



TEACHERS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study was to examine the rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis societal expectations. This study therefore explored the multiple responsibilities of teachers, including instructional duties, ethical obligations, and roles in community engagement. The teachers' ethical responsibilities as discussed in the study include professional conduct; commitment to students; and lifelong learning. The instructional responsibilities of teachers as discussed in the study include curriculum delivery differentiation; assessment and evaluation among others. Teachers' professional responsibilities were also discussed. Some challenges to exercise of their rights and execution of their responsibilities were also noted. The way forward as identified in the study include: legal protections, awareness and education, professional development, collaborative school cultures and fair compensation and benefits.

Introduction

Teachers are integral to the educational process, possessing a wide range of responsibilities that influence student learning, development, and well-being. This research work explored the multiple responsibilities of teachers, including instructional duties, ethical obligations, and roles in community engagement. By understanding these responsibilities, stakeholders can better support educators and enhance the educational experience for students. Focusing on the key areas will not only enhance the rights and responsibilities of teachers but also contribute to a more effective, equitable, and positive educational landscape for both educators and students alike. Safeguarding teacher rights is essential for developing a sustainable education system. Teachers are at the heart of the educational process, and their well-being directly impacts student learning, school culture, and overall educational quality.

Ethical Responsibilities of Teachers

In addition to their rights, teachers also have ethical responsibilities, which are integral to their role:

1. Professional Conduct: Teachers are expected to uphold a standard of professionalism, integrity, and respect. The Nigerian Teachers' Professional Code of Conduct emphasizes ethical behavior and accountability (Nigerian Teachers' Professional Code of Conduct, 2008).
2. Commitment to Students: Teachers have a duty to prioritize students' welfare, ensuring they provide safe and constructive learning environments.



3. Lifelong Learning: Emphasizing the importance of continuous professional development aligns with their rights to professional growth and job security.

Instructional Responsibilities

Curriculum Delivery: Teachers are responsible for delivering a curriculum that meets educational standards and addresses students' needs. This includes: Planning Lessons- Creating engaging and comprehensive lesson plans that align with curriculum frameworks and learning objectives (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards [NBPTS], 2021).

Differentiation: Adapting instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of students, including those with different abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles.

Assessment and Evaluation: Teachers must assess student learning and provide feedback. This involves: Formative Assessments: Conducting regular assessments during the learning process to gauge understanding and inform instruction and Summative Assessments: Administering evaluations at the end of instructional units to measure student learning outcomes.

Feedback Provision: Offering constructive feedback that guides students in their learning journey and encourages growth (Ezeaku 2012; Okoye 2021).

Classroom Management: Creating a positive learning environment is a critical responsibility for teachers. This includes: Establishing Rules and Procedures: Setting clear classroom expectations to promote a respectful and productive learning environment (Okaforcha and Okeke 2020).

Behaviour Management: Implementing strategies to address inappropriate behavior and maintain order within the classroom (Ojimba (2020; Ehigiator and Ucheagwu-Okoye 2021).

Fostering a Positive Climate: Encouraging positive relationships among students and between students and teachers to enhance engagement and motivation (Nwakoby and Nwakoby 2022).

Professional Responsibilities

Lifelong Learning: Teachers must engage in ongoing professional development to stay current in their field. This includes: - Continuing Education: Participating in workshops, courses, and conferences to enhance teaching skills and knowledge (Nwakoby 2024; Nwakoby and Chukwujekwu 2020). Reflective Practice: Regularly reflecting on their teaching practices and seeking opportunities for improvement (Okoye 2016; Nwakoby and Nwakoby 2023).

Collaboration with Colleagues: Collaboration among educators is essential for sharing best practices and enhancing student outcomes. Team Teaching: Working with colleagues to design and implement interdisciplinary lessons that provide holistic learning experiences (Ojimba 2024; Okoye 2017).

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Engaging in collaborative learning with peers to discuss strategies, share resources, and solve common challenges (Ilodigwe and Nwakoby 2021; Iloka 2021; Nwakoby 2023).

Parental Engagement-Teachers are responsible for fostering communication and collaboration with parents and guardians: Regular Communication- Keeping parents informed about student progress, classroom activities, and school events (Ojimba 2023; Okeke and Okaforcha 2020; Iloka 2022).

Building Partnerships: Actively involving parents in the educational process and encouraging



their participation in school activities (Ibe and Udeoji 2019 Ucheagwu-Okoye 2019).

Ethical Responsibilities like Commitment to Equity- Teachers have a responsibility to promote equity and inclusivity within their classrooms. This entails: - Culturally Responsive Teaching: Recognizing and valuing students' diverse backgrounds to create an inclusive curriculum that addresses their needs (Ucheagwu-Okoye and Nwadukwe 2021) and Advocacy for All Students-Speaking up for marginalized or underrepresented students and ensuring that all have equal opportunities to succeed (Iloka 2023); Nwakoby and Ildigwe 2022; Ibe 2022; Ibe, Nwakoby & Ihediuche 2024).

Professional Integrity- Maintaining high ethical standards is crucial for teachers:

Confidentiality: Protecting students' privacy and handling sensitive information with care (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2020). Honesty and Transparency- Being truthful about student assessments and professional qualifications, fostering a trust-based relationship with students and parents (AFT, 2020).

Responsibilities in Student Development

Supporting Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): Teachers play a vital role in promoting students' social and emotional well-being. This includes: Teaching SEL Skills- Integrating social-emotional learning into the curriculum to help students develop skills such as self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2020), Creating a Supportive Environment: Fostering a classroom atmosphere where students feel safe to express themselves and take risks (Okaforcha and Okeke 2019; Ezeaku 2014).

Mentoring and Guidance: Teachers act as mentors to students, providing guidance and support for their academic and personal growth. This involves: -Individualized Support: Offering additional help to students who may be struggling academically or personally (Chike Okosa, Ibe and Ojimba 2023; Okeke and Okaforcha (2018) and Career and Life Guidance: Assisting students in exploring future career options and developing life skills necessary for success beyond the classroom (Nwogu and Nwakoby 2021; Ughamadu, Okaforcha and Okeke 2015).

Community Engagement: Building Relationships with the Community: Teachers have a responsibility to connect their classrooms with the broader community. This includes Community Involvement-Participating in community events and encouraging students to engage in local initiatives (Okoye and Ucheagwu-Okoye 2021) and Service Learning-Integrating service-learning projects into the curriculum to provide students with opportunities to apply their learning in real-world contexts (Ibe 2019; Okoye 2017; Ezeaku 2013).

Advocacy for Educational Improvement: Teachers are often at the forefront of advocating for improvements in education policies and practices. This involves: - Engaging in Policy Discussions: Contributing to conversations around educational reform and advocating for policies that benefit students and educators (Ani, Iloka and Nwakoby, 2021) and Building Coalitions: Collaborating



with other educators, organizations, and stakeholders to promote positive change in education (Okeke 2023; Okoye 2018).

Challenges Teachers Face in Meeting Their Responsibilities

Resource Limitations: Many teachers face challenges related to inadequate resources, including Lack of Teaching Materials- Insufficient access to textbooks, technology, and other instructional resources can hinder effective teaching (Okaforcha and Okeke 2019; Ezeaku (2012).

Workload and Burnout-Teachers often experience high workload demands and stress, which can impact their ability to fulfill their responsibilities: **Balancing Responsibilities-** Managing classroom duties, grading, and administrative tasks can be overwhelming and lead to burnout (Okaforcha and Okeke 2018; Ezeaku 2019; Nwabashili, Iloka and Ucheagwu-Okoye 2022).

Societal Expectations

Societal pressures can create challenges for teachers: - **Public Perception:** Negative perceptions of the teaching profession can affect teachers' morale and their commitment to their responsibilities (Ojimba 2021; Okaforcha and Okeke 2018; Ezeaku and Obikeze 2018. Therefore, Teachers hold a multifaceted set of responsibilities that extend beyond instructional duties. They are not only teachers but also mentors, advocates, and community leaders. Meeting these responsibilities requires ongoing professional development, collaboration, and a commitment to ethical standards. Supporting teachers in fulfilling their roles can lead to improved student outcomes and a more holistic educational experience. The challenges they face highlight the need for systemic change and greater investment in education to empower teachers and ensure they can effectively meet their responsibilities.

Enhancing Professional Development

Enhancing teacher rights and responsibilities requires a multifaceted approach that involves legal protections, awareness, professional development, collaborative cultures, and fair compensation. By implementing these recommendations, educational stakeholders can create an environment that supports teachers, empowers them to advocate for their rights, and fosters a positive atmosphere for student learning. When teachers feel valued and supported, they are better equipped to fulfill their responsibilities, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for students.

Ongoing Professional Learning: Investing in continuous professional development for teachers is vital for their growth and effectiveness. Professional learning opportunities should: - Include workshops on pedagogical strategies, classroom management, and student engagement to empower teachers in their instructional responsibilities. - Address topics related to teachers' legal rights and ethical responsibilities, equipping them to navigate complex situations in the classroom. - Encourage flexibility in professional development plans to cater to the individual needs of teachers and support their professional growth.

Mentorship Programs: Mentorship programs can play a significant role in supporting teachers and reinforcing their responsibilities. These programs should: - Pair novice teachers with



experienced educators who can provide guidance on navigating workplace dynamics and understanding expectations. - Facilitate mentorship that focuses not only on instructional practices but also on teachers' rights and responsibilities within the educational system. - Foster a collaborative culture in schools where mentorship is seen as essential for both professional growth and the enhancement of student outcomes.

Building Collaborative School Cultures: Teacher Involvement in Decision-Making- Empowering teachers to be involved in decision-making at various levels is crucial for enhancing their sense of ownership and responsibility in the educational process. Schools should: - Establish teachers' advisory councils that give educators a voice in policymaking and curriculum development. - Create opportunities for teacher participation in school governance, enabling them to contribute to decisions affecting their work and the school environment. - Encourage collaborative teamwork among teachers to share responsibilities and foster a sense of community within the school.

Promoting Positive Relationships: Building positive relationships among teachers, administrators, and students is foundational for a thriving educational environment. Initiatives to consider include: - Providing training for school administrators on effective communication and conflict resolution strategies to improve relationships with teachers. - Encouraging team-building activities and social events that promote camaraderie among staff, fostering a supportive atmosphere. - Establishing mentorship and support networks that encourage collaboration and mutual support among educators.

Competitive Salaries: To attract and retain talented educators, it is imperative that teachers receive competitive salaries that reflect their qualifications and responsibilities. Recommendations include: - Conducting regular salary reviews to ensure that teacher salaries are competitive with other professions requiring similar levels of education and expertise. - Providing opportunities for salary increases based on experience and additional responsibilities undertaken by teachers, such as mentoring or leading professional development sessions. - Advocating for transparent salary scales to promote equity and fairness in teacher compensation.

Comprehensive Benefits Packages: Teachers should also have access to comprehensive benefits that support their well-being. These may include: - Offering health insurance, retirement plans, and paid leave that reflect the importance of teachers' health and job security. - Providing mental health support services to help teachers cope with stress and prevent burnout. - Encouraging work-life balance by implementing policies that support teachers in balancing their professional and personal responsibilities.

Positive Classroom Environment- Effective Teaching Practices: Teachers who feel secure in their rights are more likely to implement innovative teaching practices, leading to better student engagement and academic outcomes. - Student Relationships: Teachers with high job satisfaction



build stronger, positive relationships with students, influencing students' social and emotional well-being and fostering a supportive learning environment.

Informed Advocacy and Leadership-Empowerment: Safeguarding teacher rights empowers educators to advocate for their needs, which can lead to more equitable policies and practices within schools and districts. -Leadership Roles: Teachers who understand their rights often take on leadership roles in professional development, curriculum design, and school governance, facilitating an inclusive educational environment.

Improved Student Outcomes: - Quality Instruction- A respected and supported teaching force translates into better instructional quality, as teachers who are happy and secure in their rights can focus effectively on teaching. - Holistic Development: When teachers feel supported, they are more equipped to attend to the holistic development of students, promoting academic success alongside social and emotional growth.

Promotion of Equity and Inclusivity: - Advocating for Fair Treatment- Protecting teacher rights helps ensure that all educators, regardless of background, are treated equitably, which is essential in creating a fair and inclusive education system. - Culturally Responsive Teaching: Teachers who feel secure in their rights are more likely to engage in culturally responsive practices, recognizing and valuing the diverse backgrounds of their students.

Enhanced Job Satisfaction and Retention- Reducing Attrition: When teachers feel valued and their rights are respected, job satisfaction increases. High job satisfaction is correlated with lower attrition rates, which is critical for maintaining a stable teaching workforce. - Professional Commitment: Protecting teacher rights fosters a sense of professionalism and commitment, leading educators to invest more in their roles and professional development.

Strengthening the Education System: - Stability and Resilience- A system that protects teachers' rights contributes to the overall stability and resilience of the education system, enabling it to adapt and thrive in changing circumstances. Collaborative Culture: - An environment where teacher rights are safeguarded encourages collaboration among educators, leading to shared best practices and improved educational strategies.

Recommendations for Enhancing Teacher Rights and Responsibilities

Teachers play a critical role in shaping the future of society by educating and nurturing the minds of young learners. However, the effectiveness of teachers is significantly influenced by the protection of their rights and the clarity of their responsibilities. Addressing these two aspects is essential for fostering a supportive educational environment, improving job satisfaction, and enhancing student outcomes. Here are the main recommendations for enhancing teacher rights and responsibilities.



Strengthening Legal Protections- Comprehensive Legislation: To ensure that teachers' rights are clearly defined and protected, it is essential to have comprehensive legislation at both the national and local levels. This legislation should: - Establish clear guidelines regarding teachers' rights concerning job security, fair treatment, and workplace safety. - Include provisions that protect teachers against unfair dismissal, discrimination, and harassment and outline the processes for addressing grievances to empower teachers to advocate for their rights without fear of retaliation.

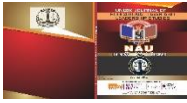
Enforcement Mechanisms: Laws protecting teachers' rights must be backed by effective enforcement mechanisms, including: - Designating independent bodies or ombudsmen tasked with investigating complaints related to violations of teachers' rights. - Providing accessible channels for teachers to report grievances and seek redress. - Implementing training programs for school administrators and policymakers about teachers' rights and obligations to ensure compliance with the law.

Promoting Awareness and Education: Training Programs on Teachers' Rights: Developing training programs focused on teachers' rights is crucial for raising awareness within the education community. Such programs should: - Educate teachers about their rights under national and local laws, including provisions related to working conditions, professional conduct, and disciplinary actions. - Provide resources and materials that outline steps teachers can take if their rights are violated, including legal recourse options. - Encourage discussions about rights and responsibilities within professional development sessions, fostering a culture of awareness and advocacy.

Community Awareness Campaigns: Informing the broader community about teachers' rights can improve support for educators. Initiatives could include: - Public awareness campaigns that highlight the critical role of teachers in society and the importance of protecting their rights. - Engaging parents and community members in discussions about teachers' roles and the challenges they face, emphasizing the need for a supportive educational environment. - Collaborating with local media to share stories and information that promote respect for teachers and their professional rights

Suggestions for Improvement

1. Legal Protections: - Comprehensive legislation is essential to clearly define and protect teachers' rights regarding job security, fair treatment, and workplace safety. - Effective enforcement mechanisms should be established to address grievances and ensure compliance with laws protecting teachers.
2. Awareness and Education: - Training programs focused on teachers' rights are crucial for educating educators about their entitlements and legal protections. - Community awareness campaigns can enhance public understanding and support for teachers' roles and rights.
3. Professional Development: - Ongoing professional learning opportunities should empower teachers with skills, knowledge, and awareness of their rights and responsibilities. -



Mentorship programs can provide essential guidance for novice teachers, promoting both professional growth and understanding of the educational environment.

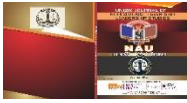
4. Collaborative School Cultures: - Involving teachers in decision-making processes fosters ownership and commitment, enhancing their sense of responsibility in schools. - Building positive relationships among educators, administrators, and students is fundamental to a supportive educational environment.
5. Fair Compensation and Benefits: - Competitive salaries aligned with the level of education and experience are crucial for attracting and retaining quality teachers. - Comprehensive benefits packages, including health support and work-life balance policies, are necessary for promoting teacher well-being and job satisfaction.

Conclusion

Protecting teacher rights is fundamental for creating a sustainable education system. By fostering an environment where teachers feel valued, supported, and empowered, we can enhance educational quality, promote student success, and build a resilient educational framework that benefits everyone involved. As teachers are the backbone of educational systems, ensuring their rights is crucial for achieving long-term goals in education and beyond.

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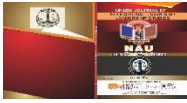
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