

CONCEPTUALISING THE PROFESSIONAL NATURE OF THE TEACHING ENTERPRISE: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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Abstract

In this article, an effort is made to present a framework that can define and offer a better understanding of the nature of a professional undertaking. Essentially, the framework attempts a demarcation between a professional and non-professional enterprise. To this effect, four major arguments inform the article. First, there is little doubt that there are some people in professional undertakings today that can hardly tell what it simply means to be a member in a profession. Such ignorance is surely behind the current widespread professional misdemeanours in different professional communities. Secondly, not every business undertaken by a man or woman in the world today is worth the concept and status of profession. Thirdly, the concerns with public goods or simply basic human needs such as health, justice, spiritual salvation, and education can better help to define a professional undertaking. Fourthly, in sum, there is no profession in the absence of an ethical dimension. In conclusion, there is little doubt that a better conceptual grasp of the professional requirement is a prerequisite and foundation for good professional practice.

Key words: ethical dimension, professionalism, teaching

1.0 Introduction

The desire to help teachers and other practitioners elsewhere understand what it means to be a *professional* provides the impetus for this article. In their article, *Professional identity and misconduct: Perspectives of Tanzanian teachers*, Anangisye and Barrett (2005) acknowledge the widespread of misconduct in teaching or education. Given the character of professional undertakings, however, one wonders why there is such clients' abuse in professional communities in general, and in the teaching sector in particular. Anangisye (2006:237) attributes professional misconduct in the teaching sector to ignorance. Drawing from Socrates, the researcher does attribute some unprofessional practice to ignorance or lack of relevant knowledge on the part of teachers. Arguably, if teachers were well informed of what it means to be a teacher there would be less tendency to misdemeanours. In this light, the main concern of this article is a professional

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attempt to indicate that ethics is the *cornerstone* of every professional undertaking. The ethical emphasis on professional undertakings dates as far back as c460 – c370 BC when Hippocrates was arguably the first person to require ethical standards of professional practice. Since then, professions have been regarded as moral enterprises. Debatably, the notions of 'profession' and 'ethics' cannot be separated, and there is no profession in the absence of an ethical dimension. Given this view, however, one would wish to know exactly how a profession can be differentiated from a non-professional undertaking. Downie (1990) has the same concern, as presented in the excerpt below:

Sociologists are interested in the characteristics which professions in fact display, but my philosophical concern, while it overlaps with and draws from sociological analyses, is directed more towards the evaluative question of what enables professions to perform a unique and socially valuable function, distinct from business or commerce (Downie, 1990:147).

In light of the excerpt cited above, it needs more than just ticking off against a list of professional criteria for an occupation to be considered a profession (Carr, 2000b). This article marks out a conceptual framework for the analysis of what exactly it means to be a member of a profession. Moreover, the framework aims at informing practitioners and policy makers in teaching and elsewhere of the inherent nature and character of professionalism. This concern raises three fundamental questions: (i) What is a profession and what is not?, (ii) How inherent is the ethical dimension in professional undertakings?, and (iii) Is teaching a profession?

2.0 'Profession' defined in context

The concept of profession is a much-debated concept (Perkin, 1983; Freidson, 1994). The problematic character rests on how to define and differentiate a professional from a non-professional undertaking. There is a scholarly disagreement on the concept. There are several different contexts in which the concept is found (Carr, 2000b; Downie, 1990). In this regard, there is a need to distinguish the various contexts in which the concept is implicated. First, consider, for example, the following quote: "AMIR KHAN is looking forward to making his debut in Scotland when he continues his climb up the professional boxing ladder at Braehead on Nov. 5" (Coats, 2005:40). This context in which the concept 'professional' is used suggests that people are paid for what they do. In this particular case, one may hear, read or encounter people speaking and writing of professional table tennis players, professional footballers, professional cyclists, professional traditional dancers, etc. In this discourse, the concept of

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'professional' differentiates a professional player from an amateur (or simply professionalism from amateurism). The professional player, for instance, participates in different sports and games for monetary gains. However, for an amateur player, participation in sports and games is essentially for pleasure. Several scholars, e.g. Perkin, have drawn a distinction between professionalism and amateurism. The quotation below exemplifies this.

Until the 1960s an annual cricket match used to be played in England between the 'Gentlemen' and the 'Players'. The gentlemen were the leading amateurs of national standing in the country cricket clubs, the players the professionals who were paid for doing what the supposedly wealthy and leisured gentlemen did for fun (Perkin, 1983:12).

Secondly, the concept 'professional' is used to describe an undertaking, which is well performed. In this second view, the use of the concept identifies the standards of excellence of a particular enterprise. Thus, it is common to hear people talk about professional or unprofessional hairdressers, builders, printers, photographers, sculptors, and so on. To speak of the professionally built Nkrumah Hall at the University of Dar es Salaam, for example, simply suggests that the hall has been constructed to high architectural standards. This use of the concept hinges on the quality of expertise employed. From this viewpoint, almost any enterprise can be called 'professional'. Consider, for example, the following commercial on cosmetics:

Professional beauty provides solutions from experts, whether you need advice on staff management, recruitment methods, improving your training techniques, tax and legal advice, installing a database or improving retail sales, you'll read about the business issues which affect your day-to-day working life.

Such use of the concept is basically market-oriented. In this example, the use of the concept 'professional' is part of the selling, or simply advertising the expertise. In consequence, nowadays, it is common to come across people who use posters and flyers which use the concept 'professional' to get their expertise, services or goods advertised and sold. However, such uses of the concept do not signify membership to a profession. The third context in which the concept is used draws on the traditional implications of 'profession'. In this sense, the use of the term 'professional' related directly to the traditional professions. The term 'professions' is here used to distinguish the services of some occupations called 'professions' from those of 'trades' or other occupations. More specifically, this perspective holds that a better understanding of the concept of 'professional' may be by

reference to such professions as medicine, law, and the ministry, as one philosopher in education indicates in the following excerpt.

....in this sense, professionalism and professionalism are the requirements of a particular class or category of occupation, which is usually taken to include doctors and lawyers, may well embrace teachers and clergymen (and other members of so-called vocations) – but traditionally excludes plumbers, joiners and other tradesmen (Carr, 2000b:22).

The fundamental question is: What makes the third use of the concept different from the others? The first two uses focus on payment and the quality of performance as the basis of professional endeavour. Many people in different areas of engagement use the term ‘professional’ inappropriately and, the term is used in contexts where people are not at all engaged in discussions about professions. The third use of the concept takes the ethical dimension to be a primary concern (Carr, 1999; Koehn, 1994). Possibly, it is the ethical primacy that serves to define and differentiate professions from other categories of occupation or activity.

3.0 The salience of professionalism

Literature suggests various criteria to define a profession. In most cases, such criteria take a sociological perspective which does not speak much about professions (Downie, 1990). Instead, Downie suggests philosophical or evaluative analysis to examine the criteria. In the following sections, such criteria for defining a profession have been listed and explained.

3.1 Concern with public service

All professions are concerned with, and related to people. The aim of professions is the clients’ access to such public services or basic needs as health, legal justice, and education. As discussed elsewhere, a medical doctor’s obligation is to the patient and a lawyer’s to her or his client (Koehn, 1994). All this, however, raises the question of how provision of public services makes professions different from other occupations. Undoubtedly, janitors, hairdressers or barbers, for example, provide their customers with useful services. However, it is arguable that in a professional undertaking the service is uniquely determined by a certain kind of relationship – as the following quotation might suggest.

This is obviously the case in a doctor/patient or teacher/pupil relationship. It can be argued that because of the dominant position

which the professional occupies in the relationship with his client, and because as a professional he must supply a service, and often assess its success as well, he must be governed more than others by principles of ethics; in particular, in this context, he must be governed by a desire to be of assistance, often called 'beneficence' (Downie, 1990: 150).

In light of this citation, the uniqueness of the relationship between the professional and his or her client hinges on several crucial points, e.g. respect, fairness, and trust. Professional trust and respect, among others, are significant qualities for professionals to promote the public good (Downie, 1990; Sockett, 1990). Indeed, respect, fairness, and trust play a fundamental role in all professional undertakings due to the unequal relationship between the professional and his or her client.

3.2 Knowledge base

Members of a professional community also possess expertise in their relevant areas of specialisation. Usually, such expertise follows from education and training in a particular field over a certain period of time. As an example, in the Tanzanian context, medical doctors train for not less than five years in order to qualify. Lawyers, on the other hand, take not less than four years. Thus, professional status is a function of mastering a relevant body of knowledge in the field in the interest of the client (Goldman, 1980). The possession of theoretically-based knowledge differentiates a professional from a non-professional (Strike, 2007; Carr, 2000b). In particular, Frowe (2005:43) argues: "... the non-professional is vulnerable through a lack of equivalent expertise... The non-professional is vulnerable partly because he or she is epistemologically disadvantaged in relation to the relevant knowledge base..." In short, to qualify for membership of a profession one must be acquainted with relevant theories. This calls for relevant courses in the respective fields in accredited institutions with approved curricula. According to Downie, insofar as the knowledge base is concerned, professions tend to be eclectic and draw from various disciplines. For example, medicine, in particular, draws widely from the natural sciences as well as several different disciplines in social sciences.

In light of this knowledge base, one may ask: What about tradesmen and women such as painters, hairdressers, and farmers? It seems true that all these have knowledge and skills that enable them to perform painting, hairdressing and farming. However, such knowledge does not serve to make painters or farmers members of professions. Carr (1999) has this to say:

But one difference upon which a distinction between profession and trade might here be said to turn is ... that professional training cannot be solely a matter of hands-on apprenticeship in the manner of carpentry or hairdressing; a surgeon or a doctor is rightly required to have mastered a good deal of complex – often scientific – knowledge, information, theory and hypothesis before he or she is let loose on patients (p.35).

The argument here is that professions “ought to be represented by educated as distinct from merely trained men and women” (Downie, 1990). Usually, such specialist expertise also enables practitioners to develop practical competences, ability, and skills. Such expertise may also enable the conduct of research in the respective field.

3.3 Expression in a code of practice

Much has been said and written about professional code of ethics or professional conduct (Carr, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c). So far, scholars widely acknowledge the code of professional conduct as among the criteria of professional undertakings. While regard for codes of professional practice tends to vary among scholars, Belsey and Chadwick in their foreword to Koehn (1994) have certain concerns. First, a code helps members of a particular professional community to examine the nature and goals of their occupation. It provides them with a better understanding of the reasons why they are in that particular occupation. This, hopefully, helps professionals work responsibly. As Carr (2000b:25) indicates, “... any profession worthy of the name ought to be governed by a code of professional ethics which clearly identifies professional *obligations* and responsibilities by reference to the *rights* of clients or patients”.

Secondly, the code of professional conduct acts as a source of information to the public about what they should expect from a profession. The code gives clients the right to question things especially when professionals fail to deliver accordingly. In this sense, it acts as a source of feedback, and it is important for professional efficiency and accountability. Thirdly, the code of ethics performs a disciplinary role. To begin with, it guides and monitors the conduct or practice of professionals. In this respect, the code of ethics acts as a framework within which each member of a professional community must operate and accomplish his or her professional role (Ishumi, 1988; Warioba, 2000). The code of professional practice also provides members of the public with protection. It subjects professionals to standards, which put the clients’ interests first.

In several works, Campbell indicates that no profession can really exist in the absence of a code of ethics (Campbell, 2000). However, there is evidence that even non-professional undertakings are likely to have codes of ethics (Carr, 2000c). As opposed to trades or other services, however, the ethical dimension of a profession goes beyond the role of professional regulation; rather, it has a constitutive role which is inherent in all professional accomplishments.

3.4 Professional autonomy

The concept of "...autonomy means self-determination or control over one's own life and decisions" (Pring, 1984:20). Autonomy is a very important feature of any professional undertaking. As applied to professions, the notion of autonomy is a matter of independence of judgement. Professionals in medicine, for example, have some freedom of judgement concerning the treatment of patients under their care. They make judgements concerning referring cases or the changing of medication for a particular patient. As professional autonomy applies to the law, lawyers have the discretion to make some decisions free from the influence of those outside the profession. Lawyers in a court of law, for instance, have the freedom to change certain courses of legal action provided this is morally acceptable.

In sum, professional autonomy has to do with the right to make independent judgement. In essence, such professional independence is for the effective practice of professionalism. However, there are circumstances in which such provision of professional autonomy is subject to limitations (Downie, 1990). Such limitations take different forms. Consider, for example, the case where the government interferes with the decisions made by lawyers in a court of law; or in a situation where a Trade Union opposes a decision about a certain course of action made by a professional association or council. The question is: Where does autonomy in a professional undertaking originate? Rubin (2005:10) provides the following explanation:

In the ideal, we grant someone autonomy when he establishes trust, either through documented performances of excellence or through education and credentials. Furthermore, having autonomy means that one is not beholden to any other source of authority. Independence from authority means that one may trust a professional because he is not serving multiple masters and has no conflicts of interest. We trust an autonomous professional because he/she fully commits to the constituents he/she serves (audience or client) or to a value he/she pledged to uphold (truth, justice).

Nevertheless, while professional undertakings would seem to enjoy some professional autonomy, there is reservation about non-professional undertakings. Indeed, it is acknowledged that there is a difference between the notion of autonomy as widely used in trades or services and that of professions.

3.5 Organisation and regulation

Organisation and regulation also characterise professional enterprises. It would appear that such organisation and regulation have two main functions (Carr, 2000b). First, organisation and regulation aim at ensuring that recruitment into any professional undertaking is monitored and controlled. This means that not every person can just join a profession that he or she wants. There are certain conditions and procedures that one must fulfil before qualifying for membership of a profession. Organisation and regulation help professional communities to attract the right people. Secondly, once recruited, such organisation and regulation help to maintain the discipline of members of the profession. Organisation and regulation are instrumental to professional effectiveness.

4.0 The centrality of ethics in a professional undertaking

Professions are first and foremost concerned with basic human rights or needs. More specifically, such needs include health, justice, and education (Carr, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c). In essence, all professions aim at addressing human basic needs. Koehn (1994:70) underscores this fact, thus: "Few would disagree about the stated aims of the learned professions. We readily grant that doctors aim at restoring and maintaining health; lawyers at securing legal justice for the person they are advising or representing in court; and the clergy at enabling their listeners to gain spiritual salvation".

The central idea of Koehn is that such human needs distinguish professional and non-professional enterprises. Indeed, the fact that the needs which professions address are readily appreciable as rights seems to get to the heart of the difference between the services that professionals provide, and other trades and industries. To speak of a right to health care or to legal justice seems to make sense in a way that speaking of a right to a new house, car or meal in an expensive restaurant does not (Carr, 2000a:249). For example, medical doctors have obligations to practise medicine in favour of the sick. They are concerned with the health of patients irrespective of their race or social background. Indeed, every doctor in a health centre or hospital has an obligation to work towards the welfare of patients under his or her care. Given the nature of this obligation, it is not expected that doctors would use their position to exploit the sick financially or sexually. There is little doubt that a doctor would be judged unprofessional or unsuitable for the

work if it had been confirmed that he or she had placed his or her personal gain above patients' interests (Carr, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c). In sum, the relationship between the doctor and patient has a marked moral dimension. The moral character insofar as medicine is concerned is informed by several different qualities such as primacy of patients' interests, readiness to help them, and a sense of responsibility towards them (Koehn, 1994). Secondly, law is another occupation recognised as a profession. Like medical doctors, lawyers are accountable to one basic need of human beings. Throughout the world there are people who are victims of crime, for example, domestic violence and rape. Lawyers as professionals have an obligation to ensure every human being receives justice. Given the character of justice, professionals in law have the duty to make sure there is equal legal treatment for human beings irrespective of their socio-economic status. In particular, Koehn states that justice is about treating people as equal in personhood.

It is also arguable that there are basic human rights in terms of spiritual needs, in the sense that human spiritual needs make the ministry a profession. In particular, the focus of clergy is on salvation. The task of a priest or minister is to improve the spiritual wellbeing of the congregation. Like all other basic human needs, the spiritual is implicated in ethical principles. Expanding on this, Koehn (1994:82) explain that God and His covenant are what they are when humans treat one another well; and that when men and women freely embrace this duty to love one another, they create and then live peacefully in a just world in which each person's dignity is respected.

In light of this discussion of the needs of human beings, a few observations can be made. There are persons who by virtue of their membership of a profession have moral obligation to provide clients with certain basic needs. This suggests that the needs of the provider are secondary to the clients' needs and interests. Indeed, it has been said that 'morality does sometimes demand sacrifice of self-interest and also of efficiency' (Goldman, 1980:271). As discussed elsewhere, it is therefore unfortunate that despite such moral obligation, there is evidence of abuse by professionals (Sockett, 1993). On many occasions, medical doctors, lawyers, and clergymen have been implicated in incidents of abuse of trust. All this defeats the fundamental purpose of the professions. In light of the foregoing discussion about the characteristics and ethical character of professional undertakings, the next section attempts to examine and define the concept of teaching. The attempt addresses the status of teaching as a professional enterprise.

5.0 Teaching defined

Much of the literature on what teaching is acknowledges the ambiguity and complexity of arriving at a complete definition of the concept of teaching (Carr, 2003b); however, despite the difficulty, there have been attempts to define the concept. So far, there are three different senses of teaching (Carr, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b). First, there are scholars, especially philosophers of education, who define teaching in terms of practice (Carr, 2003b; McLaughlin, 2003; Noddings, 2003; Wain, 2003). Central to the debate is whether or not teaching should be considered as a practice. According to Noddings (2003), there are two grounds for considering teaching as a practice. First, teaching is a relational occupation that bears distinctive criteria of internal excellence. The internal excellence takes into account the importance of those who carry out teaching as a practice possessing the relevant knowledge base. The teacher must be competent to help his or her students use academic disciplines effectively. He says that not only must a teacher acquire and continually extend her store of broad cultural knowledge; she must also be committed to establishing and maintaining relations of care and trust. He adds that this is necessary if teachers are to meet responsibility for the development of their students as whole persons. Relations of care and trust also, he stresses, form a foundation for the effective transmission of both general and specialised knowledge (Noddings, 2003:250).

While this explanation indicates that the primary concern of teaching is with learners, the second outlook takes the view that teaching is a practice because it bestows goods on both students and teachers. Noddings stresses that teaching is a practice that encourages intellectual growth in its practitioners. Noddings' view however excludes the community as an important player in teaching as a practice. It puts the main emphasis on the gains accrued to the practice of teaching, in relation to teachers and students. There is, nevertheless, a need to make what Noddings (2003) calls 'relational practice' more inclusive, that is, a practice that benefits all members of the society. Wain (2003) clarifies this as he writes that "teaching is a means since the good it serves is not intrinsic to itself, but is that of the learner and the community" (p.231). Teaching, in this regard, relates to other practices such as medicine and law. In particular, teaching as a practice is also expressible in moral terms.

Expressing the foregoing in moral terms, we learn from Carr (2003b) who is of the opinion that insofar as such development of self and others involves the reflective refining or enhancement of conduct in complex contexts of human association and agency, there is no reason to deny that it is nevertheless an important human practice. Indeed, in Aristotelian perfectionist rather than MacIntyrean sociological terms, it would precisely count as a moral rather than a theoretical or technical

practice. Carr opines: "But it is in just this moral sense, I believe, that teaching does need to be regarded as a practice – since teaching and learning are at heart pre-theoretical and pre-technical modes of moral association" (p.263).

A second conception of teaching emphasises teaching as a role; in this sense, teaching is an official employment. Teaching as a role is primarily concerned with the fulfilment of various duties, responsibilities, and liabilities. Such roles identify the place of individuals who carry out teaching. In this light, the teacher serves the interests of the employer, student, community, larger social order, and teaching profession. The success of teaching depends on the teachers' effectiveness in accomplishing those roles. The third sense is concerned with teaching as an activity in which human beings engage. Carr (2003a) proposed four significant dimensions to the concept of teaching as an activity, as follows:

- a) Teaching does not necessarily involve the role aspects. Consider, for example, where older children at home teach their juniors on how to lay tables for breakfast, wash dishes, and mop the floor.
- b) A professionally trained teacher in the role sense, who is also concerned with the promotion of the educational enterprise, can be occupied with teaching as activity.
- c) Teaching as an activity is not always implicated in the promotion of education. A good example of this sense is that of football coaches, traditional dance instructors, or choir mistresses in a church choir. Many private teachers of piano or coaches of gymnastics, for example, are concerned with instruction in certain fairly narrowly defined skills of a sort that might make us reluctant to regard them as teachers in any more robust educational sense of wider personal formation (although they might still, for all that, merit our proper respect as professionals).
- d) The fourth dimension of teaching as an activity involves the teaching of famous and old religious philosophers and teachers. Consider, for example, the place of philosophers such as Socrates, Confucius, Freire, or John Dewey. It appears that the place in their respective societies defined these great thinkers as teachers. For example, in the Chinese context, it is asserted that Confucius laid great emphasis on moral education, and this is substantiated by philosophy and teachings that were assembled by his students (Fengyan, 2004). To a great extent, education draws insights from such 'teachings' (system of educational thought). In the religious context, on the other hand, the example of Jesus Christ as a teacher cannot be overemphasised. Often, Jesus Christ was referred to as *rabbi* (which literally

means teacher). See, for example, the Gospel of Saint John 3:2 who came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." (The Holy Bible: New International Version).

Teaching is a human engagement that would appear to have two faces. Literally, teaching is an enterprise which can be carried out by every human being, anywhere, and throughout life. Most people teach during their lives. Some teach a great deal – parents, in particular, and people paid to teach in schools, colleges, and various other institutions and enterprises. Each teaching situation would be determined by subject matter, kind of teacher, type of students, physical and social context etc. Technically, on the other hand, teaching is a professional endeavour directed towards certain explicit educational goals. In this respect, it may be viewed under three aspects: practice, role, and activity. Given the essence of professionalism and the three senses, the question worthy of note is whether or not teaching qualifies as a profession, which is what the following section discusses.

6.0 The professional nature of teaching revisited

Despite arguments both for and against teaching as a profession, so far, there is little doubt that teaching is widely appreciated as some sort of professional undertaking (Downie, 1990; Fenstermacher, 1990; Pring, 1997; Carr, 1999, 2000b, 2003a, 2003c; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2003; Campbell, 2003). There are several different criteria that might support the view that teaching is a professional undertaking. First, as noted elsewhere, teaching, can be argued, is concerned with removing the *evil of ignorance*. In particular, teaching is concerned with education. There is little doubt that worldwide education is acknowledged as a basic human right or need (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2004; Carr, 2000a, 2000c).

Again, although teachers have generally less status and are less highly rewarded for their labours than doctors or lawyers, education is nevertheless widely perceived as a profession alongside medicine and law. On the face of it, indeed, it seems plausible to regard education, along health and justice, as a welfare right based on considerations of fundamental *civil* need. Thus, we might argue that just as there are primary human needs for food, shelter and covering without which human existence as such stands in jeopardy, so there are secondary human needs for health, law, and education in the absence of which there can be no *civilised* level of human security or flourishing (Carr, 2000c).

Secondly, the knowledge base is another important feature that considers teaching to be a profession. Like medicine and law, to qualify to teach calls for relevant

education or knowledge. For example, in order to have something to teach, a teacher needs competence that calls for a knowledge base in his or her academic disciplines of specialisation. In particular, Downie (1990:156) identifies the nature of knowledge relevant to teaching as a professional undertaking, in the following context:

- a) The teacher's knowledge must have a wide range, although he or she may have specialised knowledge in some spheres.
- b) The knowledge that a teacher possesses must be relevant in the context of his or her students. This suggests the applicability and relevance, character and nature, of all that students need to be aware of.
- c) A teacher should be aware that knowledge is grounded. This means that the teacher should be able to give justification for the knowledge that he or she possesses.

As discussed elsewhere, teaching as a profession draws on several different areas of specialisation. Teaching borrows from disciplines such as philosophy, history, sociology, pedagogy, psychology, and so on. Before one practises teaching, he or she has to have knowledge in these areas. The knowledge base is invariably a result of training in educational theories and practice related to education or teaching, for that matter. Thirdly, teaching requires professional autonomy. Teachers need autonomy to fulfil professional obligations and other various roles. Besides, several other scholars point to the idea of autonomy in the teaching sector (Bull, 1990; Downie, 1990; Mhando, 2006). In this respect, the autonomy is expressible in different circumstances of teachers' engagement: "Professional autonomy over the content and quality of student achievement confers on teachers not only the freedom to rule out what is patently unjustified but also the freedom to choose from among what may or may not be justified (Bull, 1990:109).

Thirdly, like doctors or lawyers, teachers have freedom to make decisions or judgements about education-related matters. Such choice is usually determined by the context in which the subject is taught. Commenting on what Le Grand² referred to as a golden age of teacher control, Whitty (2006:3) upholds the immense responsibility placed with teachers as he reminds us that parents were expected to trust teachers to know what was good for their children. Accordingly, the teacher's role included the freedom to decide not only how to teach but also what to teach. In this, they had a particular responsibility for curriculum

² Le Grand, J. (1997). Knights, knaves or pawns? Human behaviour and social policy. *Journal of Social Policy*, 26, 149 - 164.

development and innovation. Even though effectively the state paid most teachers' salaries, it did not intervene actively in the content of either teacher training or the work of teachers in schools.

Also, school or college teachers have freedom to schedule or reschedule the school or college timetables. Certainly, in the context of Tanzania, in the case of discipline, teachers have freedom to suspend or discipline students without external influence. Last, but not least, teachers' autonomy is evident in matters related to school or college income generating projects. At school or college level, teachers have freedom to decide what projects to embark on without the interference of the Ministry of Education, or without consulting parents. Usually, such projects depend on geographical settings.

Fourthly, teaching like other professions has some (more or less explicit) code of professional conduct as one of its principal characteristic features. There is no profession that exists without a code of ethics or a set of appropriate professional standards with checks and balances for those teachers who act unprofessionally within a professional context. More specifically, Lovat (1999) identified three roles for codes of professional ethics: (i) regulating the conduct of teachers, (ii) protecting teachers, and (iii) offering guidelines for practical action. It should however be borne in mind that in the three cases in which the role of a code of ethics is implicated the focus is rather on the regulative character only (Carr, 2000a). In the regulative sense, a code of ethics assumes an extrinsic character.

Fifthly, teaching is concerned with provision of public or social good. In particular, teaching like medicine, which is concerned with the social good of patients, is about the social good of school, college, or university students and other members of the society. This concern however raises the question: What is the public or social good that teaching as a profession seeks to accomplish? Reading from Brock, we see that through addressing the needs, and taking account of the interests and challenging the capacities, of each individual student, the essential 'social good' pursued by the profession of teaching is to maximise learning opportunities that would help enable each individual student to achieve personal excellence in the intellectual, personal, social, cultural, physical, moral, spiritual and other aspects of human development (Brock, 1998:16).

As noted elsewhere, the provision of social good depends on special relationship in which there is a teacher whose client is a school, college or university student (Downie, 1990). To provide students with the public or social good such a relationship must be conducted in light of ethical principles that include trust and respect.

It is also argued that a profession involves organisation and regulations. For an individual to carry out teaching he or she must meet certain standards. One must undergo a teacher education and training course. In Tanzania, for example, the minimum level of teacher education for primary or secondary school is two years (URT, 1995). However, so often, the period set for teacher education courses has not been adhered to. There have been 'crash programmes' which lead to reduction of the duration of teacher education programmes (Kahinga, 1976; Williams, 2005). At degree level, however, teacher education takes three years. In addition to undergoing a teacher education and training course, one must be morally acceptable. There are cases, for example, in which student teachers could be removed from a teacher education and training course once proved to have displayed unprofessional conduct such as stealing or having had affairs with pupils during teaching practice. In essence, organisation and regulations aim at controlling recruitment and discipline (Carr, 1999).

7.0 Concluding comments

In this article, it has been argued that the ethical dimension is the first and foremost indicator of professionalism. The intrinsic nature of such professionalism is manifested in the efforts of members of professional communities to accomplish the public goods or basic human needs of health, justice, spiritual salvation, and education. It is arguable that misdemeanours in medicine, ministry, law, and education, are to a certain degree attributable to ignorance of the inherent nature of professional endeavour. There is little doubt that a better conceptual grasp of the professional requirement is a precondition and foundation for good professional practice. This article therefore, hopefully, has been able to provide an important forum for professionals, teachers in particular, to critically reflect and rethink what they owe their clients.

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