

Finland is very much concerned and particular about the high quality of teachers for her education, which has no doubt made teaching in Finland a most admired profession and has made even primary school teaching the most sought-after career. The attractiveness of the teaching profession in Finland had a lot to do with the selection process, the work itself, and the working conditions than with the teacher's pay which is at par with what obtains in many European countries.

The standard of entry for trainees into the teaching professions in Finland is very high and must be met before would-be candidates are admitted. It is highly competitive as gaining admission to study education is considered a prestigious accomplishment. Finland has long moved Teacher Education into research universities which also confers prestige on young people who go into teaching in Finland. It is equally notable that Finland has a very high retention rate for teachers, as about 90% of trained teachers remain in the teaching profession for the period of their careers.

The process of admitting students into the teaching profession is highly selective and competitive, as only one out of every ten candidates who applied is admitted. Candidates are assessed on the basis of their upper secondary school results, matriculation score, and co-curricular activities. Other forms of examinations are also administered to the candidates to assess their ability to think critically and evaluate arguments.

Teachers' salaries are equally competitive compared to other professions in Finland but fairly average when compared to other European Countries. Even though, teacher salaries in Finland may be somewhat lower than in other professions, the teaching profession is highly regarded and granted a level of respect. Undoubtedly, only the best and brightest are admitted and accepted in their Schools of Education, preparing to be teachers. Teaching is considered one of Finland's most highly esteemed professions and undoubtedly one of the most competitive in terms of entry.

Education Benchmarking

Learning Policy Institute Analysis of National Center for Education Statistics (2013) has listed the following countries as the World's best-performing education systems, including what sets them apart.

1. Canada, due to a wide series of reforms in the past two decades, has emerged as an educational leader in international assessment rankings.
2. Finland's educational system is widely acknowledged as one of the best in the world.
3. Japan's students work harder and learn more than students in almost any other country.
4. Shanghai – China's students topped the international rankings their first time out of the gate in 2009 and managed to improve on that performance in 2012.
5. Taiwan has been rated in Mathematics and Science, and in 2012, Taiwan's reading performance improved dramatically to rank 7th place overall.
6. Estonia emerged as a top performer on PISA 2012, a remarkable achievement for a country that only gained independence in 1992.
7. Hong Kong, driven by a diverse population with ever-changing needs, has refocused its education system to mesh with its international economic goals.
8. South Korea's education system underwent a series of rapid changes in the second half of the 20th Century resulting in a comprehensive school system and a 70% increase in adult literacy.
9. Singapore, a tiny Island nation, built a world-class national education system from scratch.

Teaching as a Profession

Teaching is undoubtedly challenging as it goes beyond just standing, holding the chalk, and talking before learners; rather, teaching as art needs to be done professionally. No wonder that Oyekan (1994) described teaching as an all-purpose profession engaged in human resource development for individual and economic growth. Ehindero (2006) in his own view defines teaching as a normative interactive human process involving complex decision-making on different aspects of classroom interaction.

The word profession is from 'profess', 'I agree to be bound by the principles and rules'. Profession involves the specialized application of special knowledge; hence, theoretical knowledge is imperative to an effective profession. Langford (1978) maintains that a profession is a form of employment, especially, one respected in society as honourable and possible only for an educated person and after training in some special branch of knowledge. Macmillan (2009) defines a profession as a job requiring special skills and qualifications, especially, one with high social status: The medical/legal/ nursing/teaching profession. Ehindero (2006), among his various definitions of a profession, submits that a profession forms, interprets, and enforces standards of ethical conduct regulating the practices of its members. Considering teachers' enormous tasks in discharging their duties, one would be convinced to say that teaching is a profession. However, the following problems confronting teaching in Nigeria are yet to be resolved, thereby making it impossible to wholeheartedly say that teaching is a profession in Nigeria:

- i. Problem of porous entry qualification.
- ii. Problem of teaching as a job for all.
- iii. Problem of low wages resulting in poor welfare.
- iv. Lack of professional and in-service trainings.
- v. Problem of short internship.
- vi. Problem of politicizing education.
- vii. Problem of insufficient budgetary allocation.
- viii. Lack of autonomy by the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT).
- ix. Lack of good working environment and condition.
- x. Incursion of unqualified and untrained personnel in the teaching profession.
- xi. Problem of non-registration of Nigeria Union of Teacher (NUT) as a profession

Statement of the Problem

The pursuit of educational excellence has been one of the major goals of most nations of the world. This is so because education has been adjudged the key with which any nation could permanently close the doors of poverty and ignorance and simultaneously open that of prosperity in terms of economic buoyancy, social advancement, and civilization (Sokefun, 1999). The level to which a student would be carried depends partly on his natural endowment, the ability of the teacher to influence his attitude positively making use of necessary reinforcement to be provided by the society. But in recent times in Nigeria, lack of job satisfaction in teaching has led to the lack of the right and ideal teacher. Among the problems faced by teachers are: delays in promotion, a pervading sense of insecurity, sagging morale, poor corporate image and poor or low remuneration as compared to other professionals.

These and many more have affected the mindset of most people going into the teaching profession, either as students or workers, to engage in teaching due to absence or lack of better alternative as most of them see it as a stepping stone to a higher or better offer.

Purpose of the Study

Most students in the Faculty of Education of Universities as well as students in the Colleges of Education, prefer to seek employment elsewhere rather than being employed as teachers, a profession for which they are trained. They even feel shy and ashamed to introduce themselves as Faculty/School of Education students. Therefore, this study is designed to find reasons for the negative attitude towards the teaching profession and proffering solutions to address the negative attitude. This is no doubt a problem which had been in existence for a long time, in a time when issues bothering on the teaching profession have not been thoroughly addressed by the Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria, which is now fully on course with her various directives. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- a) investigate the relationship between the attitude of students and their course of study at the University;
- b) examine the disposition of students who study Education as a course of study towards teaching as a career; and
- c) establish the relationship in the attitude of male and female students towards teaching careers.

Research Questions

The following questions were generated from the study:

- (1) Is there any relationship between the attitude of students and their course of study at the University?
- (2) Do students who study Education as a course of study have a good disposition towards teaching as a career?
- (3) Is there any relationship in the attitude of male and female students towards teaching careers?

II. Methodology

The research design adopted descriptive survey research design for this study. The population of the study comprised all the Faculty of Education students in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and University of Ilesa, Ilesa both in Osun State, Nigeria. The sample of the study comprised 120 students (males and females) randomly selected from two institutions under study. The institutions were purposively selected while the students were selected based on simple random sampling technique.

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III. Results

The results of the findings are presented in the order of the research questions earlier formulated.

Research Question 1

Is there any relationship between the attitude of students and their course of study in the University and College of Education?

Responses of the respondents are presented in Table 1

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the students' perception of students' attitudes and their course of study.

Category	N	Mean	S.D
College of Education	60	53.59	-4.47
University (Faculty of Education)	60	51.31	5.05

Table 1 shows that the mean score of each category of students (College of Education 53.59 and University 51.31) falls within the acceptable level of relationship between the attitude of the students and their course of study. It can thus be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the attitude of the students and their course of study.

Research Questions 2

Do students who study Education as a course of study have a good disposition towards teaching as a career?

Responses of the respondents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation of the students' disposition towards teaching as a career.

Category	N	Mean	S.D
College of Education	60	43.54	-4.42
University (Faculty of Education)	60	41.25	4.06

Table 2 shows that the mean score of each category of students (College of Education 43.59 and University 41.25) falls below the acceptable level of disposition. Thus, it can be concluded that the students' disposition in each category is low. This may not be surprising as oral interview with most of the students shows their lack of satisfaction in which emphasis were on salaries and wages as well as respect accorded the teachers in the society.

Research Question 3

Is there any relationship between the attitude of male and female students in the two institutions towards teaching as career?

Responses of the female students are presented in table 3

Table 3: Mean and Standard deviation of gender attitudinal scores in each category.

Category	N	Mean	S.D
College of Education	60	21.27	-2.14
University (Faculty of Education)	60	22.30	3.29

Table 3 shows that the mean score of male and female students (College of Education 21.27 and University 22.30) falls within the acceptable level of attitudinal relationship of the male and female students. This is invariably contrary to the oral interview with most of the respondents which shows that the female are more favourably disposed towards teaching as a career than the male students.

IV. Discussion of Findings

Most of the students involved in the study from the two institutions were not excited about studying education because they would invariably end up in the teaching profession. This is an indication that all the students studying education in the two institutions are not favourably disposed towards teaching as a career. This is also an indication from the results gathered that gender had a significant influence on the attitude of the students towards the teaching profession. It, therefore, means that females are more favourably disposed to the teaching profession. The females in both institutions of learning considered the teaching profession, the most suitable career that will allow them to cater properly for their children and their homes in general. The study's findings align with Acker's (1994) submission that teaching is one of the highly feminized "semi-professions" like nursing and library keeping. Feminization has no doubt contributed to teaching's low status. Teaching's low status has allowed its feminization, and these factors have interacted to perpetrate the secondary role of women and teaching in society.

In view of the aforementioned, Groskop (2006) corroborates the assertion with the submission that teaching of young children is considered a 'soft option' when it comes to a job in the public domain. Also, from time immemorial, school teaching has been considered a woman's profession and job because working with children was associated with child care rather than teaching (Skelton, 2009).

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed that students studying education as a career in both institutions of learning have the same attitude towards their course of study. There is a serious indication that almost all the students studying education in the two institutions are not favourably disposed towards teaching as a career which invariably means that they just took up teaching as a stepping stone to another career in future. There are also indications from the results gathered that gender has significant relevance as far as the attitude of the students towards the teaching profession is concerned. It, therefore, means that female students are favourably disposed to the teaching profession.

The female students in both institutions of learning considered the teaching profession, the most suitable career that will allow them to cater properly for their children in particular and their homes in general.

It is therefore recommended, among others, that the best brains among candidates seeking for admission should be admitted into the Faculties and Schools of Education as this will certainly have a positive aftermath effect on their output.

It is also recommended that remuneration for those in the teaching profession be made very attractive and at par with those in other professions. Those in the teaching profession should be remunerated based on their qualification not on the basis of teaching in primary, secondary or tertiary institutions, as this will go a long way to boost teacher's morale wherever they are placed to perform their duties.

The Government of the federation and all stakeholders must ensure that teaching is adequately professionalized in theory and practice to put a stop to the incursion into the teaching profession by unqualified personnel who see teaching as a dumping ground for the jobless.

There should be adequate and proper coordination among the National Teachers' Institute, the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria, the National Commission for Colleges of Education, the Universal Basic Education Commission, Institutes and Faculties of Education in the Universities and Colleges of Education to ensure standardized production of qualified teachers as well as their regular development and capacity to meet the global best practices and competitiveness.

There is also the need for the government at all levels to have up-to-date and reliable data on teachers, which will enable the government to know when new teachers are to be recruited into school, considering the global standard teacher-learners ratio.

Outstanding teachers and those teachers working in rural areas should be given incentives to boost their morale. The federal government should borrow a leaf from Finland to better the teaching profession in Nigeria.

Finally, the teachers' code of conduct should be strictly adhered to, and erring teachers or violators should not be spared but seriously dealt with.

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