

Impact of the society's perception on teachers' professionalism

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ABSTRACT

An effective teaching contributes to the students' performance and this depends on qualified-trained teachers, school administration, parents and conducive environment for teaching and learning. It is proven that students are more successful in their academic achievements, in the societies where teachers perceive their profession as their job. This paper explores the impact of the society's perception on teachers' professionalism. The method employed in this paper is qualitative by using interview technique and used audio-recorded to ensure a complete transcript. The result indicated that in some developing countries including Cameroon, Kenya and Fiji has various reasons for their job. Teaching profession was affected by how the society considers teachers whereby they are perceived as disadvantaged population who cannot fully take part in the social and economic activities due to the fact that their salary is very low compared other public servants. This low salary and loss of respect of teachers by the society lead to the job dissatisfaction and made the teaching profession as a transitional job before waiting to move to another different professional field.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, the issue of addressing the teacher quality is crucial so that schools should be able to equip students with the skills and knowledge that facilitate them to respond to societal needs and to successfully compete on the labor market. This issue should be addressed through teacher professionalism and development that requires training of teachers as well as availability of teaching facilities [1]. For a long time in many societies, fields like medicine and law have established their own professional characteristics that distinguish them from all other occupations and urged that teaching is not a profession [2]. According to the research Forest Tribology And Anthropology, "society is a complex of forms or processes each of which is living and growing by interaction with the other, the whole being so unified that what takes place in one part affects all the rest" [3]. This study used the aforementioned definition of the society and implicated that teachers, students, and government are integral parts of it.

Further studies confirmed that teaching is also a profession because professionalism is concerned with the ability, code of ethics, autonomy and specialized knowledge that someone has in order to deliver the service to the society. Therefore, during the process of teaching and learning, the teacher is also delivering the service to the society by teaching the students, by sharing experiences with his fellow teachers through professional learning communities; by devising teaching and learning methods; and by participating in curriculum customization [1]. Meanwhile, another research has been developed from the previous journal that stated teacher education as the program, policies and procedures that deliberated to equip potential

teachers with attitude, knowledge, behaviors and skill that require to perform the task effectively in the classroom, schools and wider community [4]. Therefore, teacher should understand the content of their teaching to transfer knowledge for their students, and the role of teacher expected to fit in society and enhance teacher's knowledge and their professional background. It is also expected that teacher professional development is expected as a strategy to drive change and improve practice.

As Evans said in Sach, that in professional development as a key process within the wider agenda of raising standards and increasing societal growth capacity by improving policy and practice in education [5]. In many developing countries, teachers are described by 'the public', the society, and this has affected policy reforms and teacher professionalism in general. As Huang, *et al.* research that mentioned into the public perception of teachers has put it: 'the status of teachers is an amalgam of a variety of impressions gained by members of the public from their own experiences as children, the interactions they have with their children's teachers and more importantly, the image that is conveyed by the media' [6]. This discussion is needed to be discussed because its connection between society and teacher professionalism. Society needs to understand how teacher practice in class and society, how it can be effective and efficient. Because, nowadays it is important to recognize the importance of effective and efficient in order to eliminate students' misconceptions [7].

Effective teaching contributes to the students' performance and this depends on qualified-trained teachers, school administration, parents and conducive environment for teaching and learning. It is proven that students are more successful in their academic achievements, in the societies where teachers perceive their profession as valued [8]. As Triyanto cited in Elizabeth, *et al.* that an effectiveness of teaching personnel can be enhanced through various ways which include conducive school environment, prompt payment of salary and allowance, provision for teacher's educational development [9]. Because in education, it is important to understand how teachers' role in their practical whether in school or in social.

Moreover, teachers are engine and oil in the whole educational process; and once the teacher is internally or externally impacted, the whole teaching system will be also affected. As human beings, teachers can be affected by how the society considers their profession; and in turn this perception may affect the teaching process specifically students' performance [10]. As any other professionals, teachers have to commit to ongoing professional learning, and the learning have to suitable for purpose and recognize that at different stage of the career, teacher require different types of activity to improve practice and extend the skills management and have to be personally transformative [5]. The definition of professionalism consist of the attitudes and behavior of one's profession [11]. Additionally, professionalism can be viewed as the question of trust between those who provide expert knowledge, and those who receive it [12]. Thus, it can be assumed that the loss of trust due to the changed perception can affect the whole process of teaching and learning.

Based on the previous explanation related to the teacher professionalism, Mayer said that it has three points of professional standards of teacher. First, related with capturing the complexity and specific context of teaching quality including professional judgement which require in providing appropriate learning opportunities for every student in every setting. The second is that the teacher should frame the accountability by developing authentic assessment, the last is teacher educators should respond directly to the challenges being put to the effectiveness of teacher education [13]. Despite from that, teacher also has role not only interaction with students in the class but also in society. Because teachers as the first player who come across the challenge with the environment, and teach the students how to solve the problem in the complex situations. Teachers are expected to offer an opportunity for the learners to acquire not only skills, but also to learn and understand diverse aspects of culture and society, to develop values, skills attitude and survival competencies [14].

While substantial researches about perception of teaching professionalism were conducted, very few studies examined the perception of the society on teachers' professionalism and the impact this perception has on teaching and learning process. Therefore, this study guided by the following objectives: i) To examine the perception of the society on the teachers' professionalism; and ii) To identify the impact of this perception on teaching and learning. After data analysis, the study provided possible solutions and recommendations to the identified problems. This study is guided by the following research questions, those are: i) What are the perceptions of the society on the teachers' professionalism?; ii) What are the affects of the above perceptions on teaching and learning?

Literature review entitled "Analysis of Teachers Perception of Their Public Image and its Influence on Students Performance in Physics: A Key to Improving the Quality of Education in Nigeria by Lliya and Simdet" [10] presents a study on perception of teachers of their public image and how it affects their and ultimately student's motivation and academic performance. According to the authors; "An ideal learning environment requires a smooth relationship between teacher, student, parents and the society at large" Emengu, (cited in Iliya and Simdet) indicated that there are several factors such as heavy workload, low

financial incentives, negative image of the teaching profession among the general public, as well as disrespect by parents have demotivated teachers and have led to low morale [10]. Iliya and Simdet pointed out that teacher's quality, as well as esteem that they receive from the society, play an important part in students' academic performance [10]. Despite this, evidence showed that often teachers are disregarded by the public, which in turn affects their attitude towards teaching in a negative way.

The main purpose of the study was, therefore, to find out how the image of teachers created by society affected their work and eventually students' academic performance. The researchers used a descriptive survey research and random sampling techniques in carrying out this project. Three important conclusions were drawn from the previous research: i) Parents' perception of teachers affects student performance; ii) Government/employers attitudes towards the teachers affect students' performance; and iii) Students attitude towards their teacher has a great influence on their performance. This research has shown how crucial is the role of society's perception of teachers for their productivity and overall performance. It is obvious that both teachers and students have an impact on each other whether positive or negative. However, as this research has shown that continuous support of teachers by the public can drastically improve their morale and the quality of instruction of teachers. Meanwhile another article said that teacher education for practical in society signified with highly qualified, which means having appropriate discipline or content knowledge with the assumption that other aspects of the job teaching can be learnt on the job [13].

Another study, an investigation on the societal perception of teaching, as a profession and an occupation in Kenya focused on the same issue, but this time within the context of Kenya. The authors claimed that despite the obvious importance of the teaching profession, it is still regarded as less prestigious and "is now considered as an occupation of people who have failed to achieve success elsewhere" [15]. Teaching is viewed by society as a profession reserved for second-rate people, who lack imagination, creativity, independence and social courage, but who have a passion for working with children. Thus, people entering the profession, the same as in the case of Nigeria from the previous article have low discipline and lack of motivation from the very beginning. Moreover, years of public critique have played its role in discouraging current and future teachers [15]. Another researcher said about professionalism in teacher is related with their leadership in their society. As Weber and Johnsen said that it is expected to collaborate with others and fill leadership roles in an increasingly complex and diverse society [16].

Further explored this issue, there is a research entitled The study Analysis of Parents, Teachers and Students' Perception of Teaching Profession in South-West Nigeria which supports previous claims, but takes more historical perspective to look at the issue. In the 1950s through the early 1980s teachers and the teaching profession was greatly honored, dignified and highly respected in society by parents in particular and the society at large because of teachers' role in promoting national development with high sense of efficiency and responsibility that is associated with their social and economic status as well as conducive working environment [17]. The teaching profession was rated high and respected among parents, many of them wanted their children to become teachers. However, the studies that were conducted over the years indicated that the status and society's perception of teacher profession has decreased in many countries across the globe [17]. The above-mentioned studies provided an example of the changing perception of society towards teaching profession. This negative trend can be seen in many countries across the world, especially in developing countries, which of course affect the quality of education. Because developing countries should strengthen their quality of education, which is as the main key to be improve the quality of human resource. As the previous research said that there is an empirical evidence on returns of educational investment that is as useful indicator of education productivity, and its serve as an incentive for individuals to invest in their own human capital [18].

2. RESEARCH METHOD

A method is a style of conducting research that is determined by the nature of the problem [19]. Based on a review of similar studies, the researchers found it appropriate to use the qualitative method, namely individual interviews. Qualitative research as a method to explore and understand the meaning on individual or group think which come from social or human problem [20].

This method allowed probing attitudes, beliefs, desires, and experience to get deeper understanding about the topics. It is also, better opportunities for interpreting, and deeper understanding of the current issue of the impact of the society's perception on teachers' professionalism from teachers as well as parents' perspectives. Since the researchers have a direct access to varied professionals representing different parts of the world and who have various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, as well as taking into consideration the time efficiency, convenience sampling has been chosen as a source of data for the research.

This research presented the clear picture of how the society perceives the teaching profession specifically in developing countries. Therefore, the countries from Asia and Africa were selected randomly.

The researchers interviewed six participants from different countries: three teachers respectively from Fiji, Cameroon and Kenya; and three parents respectively from Cameroon, Sri-Lanka, and Timor-Leste. Names of participants as well as their respective countries were anonymized, and have been assigned with letter codes T1, T2, T3 for teachers, and P1, P2, P3 for parents. Besides, those countries have less rank in the data that took from human development index (HDI) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. List of participant countries with HDI [21]

HDI	Rank	Country
0.743	93	Fiji
0.606	141	Timor-Leste
0.782	72	Sri-Lanka
0.563	153	Cameroon
0.601	143	Kenya

From the data above shows that those countries categorized has less HDI based on the record of United Nations development programme on human development report. Moreover, the selection of teacher-participants was based on their teaching experience and level of teaching while the selection of parent-participants was based on having children at school, irrespective of their children's age and grade level. The participants were contacted one day before the interview. The questions were designed in the way that provided participants with flexibility and freedom to explore their ideas in depth. Probing questions were used where applicable in order to clarify the questions to the participants.

2.1. Data collection method

Before starting the interview, the researchers explained to the participants the purpose of the study. The participants were ensured about the protection and confidentiality of the information that was being collected; and that it is their right to withdraw from the study at any given time. With participants' approval, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure a complete transcript. Typed and hand-written notes were taken during all interviews, enabling the researchers to track key points to return to later in the interview and for use during data analysis.

2.2. Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out in two phases: i) The interview recorded and make some notes that was taken by four researchers were compiled separately; this allowed the researchers to compare their notes against each other's notes and make constant references to the recordings. The data was copied on a worksheet that has the interview guide-questions then the responses of each of respondents are compiled; ii) The researcher brought together the coded interviews relationships within and across the data sources. A table was developed to compare various coded interviews. As tentative categories emerged, the researcher tested them against the data. Then, the researcher integrated and refined the categories until themes were solidified. At the end, the researchers used literature review together with interview data for correlation of ideas and discuss any further differences to draw the conclusion and further research implication.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All over the world, teaching occupation is considered as one of the most responsible and fundamental professions due to the fact that through education, teachers ensure students' intellectual growth by providing knowledge and skills that will assist graduates to meet the various challenges and start working in different areas that contribute to the sustainable development of the society [14]. The work of teaching as a complex activity which requires professional initiative, discretion and autonomy rather than a procedural and scripted activity [22]. There are some efforts to improve teacher professionalism including various training and teacher quality improvement.

Interviews with teachers and parents have shown that the teaching profession was affected by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The intrinsic motivation is self-generated factor that influences people to behave in a particular way or to move in a particular direction; and it includes appreciation, praise, recognition, self-respect, responsibility, autonomy and a sense of accomplishment and opportunities for advancement [23]. While extrinsic motivation relates to what is done to or for people to motivate them. These include rewards such as increased pay, praise, or promotion, and punishments, such as disciplinary action, withholding pay or criticism. In teaching and learning, it is urgent to understand the needs that

teachers must be able to carry out of their duties and role with professionalism. The previous research also said that there is a significant influence of work motivations with teacher performance.

Research study participants have brought up the questions of high teachers' turnover, low-ethics and professional qualifications, considerable loss of trust and respect in comparison with the past, lack of professional development opportunities, and constant criticism that affects teachers, and as a result their students. Even though considering teacher evaluation is needed to improve students outcome, yet effective teachers find rigorous due to the high-stakes on teacher evaluation which affect their job satisfaction [7].

3.1. Teachers' turnover and society's perception

The interviews with teachers and parents have revealed a possible correlation between teachers' turnover and perception of the profession within the society, even though on the individual level participants-teachers did not feel that they were affected by the public opinion. T1 and P2 stated that teachers are perceived by the society as the disadvantaged population who cannot fully take part in the social and economic activities, while teaching as a profession is seen as a transitional job before you move to a different professional field. According to Ronfeldt, *et al.* "When teachers leave schools, previously held relationships and relational patterns are altered, to the degree that turn-over disrupts the formation and maintenance of staff cohesion and community, it may also affect student achievement" [24]. The abovementioned testimonies enabled researchers to suggest that the teachers' turnover is partly caused by the society's perception of teachers, which in its' turn impacts students' academic achievement.

Contrary to the aforesaid, the T2 expressed that teaching profession was his first career choice, since he was passionate about teaching; and in his country, the teaching profession is still a prestigious and attractive profession which many people want to join and it is very competitive. Members of the society believe that teachers hold very high moral standards, high esteem, and are seen as role models in their communities. The participant highlighted that being respected by the society makes teachers proud of their job, and he himself encourages his students to choose teaching as a career path. Since teaching profession has a good image and prestige in the society, teachers remain in this domain, which contributes to the low teacher turnover in T2's country.

3.2. Loss of trust and respect, and teachers' performance

Based on the interview answers, five out of six participants reported loss of trust and respect towards teachers within their respective communities. A trust and respect are external motivation's factors, because they are given to the teachers from the society, and motivation is the internal or external drive to do something. Therefore, if teachers are trusted and respected, they will be motivated and perform better. But if they are not trusted and respected, they will not be motivated and so perform less effectively [25].

When the researchers asked the P1 and P3, their opinion about teaching profession and whether they believed that teachers were professionals; P1 stated that in his opinion, teachers were semi-professionals, and that, "Teaching is not perceived by the society on the same level as lawyers or doctors. People enter the teaching sphere because they do not have any other options and they need to survive." The P3 shared the view that teachers were not professionals, since most teachers in his country lack professional educational background and specialized skills, and enter the profession out of necessity rather than sincere desire to serve the community.

Disappointment concerning teachers losing their status of the role-models within the society has been mentioned several times throughout the process of the interviews. The participant T3 stated that, "Teaching used to be a noble profession, respected by the society. Nowadays, people have lost their trust and respect for teachers." One of the crucial parts of professionalism, namely code of ethics has been undermined by the way teachers dress and act, with egregious cases of excessive alcohol consumption and even rape cases involving teachers and students. The cases of excessive drinking and affairs between teachers and students have been mentioned by the T1 as a destroyer of the image of a teacher in the eyes of students. According to this participant, "Teachers used to be role models, they were respected and loved, perceived as demi-gods in their own areas"; but not anymore.

3.3. Creation of teachers' image in the society

Both teachers and parents were asked who played a greater role in the creation of the teachers' image, government or parents themselves. The answers were divided, with T1 and T3 who said that everyone should be involved in this process. While the rest of the respondents (teachers as well as parents) stated that; ultimately the government is responsible for the establishment of the positive perception through raise of the standards for entering the teaching domain, provision of competitive salaries and professional development opportunities, as well as promotion of the profession to the broad masses.

4. CONCLUSION

The data revealed several interesting points that clarify the questions raised by the researchers that already explained in the introduction and discussion part. First, the society's perception towards teachers' profession that is composed of the following components: ability, code of ethics, autonomy and specialized knowledge which plays an important role in the teachers' quality of instruction. Based on the answers provided by the interviewees, it can be assumed that lack of one of the aforementioned components negatively affects the instruction of teachers, which in turn undeniably impacts or affects students' performance and outcomes based on teachers' and parents' perception.

Based on the research findings, the following suggestions are provided for consideration which is also can be used for the recommendations: i) Teachers' turnover case should be addressed; ii) Approaches to teachers recruitment and teacher preparation institutions should be reconsidered; iii) Opportunities for the professional development should be expanded; iv) Official governmental regulation that defines professional code of ethics of teachers should be introduced; v) Remuneration schemes of teachers should be revised; and vi) Awareness campaigns on teaching profession should be carried out. The limitation of the study is the number of limited participants for the interview. The researchers suggest for the next research to add more participants.

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