

# An Assessment of Ethics and Code of Conduct: Compliance in Secondary Institutions in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This research investigates the professional code of ethics and conduct in Educational assessment in Nigeria secondary schools. This is to rework the behavior of the members within the teaching profession in which ethics help to keep up law and order in schools. The purpose is to examine the major professional code of ethics and conduct of the teaching profession in secondary school. The study used a survey research design, the study consisted of a sample of 200 respondents, and the study also used simple random sampling techniques in selecting the sample for the study. The questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was 0.7. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS software. The result in hypothesis 1 showed that  $[t(198) = 0.82; p > 0.05]$ ; The result in hypothesis 2 showed that  $[t(2, 247) = 0.362; p > 0.05]$ ; hypothesis 3 showed that  $[t(198) = 1.55; p > 0.05]$ ; and hypothesis 4 showed that  $[t(198) = 1.19; p > 0.05]$ . Consequent upon these, the causes attributed to the inability of the management to enforce code of ethics through continuous professional development and ethics training, and the solutions proposed. Its main interest is to effect compliance with the code of ethics and conducts among teachers in secondary schools and to encourage teachers to reflect on the professional development of ethics they have acquired through training. Based on the findings, it was concluded that effective compliance with the code of ethics and conduct among teachers in secondary schools in the anecdotal record of the training acquired. It was recommended among others that compliance with the code of conduct and ethics ensure that Institutions promote an environment of academic integrity in strengthening public trust in their effectiveness and ethics in steering forward the sustainability of the educational development, teaching, and learning outcome.*

**Keywords:** Compliance, Educational Assessment, Professional Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct and Teachers

## 1. Background to the Study

The topic of ethics in fieldwork could be a timely one for various reasons. Concern for ethical integrity in academic research has been with us for many years, if not centuries, arguably going back as far because the Hippocratic Oath, formulated between the third and fifth centuries bce, and still widely known to the Educational assessment and testing profession and therefore the public more widely. The Oath has some relevance to the study of Educational and Testing: initiates made their vow to the integrity of ethical conduct in dealing with students and they undertook to maintain the integrity regarding their human subjects, teachers and pupils (Chryssides, 2017).

If all humans have the freedom to measure their live the way they deem fit, without a consideration on how their self-belief may become an infringement upon the rights of others, this could automatically cause a complete breakdown of law and order. The word ethics, whether in political debate, educational sector, medical community, or casual conversations among friends or colleagues usually leads to a worth – laden discussion of what is considered “right” or “wrong”. In schools, teachers are expected to exhibit acceptable and conventional behaviour that may guarantee quality educational output, promote harmonious relationships and therefore the attainment of educational goals. Ethics helps to keep up law and order in schools and it also integrates diverse values that are morally acceptable. Ethics involves doing the proper thing always. Professional ethics may be a collection of values, standards and norms that each individual considered a professional should consider (Iroegbu & Uyanga, 2019).

In line with (Ferrell, 1999), a code of ethics guides the practitioners who are members, protects service users, and safeguards the reputation of the profession (Anangisye & Barrett, 2005)opined that approaches to advance ethical stands must have adhered to an understanding of the positive professional models to which educators aspire. As for teachers, their professional behaviors inside and out of doors the classroom have far-reaching impacts on their behavior and their overall performance and thus the learning outcomes (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). Consequent to this, teachers need to be conscious of their responsibilities and vulnerabilities in their interactions and relationships with each educational stakeholder. The research literature has submitted that the multiple responsibilities of teachers, numerous investigators, challenges of promoting ethics in teacher training colleges and educators have stressed the need to abide by the Professional Code of Ethics and Conduct (PCEC) (Anangisye, 2010); (Ishumi, 2011). For instance, maintain that a code of ethics makes room for moral principles that emphasize obedience to rules and authority and also the primacy of duty with the professional setting and also teaching profession for quality education. Research literature reviewed that quality professional development is indisputably central to building, improving and sustaining the quality of teacher professionals (Anangisye, 2011)

However, the codes of ethics or conduct should be established so as to contribute and make sure that the prestige of the profession and also the exercise of the professional duties are in accordance with the agreed principles. The main objectives of the professional code of ethics and conduct for teachers to rework the behavior of the members within the teaching profession, preserve public interest, protect the profession, discipline the members,

guide and be a source of help for teachers in handling the dilemmas which they will encounter in their daily professional duties. Given the responsibility entrusted to teachers of molding young people, it is imperative that they must be intimate with their professional code of ethics and conduct. This is often because teachers spend most of their time with students in their process of teaching and giving guidance to them. Additionally, teachers who recognize ethics codes and apply them however, make confidence within the society as a factor of foundation of teacher (Travers & Rebore, 2000). In this regard, a code of ethics has a crucial place in education. With the rise within the consciousness level of the society, and also the concern of parents and society as a full for top personal standards within the teaching profession (Anangisyie & Alshebou, 2008). Therefore, teachers are expected to bear in mind their professional ethics for better execution of their duties within the varsity and out of doors the college environment where such a relationship is experienced, knowledge of the Professional Code of Ethics and Conduct (PCEC) helps teachers to grasp the character of their work, the values they transmit, and therefore the implications of these values for those with whom they're engaged; thus it helps to boost and sustain the standards and reputation of the teaching profession. Moreover, understanding and addressing problems with a professional code of ethics and conduct can help teachers learn and uphold the best practices and conduct in order that they work towards moulding students into good citizens.

### **1.1 Codes of conduct and ethics for institutions**

Academic dishonesty has become a very important issue for institutions. Surveyed institutions regarding academic dishonesty, concluding that academic policies were legalistic and more concerned with "a legal/due process perspective instead of a student development perspective." This is able to suggest an occasional road perspective (Kibler, 1994).

Kibler found little evidence of any systematic, comprehensive programs promoting awareness of educational dishonesty for teacher or students. This legalistic approach is evidenced by the very fact that institutions have replaced honour codes with administrative disciplinary systems that handle dishonesty on a case-by-case basis. It is assumed that if teacher is to show ethics, then they have to provide an ethical example (Callahan, 1980) and (Rezaee, Elmore, & Szendi, 2001)

Ideally, a code of ethics should educate professionals so that they understand that ethics and also the law follows a continuum in which the law is based upon standards and expectations of society, and not contrariwise. Making this distinction will give everyone a stronger understanding of why it is important to make ethical standards the norm so as to support legal issues. As an example, issues associated with molestation and conflict of interest can both cause offenses that have legal ramifications. The code should explain why "ethical" behavior that exceeds the minimum legal requirement in these areas is vital and necessary for professional success. The professional must always be the discretion to interpret situations and remain flexible within

the implementation of specific directions in codes (Ferrell, 1999).

The literature revealed that the most important role of a code is to explain the underlying professional norms, values and principles. These values should emphasis the culture that professionals must exhibit in their organizations and the general tone for organizational decisions (Ferrell, 1999)

### **1.2 In Nigeria Context: The Code of Ethics and Conduct**

In 1977 basic characteristics of a profession were documented by the Association for Educational Communication and Technology (AECT) as (1) an organized body of specialized knowledge constantly expanding by research; (2) intellectual technique; (3) application of that technique to practical affairs; (4) long period of coaching and certification; series of standards and a statement of ethics which is enforced; (5) the flexibility to exercise its own leadership; (6) association of members of the profession into a close-knit group with a top-quality of communications among members; (7) acknowledgment as a profession; (8) professional concern for responsible use of its work; and (9) established relationship with other professions. From the foregoing, it's expected that the teaching profession must be guided by certain ethical principles as required by law. Ethical principles or codes of ethics are conceptualized here as general guidelines, ideals, or expectations that require to be taken under consideration, together with other relevant conditions and circumstances, within the design and analysis of teaching. They have detailed provisions for preventing one teacher from undermining another and for preventing conflicts among them. It also contains areas of conflict between teachers and students. The goal is to push mutual beneficial relationship among teachers and between the teachers and students, and for the development of the profession. Given the professional status of the teaching profession, the Teachers registration council of Nigeria TRCN (2005) has developed a Teachers' Code of Conduct to guide members. The document has the subsequent objectives: (a) To re-awaken the sense of self-esteem, quality, honour, selfless service, and moral rectitude within the teacher. (b) Protect the teacher's age-long position of nobility and leadership within the social, moral, and intellectual world. (c) Build a powerful moral foundation for the actualization of an academic system that can compete favourably within the global community. (d) Boost public confidence in the ability of the teaching profession to control it and to bequeath to the state products that are capable of constructing a maximum contribution towards the events of the state specifically and also the world generally. (e) Provide an objective yardstick for the assessment of the teacher's conduct and discharge of professional duties. (f) Help to ensure the protection of the professionals and sustenance of the specified prestige of the teaching profession. (g) Spell out the kind of relationship that ought to exist between the teachers on one hand and severally colleagues, students, and other persons who would interact with them from time to time. (h) To clarify teacher's rights, privileges, and obligations and their legal bases.

### 1.3 The Function of an Ethics

The First Function of an Ethics Program is to Offer Clarity to Employees Regarding (Un)ethical Behavior, The Second Function of an Ethics Program is to Demonstrate Role-Model Behavior by Management, The Third Function of an Ethics Program is to Provide The Necessary Resources to Employees to Behave Ethically, The Fourth Function of an Ethics Program is to Foster a Commitment to Ethical Behavior Among Employees, The Fifth Function of an Ethics Program is to Enhance Transparency Surrounding (Un)ethical Behavior of Employees, The Sixth Function of an Ethics Program is to Create Openness in the Discussion of Ethical Issues, The Seventh Function of an Ethics Program is to Reinforce Ethical Employee Behavior (Kaptein, 2015)

### 1.4 The Importance of the Professional Code of Ethics and Conduct in Teaching

In practice, during professional training, ethics education for teachers emphasizes on the observance of moral values and ideals. The core of teaching tasks such as giving instruction, guidance, assessment and evaluation, is the relationship between teacher and students, parents, head of school, employer and the society in general. This relationship is of an unequal and dependent nature, and therefore it needs teachers to observe their moral values and ideals.

To curb malpractice, various countries have developed professional codes of conduct in their education sector. The main aims of the code of ethics for teachers are to transform the behaviour of the members in the teaching profession to the most useful state, preserve public interest, protect the profession, discipline the members, guide and be a source of help for teachers in their daily professional duties (Kaptein, 2015). The main objectives of the professional code ethics and conduct are to enhance commitment, dedication and efficiency of service among members of the profession (Van Nuland & Khandelwal, 2006). The professional code of ethics also provides self-disciplinary guidelines for the members of the profession by creating norms of professional conduct. Furthermore, the professional code of conduct aims at obtaining the community's confidence by emphasizing the social responsibilities of the profession towards the community (Van Nuland & Khandelwal, 2006).

In summarizing the functions of codes of ethics, Van Nuland (2006) contends that in addition to the protection of clients, codes provide guidance about how to act and how to make ethical decisions, either through encouraging ethical awareness and reflection or through explicit rules. Codes create and maintain professional identity and status through the explicit statement of the core purpose, key ethical principles, the kinds of qualities expected of people who belong to the profession and the kinds of conduct required.

Some agencies use the term „objectives“ to explain what it is intended to be or how it is to be used. Both types of codes (ethical and conduct) outline what can be expected of the teacher although a code of conduct tends to be more specific. According to Anangisye (2010) the professional code of ethics and conduct for teachers is important

because it enhances the morale of teachers through setting recognized ethical standards and norms of conduct.

Professional code of ethics and conduct (PCEC) is important because it provides guidance through establishing and maintaining high standards (Rezaee et al., 2001). Moreover, PCEC helps to obtain the community's confidence in and support for the profession by emphasizing the social responsibilities of the profession towards the community (Van Nuland & Khandelwal, 2006). The PCEC also helps to elevate the autonomy and social status of the profession through professionalization. Furthermore, PCEC helps to promote democratization in educational policy making. Additionally, it inspires members to reflect and uphold the honour and dignity of the teaching profession. The PCEC also helps in identifying the ethical responsibilities and commitments in the teaching profession, and guides ethical decisions and actions in the teaching profession as well as promoting public trust and confidence in the teaching profession (Bush, Bush, Oakley, & Cicala, 2017); (Richardson & Healy, 2019); (Sivis-Cetinkaya, 2015); (Ruiz, Martinez, Rodrigo, & Diaz, 2015); (Keenan, 2013); (McCarthy, 1997)

In examining standards of practice, elements related to conduct are embedded. For example, teachers plan for and assess learning, create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments, use a range of teaching practices and resources. Several codes of conduct also delineate the need to provide a safe environment for students (Kaptein, 2015)

### 1.5 Statement of the Problem

Overtime, teachers are not taught professional ethics and conducts during their training and the fact that the orientation sessions conducted for both the school supervisors and trainees do not focus on ethics of education per se, suggest that teachers go into the teaching profession ill-equipped. It is worrisome as this situation is worsened by the absence of a code of ethics for teachers in the Nigeria education system. Such conditions can make the teaching-learning process vulnerable and make students easy prey to teachers who have little regards for ethical behaviour and they can become affected by such behaviour. Based on the above, the study is to investigate the professional code of ethics and conduct in secondary institutions in Nigeria; secondary school students perception of teachers' compliance.

### 1.6 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the professional code of ethics and conduct in educational assessment in Nigeria; secondary school students assessment of teachers' compliance. Specifically, the study is to:

- 1) Examine the major professional code of ethics and conduct of the teaching profession in secondary education
- 2) Examine the familiarity of teachers with professional code of ethics and conduct of the teaching profession in secondary education

- 3) Examine students' level of perception on teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct of the teaching profession in secondary education

**1.7 Hypotheses**

- 1) There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students of both rural and urban on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the perception of students' class (SSI, SSII & SSIII) on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.
- 3) There is no significant difference in the perception of students' from rural and urban areas on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct
- 4) There is no significant difference in the perception of students' from private and public secondary school on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct

**1.8 Significance of the Study**

The study would be of significance to secondary school teachers and the Ministry of Education, school principals and students. The study will enable teachers and principals to understand the importance of compliance to teaching professional code of ethics and conducts. The study will enable the Ministry of Education to review its approaches towards teacher education generally and specifically help them assist new comers into the profession become all rounded in their profession including the ethics of education, this is important because teacher ethics can affect the image of the individual teacher; the image of the school; the image of the teaching profession, and the image of the country. The study will be of significance for further studies.

**2. Methodology**

The study made use of survey research design. The population for the study consisted of senior secondary students in public and private schools in Nigeria.

The sample for the study consists of 200 secondary school students in the senior level both in public school and private school. Simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting the appropriate respondents. The students were sampled from SSI to SSIII. A Self-constructed questionnaire titled "Teachers Compliance with Professional Code of Ethics and Conduct Questionnaire (TCPCCQ)" was used for the study. It has two sections; A and B. Section A consists of the bio-data of the respondents, that is, gender, age, and class. Section B consists of items that measure teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct in educational assessment in Nigeria structured in four point likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The face and content validities of the instrument was ascertained by an expert in the field of Educational assessment and testing. The reliability of the instrument for this study used test re-test method. Copies of the questionnaire were administered on students who are not part of the targeted samples but the same homogeneous group. This was done twice at an interval of two weeks.

Pearson product Moment Correlation was used to compute the correlation. However, reliability coefficient of 0.7 was obtained. Copies of the questionnaire were personally administered on students by the researcher. The researcher verbally explained the purpose of the study to the participants. The instructions given to the participants were the same.

**3. Findings**

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students' of both rural and urban on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

**Table 1:** Summary of t test showing the significant difference in the perception of male and female students' of both rural and urban on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-cal	t-crit	p
Ethics and Conduct	Male	79	50.4051	5.66935	198	0.82	1.96	>0.05
	Female	121	49.6860	6.28760				

From table 4, there is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students' of both rural and urban on their teachers compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct [t (198) = 0.82; p>0.05]. Therefore hypothesis 1 is accepted. This implies that male and female students' in both rural and urban area have the same level of perception towards their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the perception of students; class (SSI, SSII, & SSIII) on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

**Table 2 (a):** Descriptive Statistics showing the significant difference on the perception of students' class (SSI, SSII, SSIII) on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
SSI	61	49.7541	5.44872	.69764	48.3586	51.1496	37.00	64.00
SSII	85	50.0941	6.57308	.71295	48.6763	51.5119	17.00	62.00
SSIII	54	50.0185	5.92561	.80637	48.4011	51.6359	31.00	61.00
Total	200	49.9700	6.04664	.42756	49.1269	50.8131	17.00	64.00

From the table above, students from SSI (M = 49.75; SD = 5.45), SSII (M = 50.09; SD = 6.57) and SSIII (M = 50.02; SD = 5.93) have the same level of perception towards their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

**Table 2 (b):** ANOVA showing the significant difference on the perception of students' class (SSI, SSII, SSIII) on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-Cal	F-Cri	p
Between Groups	4.280	2	2.140	.058	3.34	>0.05
Within Groups	7271.540	197	36.911			
Total	7275.820	199				

From the table above, there is no significant difference on the perception of students' on their teachers; compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct on the basis of class [t (2, 247) = 0.362; p>0.05]. Therefore hypothesis 2 is accepted. This implies that students from SSI-SSIII have the same level of perception towards their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in the perception of students' from rural and urban areas on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

**Table 3:** Summary of t test showing the significant difference in the perception of students' from rural and urban areas on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

	Location	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	df	t-cal	t-cri	p
Ethics and Conduct	Rural	112	49.38	6.29	198	1.55	1.96	>0.05
	Urban	88	50.72	5.67				

From table 6, there is no significant difference in the perception of students' from rural and urban areas on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct [t (198) = 1.55; p>0.05]. Therefore hypothesis 3 is accepted. This implies that students' from rural and urban area have the same level of perception towards their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

**Hypothesis 4:** There is no significant difference in the perception of students' from private and public secondary school on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

**Table 4:** Summary of t test showing the significant difference in the perception of students' from private and public secondary school on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

Variable	School Ownership	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	df	t-cal	t-cri	p
Ethics and Conduct	Private	102	50.47	5.04	198	1.19	1.96	>0.05
	Public	98	49.45	6.93				

From table 4, there is no significant difference in the perception of students' from private and public on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct [t (198) = 1.19; p>0.05]. Therefore hypothesis 4 is accepted. This implies students' in private and public secondary school have the same level of perception towards their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct.

#### 4. Discussion of Findings

The result of the hypothesis presented in hypothesis one reveals that male and female students' in both rural and urban area have the same level of perception towards their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct. The outcome of this result could be attributed to the fact that both students from rural and urban area have similar perception towards their teachers base on code of conduct and ethics compliance. This implies that both teachers have common characteristics that they exhibit towards their students and if they have concur with the attribute of the code of conduct of the teaching profession, it will yield positive results by achieving the goals of teaching and learning among the students. This finding is in agreement with the findings made by other researchers in earlier studies. For example, found significant difference between the opinions of male and female students concerning how their teachers professional code of ethics in the dimensions of professionalism, responsibility honesty and respect. Hypothesis 2 reveals that students from SSI-SSIII have the same level of perception towards their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct. The outcome could be attributed to the fact that if teachers have good conduct towards their students it will yield good teaching and learning outcome. On the contrary a teacher that lack code of conduct in the academics environment will apparently result to poor teaching and learning in the context of educational development and assessment. This is in line with the study on Teaching staff professional ethics and quality of educational output in federal Universities (Iroegbu & Uyanga, 2019). Findings argued that gender seems to be significant on level of professional ethics of teachers. However, in a study on Teachers gender and professional achievements in secondary school concluded that male school teachers were found high level of Professional ethics as compared to their counter parts Female School teachers (Odunaike, Ijaduola, & Epetimehin, 2013). Hypothesis 3 reveals that there is no significant difference in the perception of students' from rural and urban areas on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct .This established that if both male and female teachers with more commitment towards teaching profession would have improved the quality of educational output in the secondary schools is further supported by the findings of (Iroegbu & Uyanga, 2019). Hypothesis 4 reveals that there is no significant difference in the perception of students' from private and public on their teachers' compliance with professional code of ethics and conduct. Majority of the students have relatively the same perception on their teachers both in the rural and urban area and if perhaps the teachers in the secondary schools abide with the code of conduct, it would foster the educational development, teaching and learning in secondary schools. In a literature review on the study of Ethical behaviour in higher educational institutions: The role of the code of conduct (Rezaee et al., 2001) found that institutions must promote an environment of academic integrity to strengthen public trust in their effectiveness and ethics in steering forward the sustainability of the educational development, teaching and learning outcome.

## 5. Conclusion

This study provides an evidence base for the compliance of code of conduct and ethics among the teachers in secondary school in Nigeria. In addition, this study provides the granular view that it is not just the environment that influence compliance to code of conducts ethics rather the enforcement by the employers. This study would question to what extent the current assessment system of the code of conduct ethics values this development.

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