



## TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF THE TEACHER

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### **Abstract:**

The last decade in particular has seen an explosion in the literature on a wide variety of methodological innovations: resource-based learning and resource centers: simulations, games and role play, independent and distance learning education based on computers and micro process. These developments are significant not only for the content of teacher education, but also for its methods. In other words, there is no point in telling teachers about innovative methods, it is far more effective to use them. The aim of teacher education courses is to understand and find meaning in the phenomenon of education. In the humanities, education as a science is studied in detail. Teachers are paid at the scale appropriate to their status; above the scale paid to ordinary skilled workers, but below the scale paid to most professionals. The wages paid to teachers is sufficient to support a single person, but insufficient to support a family, the above exposition, the authorities mentioned state that the teachers' low salaries affect their professional status adversely. In order to empower teachers, their salaries have to be upgraded. As expert educators, teachers cannot concentrate exclusively on the "intellectual training" of the child, but have to concentrate on the child as a totality. Their concern has to be equally as much with inculcating morals and positive ideals. In order to empower teachers, their salaries have to be upgraded. There is an indication in the literature that the professional status of teachers is influenced by their relationship with the pupils. To display their leadership role teachers should in all respects associate themselves with the community as a whole. Teachers should suffer with the community in their time of misery and rejoice in their happiness and never view their faults with intolerant superiority.

### **Introduction:**

A good Teacher is an eternal student. A teacher is the one who teaches the true meaning of life. A teacher introduces to a new vision of life. A teacher helps in accomplishing a target. A teacher is a source of inspiration. S. Radha Krishnan

The development of new methods of teaching and learning in schools and higher education has been rapid. The last decade in particular has seen an explosion in the literature on a wide variety of methodological innovations: resource-based learning and resource centers: simulations, games and role play, independent and distance learning education based on computers and micro process. These developments are significant not only for the content of teacher education, but also for its methods. In other words, there is no point in telling teachers about innovative methods, it is far more effective to use them.

The meaning of "teacher education" is closely related to the training of teachers in this research, although Rowntree (1988) sees a subtle difference when he avers that: This term is wider than teacher-training in that it includes not simply a teacher's vocational training (whether initial, pre-service training or subsequent in-service training) but also whatever general post-secondary education he has that contributes to his growth as a person, regardless of his future profession.

Teacher education is affected by the socio-political, cultural, historical and economical forces prevailing in a society. In this regard Combs (Kok, 1989) asserts that teacher education institutions should be related to the aims, beliefs, expectations and priorities of the society it is destined to serve.

### **The Academic Preparation of Teachers:**

At a tertiary institution, curriculum designers are charged with the task of preparing students academically. Academic preparation of teachers is achieved by a provision of integrated general education and specialized education, geared to individual interests and needs. In teacher education it is assumed that elementary schools - pre- primary and primary - will concentrate primarily on the basic skills and common fundamentals. Specialised education receives attention through the middle and high school years through the provision of more and more elective choices.

The aim of teacher education courses is to understand and find meaning in the phenomenon of education. In the humanities, education as a science is studied in detail. As expert educators, teachers cannot concentrate exclusively on the "intellectual training" of the child, but have to concentrate on the child as a totality. Their concern has to be equally as much with inculcating morals and positive ideals. The aim of teacher education is to improve the effectiveness of prospective teachers as facilitators of children's". Learning how to learn"

Is to ensure that student teachers acquire, firstly a knowledge of these techniques and, secondly, a knowledge of how to apply them in practical situations. By self-observation or exploring the classroom context, or becoming aware of oneself as a teacher, teachers personalise the theory and practice of teaching.

### **Professional Status of Teacher:**

The concept of professional status in perspective it is necessary to start with an analysis of the term profession, from which the adjective professional derives. The etymological origin is in the Latin "profiteor" meaning "I profess". Initially it was confined to professing one's faith, but later it came to indicate a claim to knowledge in some specialised area. Educationally speaking, forceful arguments from differing definitions and educationists' views are important before a stand can be taken. The term professional status distinguishes itself markedly from mere status, with all its encompassing meanings as applied to the person of the teacher. When the noun status is qualified by the term professional, the question that comes to mind is whether teachers as professionals, in their different relationships, meet the requirements of a profession. The status of a professional person has to be earned through his/her behaviour and life-style which is directed by a philosophy of life.

Society has entrusted teachers with its most important responsibility; the education of the young (Ryan and Cooper, 1988). Although teachers have never received the respect that is their due, through the course of history great minds have acknowledged their work. As an educator, the teacher is not only concerned with a 'job for money', but more important, education aims towards inculcating a sense of values into the young. Higgs (1995) further states that in reaching out beyond the parameters of basic professional competence, education is fundamentally and quite profoundly concerned with the self-empowerment of the individual. The teacher provides the pupil with a feeling of human worthiness and the hope of fulfilling a useful role in society (Smit, 1989). The young people need an appreciative as well as an intellectual grip on reality.

### **Factors Affecting the Teacher's Status:**

It is important, particularly in the context, with its colourful and often stormy past, to attend to the historical factors that have played a role in determining the teacher's status.

#### **Historical Factors:**

The teacher had easy access to the chiefs and was made welcome in many homes. At important functions such as weddings and traditional ceremonies, the teacher was often the main speaker. The special position and high moral standards imposed by the church was served by the teachers who also enjoyed the trust and confidence of the community so that they often became the spokesmen of their area. According to Duke (1990) teachers: Before independence the teaching profession was perhaps the most highly respected and envied among teachers. Everywhere the teacher went, a green carpet was laid down for him. Unfortunately that golden age for teachers has gone and perhaps gone forever".

#### **Socio-Political Factors:**

In current events and responses of the teachers' unions and associations, as a response to democracy and democratisation of schooling, undoubtedly influence the status of education as a profession. Teachers are strongly accused and criticised for their "professional" activities, such as industrialised actions which are against the essential nature of education. As a professional body, teachers require a systematic, clearly defined code of conduct which emphasises a balance between the needs of a professional person and the needs of the client group. The teacher's right to be rewarded and safeguarded against unfair practices must also be carefully balanced against the pupils' and the taxpayers' rights to be served justly.

In addition to the socio-political factors which partly determine the status of the teacher, the remuneration for services also has an influence on the behaviour and perception of status of the teacher.

#### **Teachers' Salaries and Status:**

The survey further revealed that the teacher is not paid a salary to keep him contented or enable him to maintain a standard of living comparable to that of other people with the same qualifications. Teachers are paid at the scale appropriate to their status; above the scale paid to ordinary skilled workers, but below the scale paid to most professionals. The wages paid to teachers is sufficient to support a single person, but insufficient to support a family, the above exposition, the authorities mentioned state that the teachers' low salaries affect their professional status adversely. In order to empower teachers, their salaries have to be upgraded. There is an indication in the literature that the professional status of teachers is influenced by their relationship with the pupils.

#### **The Teacher's Relationship with Pupils:**

The professional is consulted voluntarily because of a more or less clearly defined problem which falls within the professional's field of expertise or knowledge. The teacher is faced with large numbers of pupils simultaneously, very few of whom actually want to be there and few of whom understand the reason for being at school.

Teachers maintain discipline and control in the classroom and that is likely to distract from their status (Kriel, 1990). The ambivalent position of teachers means that they have to live in two worlds - the adult world and the world of the child. Teachers are affected by their being intermediate on a number of dimensions: the world of schooling and the world of work; the moral order of the school and the different morality accepted in the wider world; the academic world where knowledge is produced and the world of learning where knowledge is disseminated (Hoyle, 1985). It is therefore the ambivalent position of teachers which undermines their

professional status and which according to the present researcher, emphasizes the unique character of education as a profession.

**Academic Factors:**

As individuals teachers' status is judge in terms of their utility, value and advancement of the technocratic order which is believed to represent humankind's advancement and progress. However, Higgs argues that if teachers as educators are evaluated in terms of their true educational mandate, their level of education will not be perceived in terms of utility, value and productive capacity. The evaluation of the status of the teacher as a professional person will be more concerned with the teacher's competence for life in the individual person's experience of existence as a person in relation to other persons. The teacher's practice of such an educational mandate would indicate that education empowers both teachers and pupils to acquire personal virtuous dispositions that will allow them the opportunity to change themselves as well as others and, by implication, society as a whole.

**The Teacher as a Professional Person:**

Education is fundamentally interpreted as the pais-agein, the mutual involvement, support and accompaniment of the youth by a prime adult, in terms of its essential ontic nature and structure. In the educational encounter between the teacher and the pupil, (the teacher, as a person and pupils, as persons), knowledge and understanding are passed on in such a way that pupils develop a life of their own. Education is thus a personal matter. The teacher's task is complex and mainly personal. One of the aspects of the teacher's personality which entails a directedness to explore meaning in the education encounter, is that the teacher has to be a knowledgeable being.

**The Teacher as a Knowledgeable Human Being:**

Teachers are not only concerned with imparting knowledge, they are primarily concerned with the education of children, thus they ought to be educated persons, which is much more than being knowledgeable. If they do so it will be intuitively or unintentionally, either by chance or under the guidance of someone else who is educated. Education is the attainment of the knowledge of Education as a science and understanding of the subject in one's chosen field, thus acquiring specialised knowledge which is a requirement for being an expert educator. Teachers realise that knowledge is essential for education and teaching as it is used to evaluate whether the teacher's activities are educationally justifiable. In order to accommodate differences, the teacher ought to know pupils' learning abilities, home backgrounds, out of school interest, reading levels, casual conversations and their socio-economic backgrounds. The teacher should know and accept pupils for what they are and not for what they should be because an educative, trusting and bonding relationship demands acceptance. The changing character of politics also applies to education. No solution to any educational problem is permanent. For this reason, education demands that the teacher as an educator should be a lifelong learner.

**The Teacher as an Affectionate Person:**

Teachers should love their pupils and realise their unique individuality that cannot be treated according to a predetermined formula (Lenyai, 1991) in the act of educating the teacher should intervene in the pupils' activities without being judgmental and see every pupil as a unique individual and penetrate to the core of the pupils' humanness to understand them better. When teachers do their work with dedication as well as empathy, sympathy and kindness, their pupils will be grateful and repay their kindness. Acceptance is a prerequisite for authentic education and education becomes a reality if the teacher's attitude is based on love and affection. Teachers show empathy for pupils who are slow and disabled and encourage them. Teachers communicate on a person to person level with pupils and not as if in a subject-object relationship. The affectionate relationship enables teachers to reveal the essential traits and features in the beloved person; and even more importantly, they see the potentialities of the child. Affection in the education situation is also supported by the teacher's sense of humour. A loving educator is more concerned with making his lesson not only educative, but also interesting. The focus in the following paragraphs will be an exploration of the relationship that exists between affection and humour as essences of the personality of the effective educator.

**The Teacher as a Humorous Human Being:**

A successful teacher is skilful in building sound relationships and has mastered the art of using humour that has a positive influence on the student's self-esteem and consequently, on the life-altering decisions eventually made by students. In an atmosphere of humour and laughter, pupils have more understanding and faith in their teacher. The use of warmth and humour are, furthermore, the basis of a trusting educational relationship. It indicates that knowledge, affection as well as humour are essential to building mutual trust between the teacher and his pupils, without which authentic education cannot be realised.

**The Teacher as a Trusting and Open Human Being:**

Education requires the teacher to be more personal, self-disclosing and willing to be human, rather than professional. As educators teachers establish education relationships on the basis of acceptance, trust, love and mutuality to the extent that they themselves. A trusting relationship is established if the teacher is able to live in two worlds, the adult world and that of the children, in the sense that the teacher understands the child's imagination and mentality. Teachers can establish a mutual trusting relationship only if they can transpose

themselves into the child's life- world, if they know their pupils and can momentarily themselves "become children. They want to think for themselves and this need cannot be satisfied through textbooks and lectures alone, but through living. Students need to know that their teachers perceive them as persons with real needs, as individuals.

**The Teacher as a Leader in Society:**

Teachers must display self-control and be aware that they are still working at their own adulthood- that their own embodiment of adulthood is still deepening and that no-one is ever fully adult but is continually becoming more adult. To display their leadership role teachers should in all respects associate themselves with the community as a whole. Teachers should suffer with the community in their time of misery and rejoice in their happiness and never view their faults with intolerant superiority. Besides being a leader of the community, another important aspect of the teacher's personality requires the ability to relate the educational theory he/she had acquired through educational practice at all levels.

**Conclusion:**

Provide information concerning education as a profession and the extent to which education meets the criteria for characteristics of a profession. The education displays the essential characteristics of a profession, although there is a fairly general consensus that teachers cannot be regarded as professionals in the sense. Firstly, professional skills and techniques which are directly related to the day to day world of teaching and which enable teachers to recognise the needs of the children they teach. Secondly, effective teachers possess specialised knowledge and understanding of pupils that will provide an essential background to their work. Thirdly, as professional educators, teachers display certain personality qualities. These include professional attitudes (such as a sense of responsibility and concern for the individual child), flexibility and adaptability, enthusiasm, resilience, curiosity, positive attitudes towards learning and satisfactory motivation and confidence in the children as individuals and themselves as teachers.

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