

Teaching Staff Professional Ethics and Quality of Educational Output in Federal Universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria

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Abstract The study examined the extent to which teaching staff professional ethics predict quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria. Four research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The correlational research design was used for the study. The population comprised 6,305 teaching staff and 32,613 students. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 1,275 teaching staff and 3,021 students. Two instruments titled “Teaching Staff Professional Ethics Questionnaire (TSPEQ)”, and a documentary analysis checklist titled “Graduate Educational Output Checklist (GEOC)” were used for data collection. The reliability co-efficient of TSPEQ was determined using the Cronbach Alpha Analysis and a reliability index of 0.83 was obtained. Graph, coefficient of R value and R² were used to answer the research questions while the f-value of Simple Linear Regression Analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that teaching staff professional ethics variables of professional competence, professional integrity and professional accountability significantly predicts quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended amongst others that, university management should ensure that professional ethics of teacher accountability is upheld by enforcing periodic self- appraisal by teachers, assessment by students and performance appraisal.

Keywords: *accountability, competence, educational output, integrity, professional ethics, quality, teaching staff*

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1. Introduction

If all humans have the liberty to live their lives the way they deem fit, without a consideration as to how their self-belief may become an infringement upon the rights of others, this may automatically lead to a total breakdown of law and order. The mere mention of the word ethics, whether in medical profession, political debates or casual conversations among friends or colleagues usually results in a value – laden discussion of what is considered “right” or “wrong”. In schools, teachers are expected to exhibit acceptable and conventional behaviour that will guarantee quality educational output, promote harmonious relationships and the attainment of educational goals. Ethics helps to maintain law and order in schools and it also integrates diverse values that are morally acceptable. Ethics involves doing the right thing always. Professional ethics is a collection of values, standards and norms that every individual regarded as a professional should consider. Professional ethics is defined as a set of rules and principles that encompasses responsibilities among professionals, whether as colleagues, clients or

society in general [1]. Dorudi and Ahari [2] view professional ethics as a field concerned with considering ethical commitments in a craft and its ethical subjects. The ethical professional makes choices through the consequences of alternative actions, so the general guidelines of ethics can explain and lead to an understanding of their behaviour [3]. Teachers who demonstrate professional ethics serve as role models to students. Students will definitely learn from, and do what their teachers do most times, just the way they tend to imitate and copy their parents at home. Ashraf, Hosseinnia and Domsy [4] in their study have shown that by the increase of commitment of teachers to professional ethics, their teaching effectiveness increases too. For a teacher to be termed a successful teacher, professional ethics play a very vital role in the teacher’s success. Lately, the quality of educational output from Nigerian federal universities has been adjudged to be on a steady decline. This low-quality output may probably be attributed to teacher’s non-adherence to the professional ethics of professional competence, integrity or accountability as examined in this study.

Professional competence of a teacher determines the quality of education, and it is an embodiment of content

competence, academic soundness, competence in teaching and learning, and an inclination to continuous professional growth. Competence is understood as excellent capability which includes knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences, which has to be a target category of the profession of an educator [5]. Professional competence is competence related to the ability to master the knowledge. Teachers' pedagogical competence has to do with how learning is being managed and this includes planning, implementation and evaluation of learning outcomes of learners. These competencies should be excellently owned by every teacher in order to achieve success in learning and teaching. The single most important influence on student learning is the quality of teaching, yet most schools don't define what good teaching is [6]. Teachers' professional competence in terms of their professional knowledge, skills, beliefs and motivation is a critical predictor of quality educational output.

Professional integrity is an embodiment of honesty, reliability and moral action. Teachers are expected to exercise integrity through their professional commitments, responsibilities and actions. This can be achieved by being trustworthy, honest, authentic, doing the right thing always and accepting one's mistakes without passing the blame on others. Adhering to professional integrity involves avoiding conflict between one's private interests and professional responsibilities which could reasonably be deemed to impact negatively on students. Anangisyé and Barrett [7] found that teachers' misconduct and unprofessionalism, together with corruption amongst educational administrators, threatens to undermine current initiatives to improve educational quality in many low-income countries including most of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Professional accountability is one of the concepts of ethics and it has several meanings. It is often used interchangeably with answerability, responsibility, liability and blameworthiness. Accountability implies an obligation to find ways to improve the capacity and performance of those responsible, not just measure the achievement or outcomes [8]. A professionally accountable teacher must be excellent not only in the subject to be taught, but also understand the learning requirements of the student. Teachers' accountability involves multiple parameters like availability to students for consultation, regularity in classroom teaching, guiding and carrying out research, as well as engaging in other academic activities like conferences, workshops and seminars. Professionalism has to do with the extent of accountability on the part of the individual involved. In teaching as a profession, teachers are expected to show high level of accountability towards students, lifelong teaching and learning, society and the profession. The following are the areas of teachers' accountability.

Towards the Learner: Students occupy an integral part in the education system and teachers are accountable to them especially in the area of developing their personalities. The success of every student is dependent on teachers' sense of dedication, competence and accountability. The teacher is expected to show love and affection to students irrespective of their school performance; encourage them to improve their academic attainments; refrain from physical punishment; sexual

abuse; mental and emotional harassment. Teachers are also mandated not to share information about any student with anyone other than school professionals who need the information to assist the student.

Towards Parents: Parents have become educational stakeholders because they invest so much into the educational development of their wards. By this, teachers are also accountable to parents especially in ensuring that the educational goals towards their wards are optimally achieved.

Towards the community: A teacher is also accountable to the community since he or she is also a product of same community. The teacher serves as a bridge between the school and the community. This avails the teacher an opportunity to coordinate different activities for the community and to encourage the deprived and weaker sections of the community to get education.

Towards the Profession: Accountability to the profession can be achieved by according just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession, adhere strictly to the tenets of the profession and maintain confidentiality of professional information acquired about colleagues in the course of employment, unless disclosure serves a professional purpose. It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that students acquire the knowledge and skills that will shape their future and make them useful to the society. The teacher is also expected to strive for his/her continuous professional development and should refrain from engaging in private tuition or private teaching activity that will be a source of distraction to his or her commitment to the profession.

Towards Colleagues: Teachers' code of ethics often addresses the type of relationship that should exist between colleagues. There should be a level of cordiality and respect for one another. Teachers are expected to treat colleagues fairly, with courtesy and sensitivity to their rights, duties, aspirations, and to encourage one another to adhere to high professional standards.

Towards Humanity and Values: Through belief and exhibition of human values such as honesty, regularity, punctuality, truthfulness, goodness, and so on, by the teachers, the students readily accept these values and inculcates them into every area of their lives.

Towards the Nation: The essence of education is to develop one's problem-solving skills and this is one of the ways a teacher can be accountable to his or her nation. A teacher must organize research activities to align with the needs of the country by helping to proffer solutions to the myriads of issues bedeviling the country.

Teachers are held accountable not just for students' intellectual development but in ensuring that students that are left under their care are safe and in a healthy environment. A code of ethics is very vital at this point in achieving this aim. Within an educational institute, the principles and practices of ethical accountability aims to improve both the internal standard of individual and group conduct, as well as external factors such as sustainable economic and ecologic strategies. Teacher accountability is traditionally based on having society, school, and classroom rules, combined with sanctions for infringement ([9]: p2). Professional accountability means that teachers cannot close their doors and teach or behave anyway they please. Transparency of practice permits professional

accountability, and the absence of account-giving means an absence of accountability.

Observing the federal universities in Nigeria, there seems to be a steady decline in the educational output of students and this has generated so much uproar in the education sector. This is evident in the poor-quality grades students graduate with. After a review of relevant literature, Oyeneye [10] declared that the quality of Nigerian university graduates was declining in recent times against the demands of the 21st century society and expectations in the labour market. Presumably, teachers seem to be low on pedagogic competence, subject matter knowledge, academic and personal integrity, as well as in being accountable for students' academic output. These have greatly contributed to low quality output since a large number of teaching staff seem to have poor knowledge of the code of ethics binding the teaching profession, while some that are aware of the code, seems not to adhere to them.

As role models, teachers are expected to adhere strictly to the professional code of ethics as this ensures that a fair, honest and uncompromising education is given to students across board. Academic basis should not be the sole aim of teaching. Setting positive examples and teaching valuable life lessons to students should also be an integral part of their lessons. Above all, it is expected that teachers must demonstrate competence, integrity, accountability, impartiality and ethical behaviour in the classroom and in their conduct with parents and co-workers.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Professional Competence

In today's competitive world, the idea of competence has amassed significant interest. Teaching relies on a clearly structured set of competencies among professionals employed in their respective fields [11] and teachers' professional code of ethics should stress on developing those competencies to bring improvements in the education sector. Teachers' stellar performance in their assigned roles can be achieved by adequate preparation focused on competence. Competency can be defined as the acquisition of abilities and trainable skills geared towards making one become effective in a chosen field of endeavour. Steiner, Hassel and Hassel ([12]: p5) stated that "competency is a pattern of thinking, feeling, acting or speaking; which makes a person successful in a specific job or role". Grossman as cited in Buys [13] stated that competence includes a person's knowledge, skills and clinical judgement as well as the practice of environmental demands. The best predictor of future performance in a given role is a previous demonstration of competence in achieving success.

Teachers' success can be understood through the concept of professional competence. Teachers professional competence play a vital role in students' educational output at all levels of education and their performance can be assessed through students' achievement. Professional competency includes knowledge, skills and professional values, classroom management, curriculum planning and its implementation. Taghipour Zahir [14] divides teachers'

competencies into two categories; personal and vocational. Personal competencies include: mental and physical health, adherence to the values, having good mental abilities, while vocational competencies include: general knowledge, vocational knowledge and communication skills. Professional competence is also known as vocational competence, communication and classroom competencies, scientific competence or teaching competencies [14,15,16]. Ackerman, Heafner and Bartz [17] concluded that the greatest determinate of student achievement is the teachers' characteristic such as: teacher training, teaching experiences, pedagogical practices, and professional development.

Teachers' pedagogic competence is related to a series of teaching activities done to achieve a successful learning and teaching process in the classroom. Competence in this context encompasses teachers' academic soundness, competence in teaching and an inclination to continuous professional growth. Murray, Gillese, Lemon, Mercer and Robin as cited in Hall [18] defined the principle of pedagogical competence as the way an instructor takes active steps to stay current regarding teaching strategies that will help students learn relevant knowledge and skills. A teacher with low pedagogic skills will have a difficult time engaging student in learning. That is why pedagogic competence is fundamental to successful teaching and learning. Wescombe-Down [19] maintained that the mark of a quality teacher is centered on 'pedagogical fitness'. A pedagogically fit teacher 'establishes and maintains a positive, inclusive and safe learning environment' ([19]: p20) where students' beliefs, confidence, skills and values can be fostered and developed. A fundamental element that contributes to student learning and achievement is a teacher's knowledge of subject matter [20]. Stronge further stated that subject matter knowledge is a "teachers' understanding of subject facts, concepts, principles, and the method through which they are integrated cognitively [to] determine the teachers' pedagogical thinking and decision making" ([20]: p19). Subject matter is the 'what' of teaching and teachers should always apply a variety of learning activities. Each lesson topic needs multiple teaching strategies based on the content and objective to help into deeper comprehension, greater retention, and better achievement [21]. A strategy is effective if it is suitable with the topic and the time available [22].

Tanang and Abu [23] examined teacher professionalism and professional development practices. The findings of the study showed the need for teachers to display exemplary behaviour – attitude, effective teaching skills, and continuous professional development. The study further provided a model of teacher professional development as an input for improving the competence and quality practice of teacher professionalism and professional development that can translate to improved quality of educational output. Rahman [24] in a study on professional competence, pedagogical competence and the performance of teachers asserted that teachers' pedagogical competence is the ability to manage learning which includes planning, implementation and evaluation of learning outcomes of learners, and that these competencies should be owned by every teacher in order to achieve success in learning and teaching.

2.2. Professional Integrity

The term integrity was derived from the Latin word 'integer' which means complete, whole or having no part taken away. Integrity is the act of being sincere, honest and having strong moral principles. It describes a person who refuses to compromise in matters of principle and whose words are his or her bond. Integrity is the opposite of deceit and corruption. Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of Integrity. There is no integrity in saying one thing and doing another thing. Bhattacharjee [25] posited that policy makers must not forget that if education is the backbone of a nation, a brilliant and honest teacher is the backbone of education and the guardian of a civilization. Banks [26] notes that the term integrity was not in common usage in the literature on professionalism, nor did it appear in most codes of conduct for professional practice, until the last two decades. Professional organizations and institutions have now realized that integrity should be an integral part of the professional code of ethics due to the rapid emergence and rise in misconducts and malpractices being practiced in institutions. Integrity, as defined by Killinger [27] is a personal choice, an uncompromising and predictably consistent commitment to honour moral, ethical, spiritual, and artistic values and principles. Integrity involves both personal and professional responsibility. An individual who has integrity will definitely exhibit it professionally at work and will not violate the ethics of his or her profession. Naagarazan [28] defines integrity as the unity of thought, word and deed (honesty) and open-mindedness. It includes the capacity to communicate the factual information so that others can make well-informed decisions. Ianinska and Garcia Zamor [29] added another perspective by describing integrity as wholeness of character, a commitment to one's intentions and promises, and standing for something.

The concept of professional integrity as postulated by Rozuel [30] has been emphatically articulated as the moral responsibility ascribed to a professional role. In a philosophical reflection on professional responsibility, Pritchard [31] traced professional integrity to its root - practical ethics, and went ahead to define this type of integrity as a matter of remaining true to and publicly endorsing the principles, values, ideas, goals and standards of one's profession. Personal integrity is generally related to professional integrity but professional integrity is related to, but different from personal integrity. Professional integrity derives its substance from the fundamental goals or mission of the profession [32]. Professional integrity is sustained on the principle of moral integrity and ethical principles centred in transparency, honesty, sincerity, moral consciousness, loyalty, truthiness and reality in the functions performed [33]. Personal integrity entails doing what is right at all times even when it would be more convenient to do what is only beneficial to oneself. An important aspect of personal integrity, as pointed out by Banks and Gallagher [34], is consistency through one's behaviour and moral life, no matter how tempting and conflicting the circumstances may be.

According to Hoy and Miskel [35], integrity means that one's behaviours are consistent with their stated values

and that they are honest, ethical, responsible and trustworthy. In the context of professional practice, integrity could mean seeing the profession as a coherent whole and behaving according to the professional framework, being aware of the totality, aims, values and rules of the profession [34]. In ethics, integrity is regarded by many as the honesty and truthfulness or accuracy of one's actions. A person of integrity behaves in virtuous ways, such as keeping promises and refraining from lying, cheating and stealing [36]. Teachers are expected to demonstrate integrity by respecting students, teaching fair play, treating everyone with kindness and serve as a role model for young people to follow. When discussing behaviour and morality, an individual is said to possess the virtue of integrity if the individual's actions are based upon an internally consistent framework of principles [37]. Teachers who demonstrate integrity are accountable for providing academic programmes of quality and positive educational experiences [36]. A teacher with character demonstrates that integrity is a prized possession.

Vargas-Hernandez [33] in Mexico analyzed professional integrity as an improvement concept to the actual values, virtues, capabilities and attitudes needed to assume any professional tasks. Using a comparative method, the study provided a sound professional philosophy that empowers professionals to act with integrity and increase the probability for long-term success and professional fulfilment. The results also provided the basis to develop a code of conduct and regulation policies to sustain professional integrity which can positively influence the behaviour of key actors. In a similar study, Mehdipour and Balaramulu [38] examined the influence of teacher's behaviour on the academic achievement of university students. The collected data were tabulated and analyzed using Chi-square and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r). The major conclusions of the study were that teachers felt proud to be teachers and faculties also expressed that priority wise, punctuality, integrity and hard work were important qualities of good teachers. This showed that there was a significant correlation between the teachers' behaviour (integrity) and academic achievement in students of Hyderabad universities.

2.3. Professional Accountability

Accountability is one of the concepts of ethics and governance. It has been defined in diverse ways. The term is often used synonymously with the concepts of answerability, blameworthiness, transparency, liability and any other idea associated with account-giving. Kuchapski as cited in Levitt, Janta and Wegrich [39] stated that the term is extensively used in discussions of educational reforms among educational policy makers, but apparently remains somewhat unclear and incoherent. Accountability, as defined by the Canadian Teachers' Federation [8] implies an obligation to find ways to improve the capacity and performance of those responsible, not just to measure the achievement or outcomes. The demand for effective teachers and good quality of undergraduate's output has become a pillar on which education reform is rested on. This is significant in schools as teachers are professionals and are expected to

show professionalism in all their conduct. The Rastogi Committee as cited in UK Essays [40] while emphasizing the need for accountability in teaching profession, suggested that self-appraisal by teachers, assessment by students in appropriate manner, periodic performance appraisal, work load and code of professional ethics should be taken into consideration while ensuring accountability of the teachers. Teachers' academic accountability involves multiple parameters like availability to students for consultation, regularity in classroom teaching, guiding and carrying out research, and engaging in other academic activities like conferences, workshops and seminars. Professionalism has to do with the extent of accountability on the part of the individual involved. In teaching as a profession, teachers are expected to be accountable towards learners, parents, community, profession, humanity and values, as well as the nation.

Teachers are held accountable not just for students' intellectual development but in ensuring that students that are left under their care are safe and in a healthy environment. A code of ethics is very vital at this point in achieving this aim. Within an educational institute, the principles and practices of ethical accountability aims to improve both the internal standard of individual and group conduct, as well as external factors such as sustainable economic and ecologic strategies. Teacher accountability is traditionally based on having society, school, and classroom rules, combined with sanctions for infringement ([9]: p2). Professional accountability means that teachers cannot close their doors and teach or behave anyway they please. Transparency of practice permits professional accountability, and the absence of account-giving means an absence of accountability.

Aksekili, kusmus and Akduman [41] in a study reviewed the professional ethics understanding of pre-school teacher candidates in terms of respect for profession, personality and society; responsibility and righteousness; establishment of a healthy and safety environment; democracy and equality; justice and morality; honesty and helpfulness which are all attributes of accountability. The findings concluded that majority of teacher candidates who participated in this research had the professional ethics understanding of accountability which impacted on students' academic growth. A recent study was conducted by Johnson [42] in USA to examine the relationship between teacher accountability and student growth. The research was a cross-sectional study in which ordinal and logistic regression methods were used to test the relationships between the dependent variable (student growth) and independent variable (teacher accountability). Findings from the study indicated a significant correlation between teacher accountability and student growth while controlling for teacher and school characteristics. It was therefore concluded that, students taught by teachers that were rated effective were likely to have typical or high growth on standardized state tests as opposed to students taught by teachers rated as ineffective

From the studies so far reviewed, it is obvious that none was specifically carried out to measure the relationship between teaching staff professional ethics and quality of educational output in Nigerian South-South federal universities. Besides, the variables considered in the

previous studies are different from the ones used in this present study. Furthermore, despite numerous contributions from the studies reviewed, the quality of educational output is still poor. This has created a gap which this study on teaching staff professional ethics and quality of educational output is poised to fill. The results of this study can serve as an additional validation for practices aimed at fostering teaching staff professional ethics of competence, integrity and accountability, especially in Nigerian federal universities in which research on such topic seems very rare or even not carried out. Hence, this study seeks to determine how professional competence, professional integrity and professional accountability relates to the quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria.

3. Statement of the Problem

Quality of educational output in Nigerian federal universities has become a serious concern to the society. A decline in educational output of students in federal universities has generated so much uproar among stakeholders in the education sector. The Nigerian Institute of Personnel Management (NIPM), National Employers of Consultative Association (NECA), and other similar organizations have decried and argued that the quality of graduates from Nigerian universities are rapidly declining and do not meet the demands of the industry. In 2017, the case of the Kaduna State competency test conducted for teachers indicated that Nigerian graduates who become teachers appear to be inadequately prepared in both content and pedagogy, and are not so knowledgeable about teaching staff professional ethics, let alone adhere to them. This invariably contributes negatively to the quality of graduates being churned out. Education occupies the most strategic position in Nigeria's struggle for national development, and such struggles cannot be successful in the absence of professional ethics compliant teachers. Teachers are a model of moral and pro-social behaviours, and as such, their actions and attitudes can greatly affect students' sense of justice and perception of moral code. The teachers' code of professional ethics is well articulated and known by teachers, but how well are teachers adhering or committed to these codes. The level of commitment, adherence and implementation seems to be quite low. There is no recourse to the code of ethics by teachers as a lot of abnormal situations still pervade the educational system. Some teachers seem to have poor knowledge about this code of ethics while some that are aware of the code seems not to adhere to them. The code is not just a listing of what teachers are to do habitually or only when it is convenient, but consists of rules which are standards guiding the conduct of a professional teacher. An inspection of the graduating grades of graduates between 2014 and 2016 academic sessions shows a high rate of Second Class Lower, Third Class and Pass degrees from universities. The National Universities Commission (NUC) in 2014 abolished the Pass degree in Nigerian universities leaving the 'Third Class' as the least classification. This has brought the need for improved grades to the forefront. It has been observed that whenever

students have low quality results, the public tends to blame the failure on teachers. It is expected that schools should serve the intellectual, ethical, physical, social, and academic achievement needs of students. Unfortunately, most products from our universities graduate without these basic needs being met. One may wonder what is responsible for the apparent poor students' academic performance. Could this be traced to teachers' level of competence, integrity, accountability, commitment to duties, or what? The fundamental problem of this study therefore is to investigate the quality of educational output in relation to teaching staff professional ethics. The elements of the problem are professional competence, professional integrity and professional accountability.

3.1. Research Questions

1. What is the quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria?
2. To what extent does professional competence predict quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria?
3. To what extent does professional integrity predict quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria?
4. To what extent does professional accountability predict quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria?

3.2. Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: The extent to which professional competence predicts quality of educational output in federal universities, South- South Zone of Nigeria is not significant.

H₀₂: The extent to which professional integrity predicts quality of educational output in federal universities, South- South Zone of Nigeria is not significant.

H₀₃: The extent to which professional accountability predicts quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria is not significant.

4. Research Methods

The correlational research design was used for this study. This study adopted this design because it sought to determine if two or more variables are related, and if so, in what way. The South-South Zone of Nigeria was the area for this study. This area is one of the six Geo-Political Zones in the country. It is made up of six states namely; Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Delta, Edo and Rivers. The population of the study comprised 6,305 teaching staff and 32,613 graduating students in the 2015/2016 academic session distributed into the six federal universities in the zone. The sample size of this study was 1,275 (20%) teaching staff and 3,021 (9%) students drawn from the sampled schools. To arrive at the sample size, the purposive sampling technique was used to select four out of the six universities that have graduated students in faculties and departments that cut across these universities.

This comprised six faculties and 28 departments. From each of the sampled departments and faculties, simple random sampling method of balloting was used to select two departments each from the six faculties. This made up the sample size of 1,275 teaching staff and 3,021 students.

Two instruments were used for data collection in the study. One was researchers - developed questionnaire titled "Teaching Staff Professional Ethics Questionnaire (TSPEQ)", while the second one was data on students' educational output (graduation grade) from the sampled schools titled "Graduate Educational Output Checklist (GEOC)" gathered from the universities' relevant authorities. The TSPEQ was used to measure professional competence, professional integrity and professional accountability, while the GEOC was used to measure the quality of educational output. The TSPEQ was a 21-item questionnaire (See Appendix) which utilized a five-point Likert scale where respondents were presented with five alternative response options of Very Often (VO - 5), Often (O - 4), Sometimes (S - 3), Rarely (R - 2), and Never (N - 1). The second instrument which was the GEOC covered the 2015/2016 academic session. The content of the GEOC was the total number of students that graduated with first class, second class upper, second class lower, third class and pass degrees from the sampled universities in the years under review. The GEOC utilized a five-point Likert scale of Excellent (1st class - 5), Very Good (2nd class upper - 4), Good (2nd class lower - 3), Fair (3rd class - 2) and Poor (Pass - 1). A combination of the scores from the teaching staff professional ethics variables and the graduates' educational output checklist were analyzed to determine the correlation coefficient between the two variables.

The TSPEQ was subjected to face validation by three research experts from the Faculty of Education, University of Uyo. In order to establish the internal consistency (reliability) of the instrument, the inter item correlation method was used to determine the relationship between items in each variable. This was done using 50 teaching staff who were not part of the study sample. After the appropriate scoring of the responses, the result was subjected to Cronbach Alpha Analysis which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.83. A consent form containing information about the research were initially given to the teaching staff to fill before the researchers-developed questionnaire – TSPEQ was administered with the help of two research assistants for each of the sampled universities who were briefed on what to do.

The data from the two instruments were sorted, compiled, classified and coded into a coding sheet and analyzed using a computerized data analysis package known as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). In analyzing the data collected from the respondents; graph, coefficient of R value and R² were used to answer research questions, while the f-value of Simple Linear Regression Analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. In scoring the TSPEQ, the positive worded statements were weighted 5,4,3,2,1, moving from VO to N, while the negative worded statements were scored in the reverse direction, the weights moving from 1 to 5. The second instrument (GEOC) being data on graduates' educational output

(graduation grade) were gathered through validated checklist from the universities' relevant authorities and were classified under Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair and Poor weighing 5,4,3,2,1. In testing the research hypotheses, the *f* - calculated was compared with the *f* - critical at 0.05 level of significance. The research hypotheses were rejected when the calculated *f* - value was greater than the critical *f* - value, and were retained when the critical *f* - value was greater than the calculated

f - value. The *f* - values were used to test and determine the degree of significance of the regression coefficient (*R*).

5. Results

Research Question One: What is the quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria?

Table 1. Quality of educational output of the sampled schools for 2015/2016 academic session

S/N	Faculty	Uniben				Unical					Uniport				Uniuyo				
		1 st Class	2 nd Upper	2 nd Lower	3 rd Class	1 st Class	2 nd Upper	2 nd Lower	3 rd Class	Pass	1 st Class	2 nd Upper	2 nd Lower	3 rd Class	1 st Class	2 nd Upper	2 nd Lower	3 rd Class	Pass
1.	Agriculture	3	119	75	-	1	12	37	-	1	-	34	22	-	-	7	29	12	-
2.	Arts	-	67	234	21	1	26	26	7	-	1	77	71	8	2	25	107	24	-
3.	Business Administration	5	98	174	50	1	12	51	16	6	-	19	38	3	2	28	55	32	3
4.	Education	1	55	72	2	-	15	38	11	-	1	7	6	1	-	33	73	21	-
5.	Sciences	5	32	152	80	-	13	46	31	-	3	64	29	2	1	18	30	19	1
6.	Social Science	-	65	125	14	-	23	83	11	-	2	22	34	2	3	57	69	19	1

Key: University of Benin (Uniben), University of Calabar (Unical), University of Port Harcourt (Uniport) and University of Uyo (Uniuyo)
Source: [43].

The data in Table 1 and Figure 1 shows the degree classification of students that graduated from federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria in the 2015/2016 academic session. The data reveals that most students graduated with 2nd class lower grade, third class and pass, compared to those that graduated with 1st class and 2nd class upper grade. This result is replicated in all the sampled universities. This indicates that the quality of students' educational output in the sampled schools were either slightly above average, average or below average.

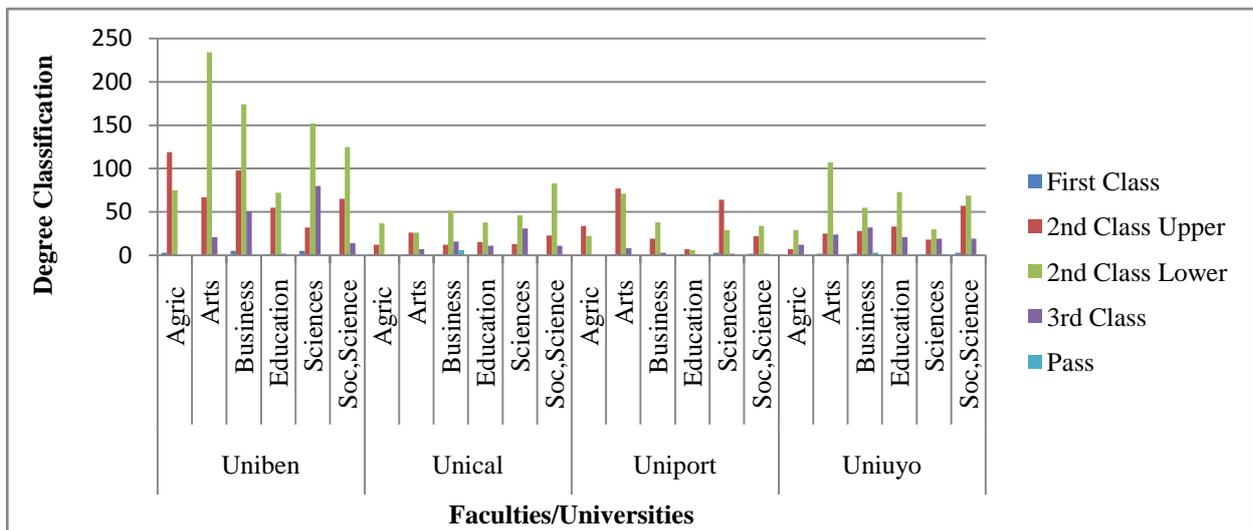


Figure 1. Quality of educational output by faculties/universities

Research Question Two: To what extent does professional competence predict quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria?

Table 2. Result of R and R² coefficient of Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the extent to which professional competence predicts quality of educational output (n = 1275)

Variables	Sum of Squares	R	R ²	Std. Error	% Contribution of R	Remark
Professional Competence	4783.749	0.524	0.275	3.15024	27.5%	Moderate
Quality of Output	12633.289					

Hypothesis One: The extent to which professional competence predicts quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria is not significant.

Table 3. Result of Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the relationship between professional competence and quality of educational output (n = 1275)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-crit	Decision
Regression	4783.749	1	4783.749	482.04	3.84	Reject Ho ₁
Residual	12633.289	1273	9.924			
Total	17417.038	1274				

a. Dependent Variable: Quality of Output

b. Predictors: (Constant), Professional Competence

R = 0.524, R² = 0.275, df = (n-2), Sig. at P ≤ 0.05.

Result in Table 2 shows R for the linear correlation coefficient and R² for the determination of the extent of prediction between professional competence and quality of education output. The R – value of 0.524 indicates a moderate and positive relationship between the two variables. The calculated R² of 0.275 which is the coefficient of determination indicates that 27.5% variation in quality of educational output is explained by teaching staff professional competence. This means that, professional competence predicts quality of educational output. The result in Table 3 shows that the calculated F- value of 482.04 is greater than the critical F- value of 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance with 1 and 1273 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which states that the extent to which professional competence predicts quality of educational output is not significant is therefore rejected in favour of the alternate one. This means that, teachers' professional competence significantly predicts quality of educational output in Nigerian South-South federal universities.

Research Question Three: To what extent does professional integrity predict quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria?

Hypothesis Two: The extent to which professional integrity predicts quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria is not significant.

Result in Table 4 shows R for the linear correlation coefficient and R² for the determination of the extent of prediction between professional integrity and quality of education output. The R – value of 0.491 indicates a moderate and positive relationship between the two variables. The calculated R² of 0.241 which is the coefficient of determination indicates that 24.1% variation in quality of educational output is explained by teaching staff professional integrity. This means that, professional integrity predicts quality of educational output. The result in Table 5 shows

that the calculated F- value of 404.61 is greater than the critical F- value of 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance with 1 and 1273 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which states that the extent to which professional integrity predicts quality of educational output is not significant is therefore rejected in favour of the alternate one. This means that, teachers' professional integrity significantly predicts quality of educational output in Nigerian South-South federal universities.

Research Question Four: To what extent does professional accountability predict quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria?

Hypothesis Three: The extent to which professional accountability predicts quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria is not significant.

Result in Table 6 shows R for the linear correlation coefficient and R² for the determination of the extent of prediction between professional accountability and quality of education output. The R – value of 0.500 indicates a moderate and positive relationship between the two variables. The calculated R² of 0.250 which is the coefficient of determination indicates that 25% variation in quality of educational output is explained by teaching staff professional accountability. This means that, professional accountability predicts quality of educational output. The result in Table 7 shows that the calculated F- value of 425.27 is greater than the critical F- value of 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance with 1 and 1273 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which states that the extent to which professional accountability predicts quality of educational output is not significant is therefore rejected in favour of the alternate one. This means that, teachers' professional accountability significantly predicts quality of educational output in Nigerian South-South federal universities.

Table 4. Result of R and R² coefficient of Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the extent to which professional integrity predicts quality of educational output (n = 1275)

Variables	Sum of Squares	R	R ²	Std. Error	% Contribution of R	Remark
Professional Integrity	4200.656	0.491	0.241	3.22212	24.1%	Moderate
Quality of Output	13216.382					

Source: Researchers' Field Data (2019).

Table 5. Result of Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the relationship between professional integrity and quality of educational output (n = 1275)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-crit	Decision
Regression	4200.656	1	4200.656	404.61	3.84	Reject Ho ₂
Residual	13216.382	1273	10.382			
Total	17417.038	1274				

a. Dependent Variable: Quality of Output

b. Predictors: (Constant), Professional Integrity

R = 0.491, R² = 0.241, df = (n-2), Sig. at P ≤ 0.05.

Table 6. Result of R and R² coefficient of Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the extent to which professional accountability predicts quality of educational output (n = 1275)

Variables	Sum of Squares	R	R ²	Std. Error	% Contribution of R	Remark
Professional Accountability	4361.429	0.500	0.250	3.20246	25%	Moderate
Quality of Output	13055.609					

Source: Researchers' Field Data (2019).

Table 7. Result of Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the relationship between professional accountability and quality of educational output (n = 1275)

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-crit	Decision
Regression	4361.429	1	4361.429	425.27	3.84	Reject Ho ₃
Residual	13055.609	1273	10.256			
Total	17417.038	1274				

a. Dependent Variable: Quality of Output

b. Predictors: (Constant), Professional Accountability

R = 0.500, R² = 0.250, df = (n-2), Sig. at P ≤ 0.05.

6. Discussion of Findings

6.1. Professional Competence and Quality of Educational Output

The result of the analysis presented in hypothesis one reveals that the extent to which professional competence predicts quality of educational output is significant. The outcome of this result could be attributed to the fact that if teachers have good verbal ability, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, ability to use a range of teaching strategies skillfully and impressive certification status, it will yield positive outcomes which will become evident in student output. On the contrary, a teacher that lacks content knowledge, professionalism, classroom management skills, organizational skills, people skills and commitment, increases the risk of having poorly performed students. This finding that the contribution of professional competence to the quality of educational output is significant is in agreement with the findings made by other researchers in earlier studies. For instance, Ackerman, Heafner and Bartz [17] in a study on teacher effect model for impacting student achievement concluded that the greatest determinate of student achievement is the teachers' characteristic such as: teacher training, teaching experiences, pedagogical practices, and professional development. Also, Sudrajat [44] found that pedagogical competence is a distinctive competency which will determine the level of success in the process and learning outcomes of learners. Teachers who have the pedagogical competence are those who are able to manage and implement the learning process interaction that will result in quality student output.

As noted from the findings of this study, it is evident that lack of professionally competent teachers reduces the skill to meet specific needs of the learners. This finding agrees with that of Wikan [45] who noted that low quality of teacher education or lack of qualified teachers might be one reason behind the poor learning outcome. Also, Fatai [46] concluded that only teachers who are qualified, certificated, competent and of good moral standing need to be employed to teach students. This implies that teachers who scored highly on pedagogy content knowledge provided more cognitively activating instruction which shows positive effects on student

achievement. This concurs with the view of Papay [47] who posited that teachers and their instructional approaches are key factors for the effectiveness and improvement of schools, particularly for promoting student learning in terms of academic achievement results as key output variables. In support of this finding is the view of Maende [48] who established that teacher professional development has high influence on students' participation during lessons, teaching methodologies, organization of content, and knowledge of subject matter. It is therefore evident that an increase in teachers' efficiency and productivity will ensure quality output in terms of quality graduation grades. The finding of this study is also in consonance with the views of Odumbe, Simatwa and Ayodo [49] who established that high teacher competence was one of the factors that enhances student performance in schools. For the quality of educational output of university students in South-South Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria to be enhanced, it is imperative that these competencies should be excellently owned by every teacher in order to achieve success in learning and teaching.

6.2. Professional Integrity and Quality of Educational Output

The result for testing hypothesis two reveals that professional integrity significantly predicts the quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria. The result obtained is an indication that the behaviour of teachers who act in accordance with the social and moral standard of the profession by doing the right things at all times, believing in all students, being trustworthy, and accepting one's mistake without passing the blame to others, will definitely rob off on the students positively. This finding that professional integrity significantly relates to the quality of educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria is further supported by the findings made by other researchers, as earlier reported in this study. For instance, Lumpkin [36] in a study on teaching character and moral virtues opined that teachers who demonstrate integrity are accountable for providing academic programmes of quality and positive educational experiences. Also, Fatai [46] opined that teachers should be dedicated and serve as role models in matters of punctuality, integrity and

accountability. Without these traits, the teachers are likely to have less impact on students' academic excellence. The results are consistent with research conducted by Vargas-Hernandez [33] who, in a study aimed at analyzing professional integrity as an improvement concept to the actual values, virtues, capabilities and attitudes needed to assume any professional tasks, discovered that professionals who act with integrity experience professional fulfilment and long-term success which can positively influence student success. In addition, Mehdipour and Balaramulu [38] in their study on the influence of teacher's behaviour on the academic achievement of university students found a significant relationship between teachers' integrity, punctuality, confidence and academic achievement of students. These results imply that a sound professional philosophy that empowers professionals to act with integrity increases the probability for long-term success which can positively influence the quality of educational output of students. This finding is also in consonance with the view of Romero [50] in a study which explored how integrity impacted student outcomes. The findings demonstrated more than 60% variance in integrity and when this was measured with student outcomes, the result yielded a significant correlation between graduation status and Grade Point Average (GPA). This implies that teachers' integrity level with students positively impacts on their graduation grades.

6.3. Professional Accountability and Quality of Educational Output

The result of the analysis presented in hypothesis three reveals that there is a significant relationship between teachers' professional accountability and quality of educational output. This finding project the need for teaching staff to be accountable towards students, society, profession, teaching-learning process, knowledge and values. This can be achieved by being excellent, not just in subject knowledge, but in understanding students' learning requirements. With such attributes, quality educational output will be guaranteed. The main discourse on the findings of the study as stated in hypothesis three is that the quality of student educational output in South-South is influenced by teachers' accountability. This explains why Bandele [51] pointed out that teachers who are accountable act responsively in discharging their duties thereby enhancing educational quality and contributes towards the realization of one of the educational objective which is to produce capable graduates who will be useful not only to themselves, but to the country at large. This observation is further supported by the view of Yaro, Arshad and Salleh [52] who concluded that, accountability in the teaching profession is very vital and goes beyond acting according to the stipulation of law as it is result oriented and lays more emphasis on the final results.

This finding that professional accountability relates positively and significantly with the quality of educational output is further supported by the findings of earlier researchers. For instance, Johnson [42], in a study on the relationship between teacher practice and student

performance concluded that students who are taught by teachers that are rated effective in accountability were likely to have typical or high growth on standardized tests as opposed to students taught by teachers rated as ineffective. Also, Odhiambo [53] in a study on elusive search for quality education, contends that there is a growing need from government and the public for teacher accountability in students' performance as schools are commonly evaluated by students' academic results. In other words, effective school management spend a considerable time holding teachers accountable for student performances while encouraging them to become involved in problem-solving meetings and establishing stronger and more trusting relationships. This finding is also in line with the claim made by Marzano and Waters [54], that with increase accountability for schools, teachers play a vital role in improving student achievement by supporting strategic policies that place a strong emphasis on student learning as this improves student achievement, behaviour and attitudes. This finding confirms earlier research by Brundrette and Rhodes [55] in a study on making a connection between student achievement, teacher accountability, and quality classroom instruction. The study affirmed that creating accountability engenders a culture of quality that ensures an improvement of teaching and learning. This is also in line with Ballard and Bates [56] who demonstrated the need to hold instructors accountable for students' performance on the basis of standardized achievement tests reflecting the quality of instruction students receive from their teachers.

7. Conclusion

The study brings forward a number of concerns emerging from observed poor quality of students' educational output which is attributed to teaching staff's non-adherence to the professional ethics binding the teaching profession. The key finding of this study is that quality of students' educational output in federal universities, South-South Zone of Nigeria is predicted by teaching staff professional ethics. Specifically, teaching staff professional ethics variables of professional competence, professional integrity and professional accountability significantly predicts the quality of educational output in Nigerian federal universities. In the light of the findings of this study, it seems natural to conclude that teachers' improved awareness and adherence to these professional ethics is a joint responsibility of the university management, teachers and educational stakeholders in the society. Teachers' adequate knowledge and adherence to professional ethics binding the teaching profession will invariably result to improved quality of educational output. Every member of the society especially teachers, have the moral responsibility and a shared vision to enforce students' rights to quality education.

8. Recommendations

1. Federal government through the National Universities Commission (NUC) should ensure continuous

education and training of teachers in post certification programmes as this will enhance competence and professionalism in teachers which will invariably translate into improved quality of educational output.

2. Institutional leaders should ensure that teachers' integrity is made an integral part of the teachers' professional code of ethics so as to curb the rapid emergence and rise in misconducts and malpractices being practiced in academic institutions.
3. University management should ensure that professional ethics of teacher accountability is upheld by enforcing periodic self-appraisal by teachers, assessment by students and performance appraisal.

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Appendix

TEACHING STAFF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS QUESTIONNAIRE (TSPEQ)

Instruction: Please kindly fill the blank spaces and tick (✓) in the box with the appropriate option that applies to you.
Key: Very Often (VO), Often (O), Sometimes (S), Rarely (R), Never (N).

1. Name of Institution

2. Name of Faculty

3. Name of Department

Key: Very Often (VO), Often (O), Sometimes (S), Rarely (R), Never (N).

S/N	ITEMS					
		VO	O	S	R	N
Professional Competence						
1.	I teach courses that are in my field of study					
2.	I use variety of strategies to guide my students					
3.	I have a good knowledge of the course content					
4.	I do not use Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to prepare my courses					
5.	I do not give timely feedbacks to students					
6.	I encounter challenges in delivering lectures in certain topics					
7.	I have conflict of interest in delivering my professional work					
Professional Integrity						
8.	I believe in being honest in all situations					
9.	I enforce standards for academic integrity so that students who exhibit honesty are not disadvantaged					
10.	I act with probity to all students					
11.	I act appropriately when a student is caught cheating in an examination					
12.	I do not infuse integrity into the classroom culture					
13.	I set examination that do not reflect the course content					
14.	I avoid the use of professional relationship with students for private advantage					

S/N	ITEMS					
Professional Accountability		VO	O	S	R	N
15.	I accept responsibility for students learning outcomes					
16.	I constructively assess my students regularly					
17.	I enjoy taking students' attendance in my classes					
18.	I know my students' learning weaknesses					
19.	I encounter difficulty placing students' best interest over my personal interest					
20.	I encounter challenges in keeping students' continuous assessment records					
21.	I do not encourage my students to strive for higher standards					

Key: Very Often (VO), Often (O), Sometimes (S), Rarely (R), Never (N).



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