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TEACHERS FOR THE 21st CENTURY IN ZIMBABWE - THE CASE FOR PROFESSIONAL TEACHER ETHICS IN COLLEGES OF TEACHER EDUCATION.

N Makuvaza

Educational Foundations; University of Zimbabwe

Abstract

*This paper examines ways of enhancing the quality of teachers as Zimbabwe gears itself for the new millenium. Teachers, in this paper, shall include college lecturers and principals and education officers in the ministries of both Education, Sport & Culture and Higher Education, for it is assumed that these are promotional offices from being clasroom teachers. It shall be argued that the teacher for the 21st century should not only be qualified and competent but should also have **hunhu**. A case for Professional Teacher Ethics, informed by **hunhu**, to be included in teacher preparation programmes in institutions of teacher education shall be advanced as a way to improve the quality of the teacher produced. It shall be the contention of the paper that what Zimbabwe needs in the new millenium is not only a teacher who is competent but one who, in addition to competence, has **hunhu**. By **hunhu** we mean "humaneness, characterised by respectfulness, politeness" and sociality (Ramose, 1999:50).*

Background

This paper is informed firstly by numerous reports in the country's dailies of misconduct by professional teachers (Sunday Mail, June 20, 1999 ; The Herald, June 21, 1999 ; The Daily News, June 29, 1999 ; The Sunday Mail, June 26, 1999) which, one must admit, are just the tip of an iceberg for it is possible that there are so many of such cases

which go unreported. These cases include corruption, bribery, embezzlement of pupils' funds, improper relations with female pupils or students and the latest ones of teachers selling examination questions to students and college and high school officials selling places to prospective students.

Secondly, this paper was also informed by the following incident I witnessed on 20 May, 1999, involving a qualified university graduate teacher and a Chawasarira bus company crew and the pulic at Sadza Growth Point in Chikomba District, Mashonaland East Province.

A Chawasarira Bus Company bus arrived at the bus-terminus and immediately we saw a man who once must have been smartly dressed being pushed out of the bus. He was clutching a paper bag full of empty beer bottles in one hand and in the other was a jacket which was full of vomit. The vomit was also evident on his shirt. His trousers was soiled in front, an indication that he must have helped himself in his pants while in the bus. As he was pushed out of the bus, he started shouting and scolding no-one in particular using the worst obscene and vulgar words. imaginable. **"Regai ndidye mari dzangu.**

Munondivengera mari yangu nekufunda kwangu. Vanhu vasina kudzidza" (let me enjoy my money, you hate me for my money and my education because you are not educated). The rest could hardly be heard as he was mumbling. As he struggled to walk further from the bus towards a bottle-store nearby, he fell down and immediately started snoring.

I noticed two women alighting from the same bus. I approached them and asked them who the man was and what had happened. They sounded surprised that I did not know him. **"Unobvepiko nhai mwanangu usingazivi Ticha Zimunda**(where do you come from son that you do not know Zimunda- the teacher)(false name but name provided). **"Hauzivi Ticha Zimunda wepasekondari apo"**(you do

not know Ticha Zimunya from that secondary school). A passerby retorted : "**Ah! Mati nditicha !**"(You say he is a teacher !).

The other one joined and added: "**Hauzivi Ticha uyu apedza vanasikana vemuno kumitisa achiramba. Asi munoti zvine hunhu here izvozvo? Asi achazviona hake**".(You do not know that teacher who has impregnated so many girls around here and rejected them. But do you think that is being consistent with a real person ? He shall see it one day).

The other one commended: "**Ah, vasikana, zvematicha emazuva ano, asi munoti zvine hunhu here kuti munhu angabve kuHarare achingonwa nekungotuka munhu wese achimuudza kuti hauna kudzidza: Zvino ndiko kungadzi kudzidza kwacho here ikoko kokuzviitira weti wakakotsira.Saka vana vacho chii chavanofunda kune munhu akadaro**"(But ladies, do you think that it is proper that someone can be drinking and scolding people all the way from Harare. Can we say that is being educated and on top of that urinating in his clothes. So what will children learn from such a teacher ?).

The other one who had been quiet interjected : "**Ko uko kukamhina anoita munoti akaitwa sei ?**The other one responded :**Zvanzi akakuvara achifundisa vana kukwakuka**."(You see that he is limping, what do you think happened to him ? They say that he sprained himself when he was teaching high jump to his students).

"**Nhema !**" (the other one quickly responded but in a low voice)
"Ndakanzwa kuti akazvamburwa akapotsa afa, awanikidzwa aine mukadzi womunhu kurukova rwekuseri kwechikoro uko. Imiwe maticha emazuva ano avakutonyadzisa."(That's a lie. People say that he was thoroughly assaulted when he was caught in a compromising position with someone's wife in that river behind the school. Hey, teachers of today are a shame).

I did not wait to hear the rest of the conversation because my connecting bus to Chirasauta had long come and was about to leave.

Professional Teacher Ethics - A Justification

The reported cases in the daily papers and the incident of the drunken teacher above all point to a possible gap and need in the current teacher preparation programmes being run by colleges of teacher education in the country. They both shed light on the possible need for professional teacher ethics informed by **hunhu** to be included in teacher preparation programmes in colleges of teacher education in Zimbabwe.

Admittedly, one might argue that the incident at the growth point is isolated but then this isolated case coupled with the numerous reported cases above indeed constitute a national worry. Indeed, a national concern which might persuade us to agree with the observations made by Stark et. al.(1986: 62) that,

..., in contrast to the spirit of altruism or service commonly attributed to professional status, professionals are becoming exploiters rather than enablers in society as they expend more effort in seeking rewards rather than in expending services.

It must be pointed out that the reported cases of alleged misconduct are not directed against teachers' professional competence but rather their social competence. In fact, some of the officers against whom the allegations of misconduct are made have track records of being very competent in their work either as teachers or lecturers.

Others have tried to exonerate the teachers' unbecoming behavior and tendencies towards "becoming exploiters rather than enablers in society as they expend more effort in seeking rewards rather than in expending services" on the current harsh economic conditions. Assuming that hard economic conditions are the source of the problem, how then does having intimate relations with students, some of whom are minors, and soliciting for sexual favours from female students in colleges in exchange for higher grades have anything to do with harsh economic conditions. Indeed, some explanations must be sought for this menace in our society either in addition or apart from the harsh economic conditions.

It is thus being hypothesised that the problem can be traced back to professional training of these teachers which probably did not introduce them to a sound theoretical base in professional teacher ethical theory. The assumption being that if teachers were exposed to some professional teacher ethics informed by **hunhu** in their training then we could probably be having a teacher who would think rationally and ethically before engaging in such cases as reported above. The immediate concern of this paper however, is to examine what professional teacher ethics entails.

About Ethics, Professional Ethics and Professional Teacher Ethics

Any meaningful examination of professional ethics in some detail presupposes some basic understanding of what ethics and a profession entail as the concept (professional ethics) derives from these two concepts. An understanding of these two concepts is necessary for a sound appreciation of the importance of professional ethics to professionals in general and teachers in particular.

Admittedly, no definition of the terms can be regarded as exhaustive, but certain characteristics are so widely acceptable that they provide a serviceable working idea of what is meant by a profession (Lieberman, 1956). Generally, a profession is regarded as an occupation characterised by three or four central features namely, "extensive training, a significant intellectual component to practice, the provision of an important service, and perhaps credentialling" (Bayles, 1991 :15). Boyle (1969) and Smith (1981) add another characteristic very relevant to this discussion, namely, that a profession has a code of ethics which guides and regulates the behaviour and conduct of the professionals. What is of immediate concern to this paper is to establish briefly what ethics and professional ethics entail.

Ethics is a branch of philosophy and as a result others have taken it as moral philosophy (Raphael, 1981). Like in philosophy, those who study ethics are engaged in **analysis** and **synthesis** of moral issues. The object of ethics is morality whereby morality is meant "those practises and activities of human beings that are considered right or wrong, the rules governing those activities and the values imbedded, fostered or pursued by those activities and practices" (de George, 1982:82). Raphael (1981, 9) defines it as "the philosophical discussion of assumptions about what is wrong and right, good and bad as general ideas and as applied in the lives of private individuals" We are tempted to agree with Raphael but only up to a point. We differ with him where he confines these principles to the lives of private individuals because we concede that the individual does not live alone but amongst others hence the interests of others must be taken into account.

Villa-Vicenuo & de Gruchy (1994) maintain that ethics has to do with what people perceive to be right or wrong, good or bad. They proceed to add that ethics is often regarded as an understanding of what '**ought**' to be. The word 'ought' as used here implies that there is a radical distinction between what **is** and what **should be** or what ought to be.

Thus, what is, is not necessarily what should be. In light of this, ethics may be viewed as principles by which people seek to live their lives.

Ethics has also been viewed as a systematic attempt through the use of reason to make sense of human actions, collectively or individually, knowingly or unknowingly. The element of reason is crucial for an understanding of ethics, for ethics would not concern itself with actions done involuntarily e.g. under duress or external influence like drugs or hypnosis, for the person would not be conscious and in control of his/her reasoning. This aspect is of further importance to an understanding of ethics because firstly, it means the solutions cannot be arrived at hurriedly but cautiously and secondly, it implies that no one is born ethical but has to be initiated into it consciously or unconsciously. Simply put, therefore, ethics may be viewed as norms or rules governing human behaviour or human activity done willingly and knowingly or the principles by which people seek to live their lives.

Ethics is divided into two broad branches namely **general** ethics and **special** ethics. General ethics being further divided into descriptive ethics, normative ethics and meta-ethics.

Descriptive ethics studies and describes the morality of a people, culture or society. **Normative ethics** attempts at justifying a moral system through the examination of the norms, rules and values of the particular moral system. **Meta-ethics** on the other hand is sometimes called analytical ethics as it is concerned with the analysis or examination of descriptive and normative ethics. It deals largely with the meanings of moral terms and the logic or soundness of moral reasoning. It examines the use of such moral terms as 'good', 'bad', 'responsibility', 'obligation'. Its other concern is analysis of moral reasoning which involves clarifying and evaluating presuppositions and investigating the validity of arguments.

Special ethics on the other hand performs two functions related to this discussion. It applies general ethics to solving particular problems and secondly, it investigates the morality of specialised fields of human endeavour. The first function is called **casuistry** and it is the art of solving difficult moral or ethical problems, cases or dilemmas through the careful application of moral\ethical principles. One need, therefore, to hasten to admit that because this is an art or a skill, it means it has to be learnt and no one is born with it. The second and equally important function of special ethics involves the application of general ethics to specialised areas of human endeavor like in business, war, and professions. When it is applied to these specialised fields it yields disciplines like Business Ethics, War Ethics, Professional Ethics. When further applied to more specialised fields of human endeavor like medicine and teaching it becomes Medical and Teaching Ethics respectively.

Therefore, what is obtaining here is that ethics is informing these specialised fields in general and in particular. Thus general ethics would be said to be informing professions in general resulting in the discipline - Professional Ethics and in particular resulting in Teacher Ethics. Of importance to note is that each of the specialised fields has an aspect of descriptive ethics, normative ethics and meta- ethics in it.

From the above discussion a relationship between ethics and specialised fields of human endeavor like a profession becomes apparent whereby ethics is seen to be informing that particular field. With respect to our initial task of examining and establishing what Professional Ethics entails, one can say that it is a study of the influence of ethics in general on the activities and operations of professionals who subscribe to professions. Professional Ethics, therefore, seeks to lay down a system of norms to be followed by the

respective professionals in executing their professional duties and obligations to their clients and society at large.

On the whole, it has to be submitted that the study of Professional Ethics will not automatically make one an ethical professional or enable one to always know and do what is right or wrong (Bayles, 1991 ; de George ,1982). In other words, it does not claim to make anyone more moral. Like ethics in general , Professional Ethics presupposes that those who study it are already moral beings, who know right from wrong, and who wish to be even better, more thoughtful and more informed moral beings.

Thus, the study of Professional Ethics will hopefully sensitize one to the ethical dimensions of professional practice and will help one to think clearly about ethical problems. It will help professionals approach moral problems in their professions more systematically and with better tools than they would otherwise have approached them. Lastly, and very importantly Professional Ethics will not change professional practices unless those engaged in the practices see the need for and are willing to change them.

In view of the preceding discussion on ethics and professional ethics, what then is professional teacher ethics ? Professional teacher ethics is informed to a large extent by professional ethics in general since teaching is itself also a profession. However, because teaching is unique it means it has to have its own ethics which are peculiar to it. Professional teacher ethics, therefore, can be viewed as norms which define, regulate and control the behaviour and conduct of the teacher both at work and away from work.

The incident described at the beginning of this paper and the reported cases from newspapers highlight and raise crucial issues related to educatedness, professionalism in general and teacher professionalism in

particular in the context of African ethics. The comments of the women and the passerby seem to indicate conflict of assumptions and expectations regarding educatedness and professionalism between the public and the professionals themselves, especially the teacher as in the present context.

The fact that the people who witnessed the incident outlined above were doubting that the gentleman was a teacher inspite of his saying so means there was something they had seen which was not consistant with, firstly, an educated person and secondly a teacher. It can thus be surmised that one can be a qualified teacher but still not quite a teacher according to the experience and standards of the people. It means there will be something missing, not quite in agreement with their experience and expectations of a teacher inspite of the fact that one can actually be a qualified teacher. In the present context, what then could have been the missing dimension ?

The missing dimension was the element of **hunhu**. What the gentleman had done in the bus during the journey and at the bus station lacked this element of **hunhu**. It was not expected of a teacher. It would have been understandable if it was anyone else but not a teacher. Drinking and getting drunk, vomiting and sleeping in the open when drunk and making girls pregnant and rejecting them is bad but it becomes even worse if it is done by a teacher who is supposed to be informed and a model for society to emulate. Even though these abuses occur, society condemns the culprits because people who do them are taken not to have **hunhu**. But precisely because the gentleman **aiita zvinhu zvisina hunhu izvi** was a teacher , according to the public he could not be a teacher even though he was infact one.

Evident here is a case of conflict of expectations between the profession and the public, yet another source of problems and discord

between the professional, particularly, the teacher and the consumer of his/her service, which is the public. This incident brings to the surface a lot of complicated issues regarding the roles of teachers in public life and the lives society expects them to lead and thereby further highlighting the problems and dilemmas of the present professional and the teacher in particular.

The incident has highlighted that for one to be educated and let alone a professional teacher, accepted in society, one must have **unhu**. The assumption is, if the teacher in question had **unhu** then he would not have behaved in the manner reported. Because it is unheard of for a **munhu ane hunhu** firstly **kutuka zvinonyadzisira sezvaiita** this teacher, secondly **kuzviitira weti** being drunk, and thirdly **kuzvirutsira** and just sleeping anywhere and in the open as the teacher did.

Accordingly **munhu ane hunhu** can not and is not expected to behave in that manner. Issues were compounded by the fact that this person was a professional and a teacher for that matter. Traditional Africans hold professionals, and teachers in particular, in very high regard. That is why the passerby in the story was surprised to hear that the gentleman in question was indeed a teacher. They believe that a professional let alone a teacher is always a teacher both at work and away from work or even long after he/she has left the service. This goes so far to show the extend of respect society accords the teacher and all professionals in general.

However, this raises further problems of expectations, especially with the young teacher of today. Is he /she capable of standing up to that high expectation which demands that a teacher is a teacher and a model all the time. But exactly what does **hunhu** do to a person ?

Hunhu informs the behaviour and conduct of a person. It not only informs and defines but also controls that behaviour. In respect of a teacher, **hunhu** would inform the behaviour and conduct of the teacher both at work and away from work. In fact, **hunhu** would not have let the teacher drink to the extent that he loses his senses and starts abusing both himself and the public. **Hunhu** would dictate to the teacher how to interact with pupils, workmates, the authority and the public. It would further define the nature and extend of relationships between the teacher and the public.

Thus, if teachers have **hunhu**, the chances that they would indulge in the kind of activities accused of them these days might be reduced. In view of the various ethical pressures on the teacher from various angles as exemplified in the cases above, **hunhu** would influence the teacher to rationalise situations before taking the easy way out or simply doing what everyone is doing and thereby ending up in problems. A teacher whose ethical theory is rooted in and informed by **hunhu** would when confronted by a dilemma ask himself/herself the basic question : **Zvinhu zvandirikuda kuita zvine hunhu here izvi ?**

If teachers and other professionals always asked themselves this question before they ask for sexual favours from female students, especially minors, or before they sell places and vacancies to desperate prospective students and job seekers or before they embezzle students' examination funds, maybe we could be having less of these cases of professional misconduct. This is not to imply that professional teacher ethics informed by **hunhu** transforms teachers into perfect human beings. Far from it, for theory is not automatically translated into practice. What we hope it will do is to increase one's ethical sensitivity in the face of so much economic and ethical pressures bombarding him/her on a daily basis, so that before one takes a decision on any ethical issue one should pause and ask himself/herself

the fundamental question : **Asi zvine hunhu here zvandiri kuda kuita izvi ?**

That teachers in Zimbabwe need a strong component of professional ethics in their education is beyond doubt from the preceding discussion. However, it should not be any ethics but rather an ethic rooted in and informed by the people's concrete existential circumstances. It has to be a teacher ethic informed by the people's culture, philosophy and world view for it to have relevance and acceptability among the people of Zimbabwe.

The above discussion points to the fact that norms governing teacher behaviour and conduct i.e professional teacher ethics, must be rooted in and informed by **hunhu**. Accordingly, there is more to teaching and the possession of a teaching qualification for one to be called a teacher. In addition , one must have **hunhu**.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The discussion in this paper hopefully has highlighted the need for Professional Teacher Ethics to be introduced in colleges of teacher education in order to enhance the quality of graduates coming from colleges of teacher education in Zimbabwe. The assumption being that professional teacher ethics would conscientize and sensitize the teacher to the professional ethical dilemmas emanating from the current harsh economic environment. The hope being that we will end up with teachers and lecturers **vane hunhu**. Thus, Zimbabwe needs teachers **vane hunhu** in the new millenium, teachers who are able to **teach** well as well as **live** well in the communities they teach and live in, bearing in mind that society thinks of them as being both models and resource persons.

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