
Teacher Versus Cheaters: The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) and
Professionalism in Teaching

By

Dr Mbuotidem EKENG
School of Education
Akwa Ibom State College of Education
Afaha Nsit

ABSTRACT

The study evaluated the performance of trained (teachers) and untrained (cheaters) teachers as it relates to students' achievement and their classroom deliverables, using the TRCN December 2019 deadline evacuation notice to cheaters. The population of the study consisted of all the Senior Secondary Schools teachers and students in all the public Secondary Schools in Uyo, Itu, Oruk Anam, Ikot Ekpene, Okobo and Ikot Abasi Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State. The study adopted a survey design while simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the area of study. Data was obtained using two research questionnaires: one for teachers and the other for students. It was concluded that teachers perform significantly better than cheaters in the classroom and teaching is a specialized profession that must be handled by only professionals (teachers). It was therefore recommended that government must employ more teachers to avoid empty staff rooms in most schools, especially those in the rural areas as the TRCN deadline of December 2019 draws close.

Keywords: Teachers, Cheaters, Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria and Teaching.

Introduction

Profession is the phenomena of vital activity created by division of labour that social, economical and technological factors require. According to Hotaman (2017), teaching profession has originated from the social and economical changes that have arisen in societies and can be described as a professional occupational group of education sectors processing social, cultural, economical, scientific and technological dimensions.

Profession of teaching is based upon a specialization on a certain field, teaching skills, didactics and some certain personal characteristics that the profession requires. There should be a close relationship between the fact that the individual who selects teaching profession possesses the knowledge of subject matter, teaching skills and suitable personality traits and whether the individual who is in the teaching profession does so as a stepping stone or spring board to launch into a more lucrative profession.

One then sees that teaching as a profession clearly defines what the professional must know and put into practice and the core values, ideals and conduct that the professional must exhibit. Professional standard according to Roberts (2018) refers to a minimum set of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, conduct, rights, privileges and obligation expected of the teacher. The Federal government of Nigeria (2019) maintained that the entire countries of the world have come under one umbrella for the purpose of the regulation of the teaching profession globally. This umbrella is the International Forum of Teaching Regulatory Authorities (IFTRA)

with headquarters at the General Teaching Council for Whales, in the United Kingdom. Nigeria, through TRCN is a leading member. Any teacher wishing to teach in other countries must get a letter of professional standing from their country before she can be considered to teach in other countries.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching is considered to be more than a profession as teachers are regarded as the strongest pillar of the society. Umar (2015) posited that teaching is the mother of all other occupations. A teacher is like a porter who delicately shapes our impressionable minds and molds it into a vessel that defines our perception and ambitions. Therefore, for one to be in the profession and function maximally, you may need to ask yourself this question:

- Do I love to learn and update myself?
- Do I love to be around children?
- Do I find satisfaction in helping others?
- Do I enjoy gathering and sharing information?
- Do I have a command over written and oral communication skills?
- Do I have team work skills?
- Do I wish to bring a positive change in the society?

Finally, and most importantly, do I have tremendous patience?

If you answered most of the question above with a yes, then teaching can just be the best career for you.

But one sees that there are many people in the classroom that had not bothered to answer these questions and have not thought of acquiring skills or necessary training that will help them while teaching in the classroom. These are the ones that the researcher refers to as “cheaters”. They abound everywhere in our schools and classrooms doing illegal duties. Thus, with the cheaters around, the Federal Government of Nigeria, through TRCN, had issued out a threat that these cheaters will be chased out of Nigerian classrooms after December 2019. Consequently, from January 2020, teachers in Nigeria must all be certified.

Establishment and Mandates of TRCN

The Council was established by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria Act 31 of 1993. Several decades of agitation by the establishment of a regulatory agency led to the enactment of the Act.

The Act in Section (1) charges the Council with the following responsibilities:

- i. Determining who are the teachers for the purpose for this Act
- ii. Determining what standard of knowledge and skills are to be attained by persons seeking to become registered as teachers under this Act and raising these standards from time to time as circumstance may permit.

- iii. Securing in accordance with the provision of this Act the establishment and maintenance of a Register of teachers and the publication from time to time of the list of these persons.
- iv. Regulating and controlling the teaching profession in all its aspects and ramifications.
- v. Classifying from time to time members of the teaching profession according to their level of training and qualification.
- vi. Performing through the Council established under this Act of the functions conferred on it by this Act.

Thus, its major mandates are the regulation and control of the teaching profession at all levels of the Nigerian Education System, both in the public and private sectors. It has as its Vision Statement of “An effectively regulated teaching profession in Nigeria founded upon robust teacher education and practice”. Its Mission Statement is “To assure excellence and professionalism among teachers at all levels of the nation’s education system using effective registration of teachers”.

The TRCN Registration process includes:

Category	Registration Amount (₦)
A: Ph. D	10,000
B: M. Ed	8,000
C: B. Sc (Ed)	6,000
D: N. C. E.	3,000

Thus, in Nigeria, all persons who perform jobs that rightly and legally constitute teaching and learning in the Nigerian education system must be TRAINED, REGISTERED AND REGULATED TEACHERS. Also, the TRCN Act Section 17 (2) states that it is a criminal offence for any individual who is not registered by the TRCN as a teacher to do the job of a teacher or earn the reward of a teacher or use the title or identity of a teacher. The Act provides that any individual convicted of the offence shall be liable for a fine of five thousand naira (₦5000) or two years imprisonment or both, as the law court may decide.

Thus, in Nigeria, all persons who perform jobs that rightly and legally constitute teaching and learning in the Nigerian education system must be TRAINED, REGISTERED AND REGULATED TEACHERS. Also, the TRCN Act Section 17 (2) states that it is a criminal offence for any individual who is not registered by the TRCN as a teacher to do the job of a teacher to earn the reward of a teacher or use the title or identity of a teacher. The Act provides that any individual convicted of the offence shall be liable for a fine of five thousand naira (₦5000) or two years imprisonment or both, as the law court may decide.

But one sees that many individuals, employer and even government have grossly violated this law by employing untrained and unqualified personnels to teach in Nigerian classrooms.

The TRCN, through its Registrar Prof. Segun Ajiboye, on June 27, 2019, reminded the stakeholders in education that the Council was not backing down on the December 31, 2019 deadline to flush out unqualified (cheaters) teachers from Nigerian schools. Thus, the Federal Ministry of Education had on June 7, 2019 sent a circular to all Principals on the December 31, 2019 deadline for all unqualified teachers to leave the teaching profession in the country.

According to Ajiboye, Nigeria needs quality teachers to deliver quality education and not those called ‘cheaters’. This move is thus to remove quackery from the teaching profession in order to ensure that only those with required competencies give the Nigerian children quality education.

With these, it is imperative to evaluate the performance of teachers (trained) and the cheaters (untrained) in their classroom deliverables as it relates to the TRCN December 2019 deadline and how the actions of the cheaters affect professionalization of teaching.

Who Are the Teachers?

The acronym below tries to explain who a teacher is:

- T -- Talented
- E -- Enthusiastic
- A -- Attentive
- C -- Calm/ Cheerful
- H -- Honest
- E – Enduring
- R --Responsible

The National Policy on Education (2013) specifies that all teachers in educational institute should be professionally trained for effective performance of their duties.

There is a saying that:

- An average teacher tells, but
A good teacher teaches.
- A normal teacher explains, but
- A great teacher inspires.

A teacher is someone who:

- knows the subject matter
- cares about and does his/ her best to understand the students
- encourages good behavior and learning positive comments and actions.
- can structure a class so that students can learn well.
- teaches with a variety of modalities so that all students, regardless of how they learn, are connected to the lesson
- holds himself and the students to high standard
- loves learning and encourages students to learn
- shows respect to everyone in the class, and in return expects respect to be shown to everyone

Thus generally, a teacher is someone who had gone through a level of professional training and is both certified and actually teaching in an institution. He had undergone a professional training in College of Education or Faculty of Education in the university and he is actually teaching in a classroom. This includes teaching in pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.

In Nigeria, these institutions are empowered by law to award degree and certificates in Education:

- Faculty of Education(University)
- Institute of Education(University)

- Colleges of Education
- National Teacher Institute
- School of Education(Polytechnics)
- National Institute for Nigerian Languages(NINLAN)
- National Mathematical Centre(NMC)

Who are the Cheaters?

These are teachers in our class room with no certification. They come to teaching as a bridge-occupation. Udoh (2007) noted that since 1886/87 Education Code, the school system in Nigeria still has a large number of untrained and non-professional teachers. They get into teaching as a last resort or because they lack alternative professional choice.

Given their deficiencies, these cheaters:

- do not have the basic training in Education
- lack the necessary knowledge and skills to do the job
- lack confidence and respect
- are not innovative and adaptable to changes
- have poor interpersonal relationships with their students, supervisors, and employers
- are not enthusiastic about learning and cannot therefore impact positively on the students.

Ekeng (2019) added that:

- The cheater may be able to take care of the class needs but may lack the deeper knowledge of a lesson writing and preparing educational objectives
- She may implement the work assigned her but these may lack in many areas for the child's development.

Parameters for professionalization of individuals in teaching

According to Onyema (2018), for one to be qualified to be called and recognized as being in teaching profession, one must register with TRCN, and to be registered, one must,

- i. Pass a qualifying examination accepted by the Council and complete the practical teaching prescribed by the Council under the Act, or
- ii. Not being a Nigerian, hold a qualification granted outside Nigeria which for the time being is recognized by the Council and is by law entitled to practice the profession in the country in which the qualification was granted, provided that the other country accords Nigerian professional teachers the same reciprocal treatment and that he satisfies the Council that he had sufficient practical experience as a teacher.
- iii. Be of good character.
- iv. Have attained the age of twenty one
- v. Not have been convicted in Nigeria or elsewhere of an offence involving fraud or dishonesty.

Also, other requirements for professionalization of the individual in teaching include ones name being in the Teachers' Register and a full compliance to:

- i. Induction at point of graduation
- ii. Payment of registration fees and annual dues
- iii. Professional Qualifying Examination (PQE)
- iv. Internship after graduation from teacher education institution
- v. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Thus, the continued retention of untrained and non-professional teachers (cheaters) in our educational system has dampening effects on the system, as:

1. It accounts for the low image and prestige of teaching profession
2. It infests the professional teachers as it is often said that one bad apple spoils the whole basket. The untrained and non-professional teachers have nothing at stake. They believe they can easily find employment elsewhere and so, can afford to behave anyhow according to Udoh (2007), some of them have no regard for professional ethics and so become ungovernable and consequently constitute a clog in the wheel of school administration. Where the excesses of this group are not effectively checked and controlled, the effects are always contagious.
3. It encourages higher labour turn-over
4. It increases administrative problems in the school system
5. It creates job dissatisfaction in teaching
6. It adversely affects quality control in our schools.

Differences in performance between teachers and cheaters

It is obvious that teachers (trained) perform better than cheaters (untrained) in their classroom deliveries. This difference is determined by the teachers' teaching qualification. It is interesting to note that the teachers' teaching qualification helps to determine such dependent Variables as:

- knowledge of the subject matter
- discipline
- course completion
- teaching style
- use of learning materials
- classroom management ability
- attention to individual student
- creates interest in the subject
- encourage students to ask question
- give well-structured test and examination
- creativity: encourage students to think outside the box

Reasons cheaters are reluctant to be trained as teachers.

Cheaters feel reluctant of being trained as teachers due to the following reasons: Poor pay package or very little incentives. Hence, no money to go for PGDE program; heavy workload; negative public image or low status of teachers; working environment; challenging student behavior, parent interference in school work and indiscipline among students.

As most of these teachers are in the rural areas, they need enough money for their post graduate studies due to distance. This in the line with Bahr and Ferreira (2018) when they said that the final nail in the coffin is poor teachers' salary. They also gave reasons such as: teacher education competency fixation, lack of autonomy, work intensification which includes hard work

without appreciation, poor public image, teacher bashing. They concluded that it is not surprising to them that the number of applicants for teacher education programs have slumped in their country. Ekeng (2019) posited nine reasons to quit teaching, as given by Joel Wager (2007). They include: bad and insulting students, bad administrators, bad curriculum, too much paper work (notes of lesson to be written daily), too much responsibility (the society expects too much from them), not enough time, not enough credit, and the main one being NOT ENOUGH PAY.

James (2019) gave the following reasons why he decided not to continue in teaching career as he puts them humorously as: the pay really does suck, there's little prestige in it, testing never stops, you are playing the long-game (the moment of true appreciation are few and far between), teaching evaluations are ridiculous, it's mentally exhausting, it's extremely isolating, and too much paper work.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the performance of trained (teachers) and untrained (cheaters) teachers in classroom deliverables and students achievements as it relates to the TRCN December 2019 deadline and how these cheaters affect the professionalization of teaching.

Specifically, it hopes to;

1. Define clearly the parameters for professionalization in teaching.
2. Examine the specific areas where teachers perform better than cheaters in the classroom.
3. Find out reasons why cheaters are reluctant to become teachers.

Research Questions

1. What are the parameters for professionalization of individuals in teaching?
2. Which specific areas do teachers perform better than cheaters in the classroom?
3. Why are cheaters reluctant to become teachers?

Definition of Terms

- Teachers: is someone who had undergone a level of professional training and is both certified and actually teaching in an institution.
- Cheaters: people who are teaching in our classrooms with no teacher certification.
- TRCN: Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria is a Federal Government agency under the Federal Ministry of Education, charged with the mandate to regulate activities in the teaching profession.
- Teaching: it is the guidance of pupils through planned activities so that they may acquire the richest learning, possible, from their experiences.
- Profession: it is a paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification.

Methods

Research Design: The design used was the survey design. This was used because it is a non-experimental design which the researcher studies a group of people to bring out findings from samples collected from the population through questionnaire, interviews and observation.

Area of the Study: The area covered in the study were six Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State; two Local Government Areas from each Senatorial District. These include: Uyo and Itu, OrukAnam and IkotEkpene, Okobo and IkotAbasi Local Government Areas.

Population: The target population for the study was all the Senior Secondary School teachers and Senior Secondary School students in all the public and private secondary schools in the area of study.

Sample: The sample for the study was made up of 120 teachers (20 from each school) and 600 Senior Secondary School students; male and female, sampled from the six Local Government Areas. Thus each school had sample size of 100.

Instrumentation: The instruments used for the study were two structured questionnaires; one for the teachers and the other for the students. The teachers' questionnaire was structured in order to elicit response concerning personal data and their qualifications. The students' questionnaire aimed at evaluating the particular teacher teaching a particular subject as at the time of administering the questionnaire. (i.e. students assessment of their teachers in his/her delivery in the classroom). Questions were structured to elicit answers based on the Likert 4-scale of SA, A, D, SD i.e. 4, 3, 2, 1

Data Collection Procedure: The questionnaire instruments were used to generate data for the study of the effectiveness of the teachers and cheaters in classroom situations. When the researcher gets to a sampled school, with the help of the Principal, she will go into any SS class that a teacher is teaching (it cuts across different subjects). The researcher will first give out the teachers' questionnaire to the teacher who is in the class teaching, afterwards, administering the students' questionnaire to the same set of students taught by the teacher. With this, teacher's response and students' response would be matched immediately for data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Question One

The research question sought to find out the parameters for professionalization of individuals in teaching.

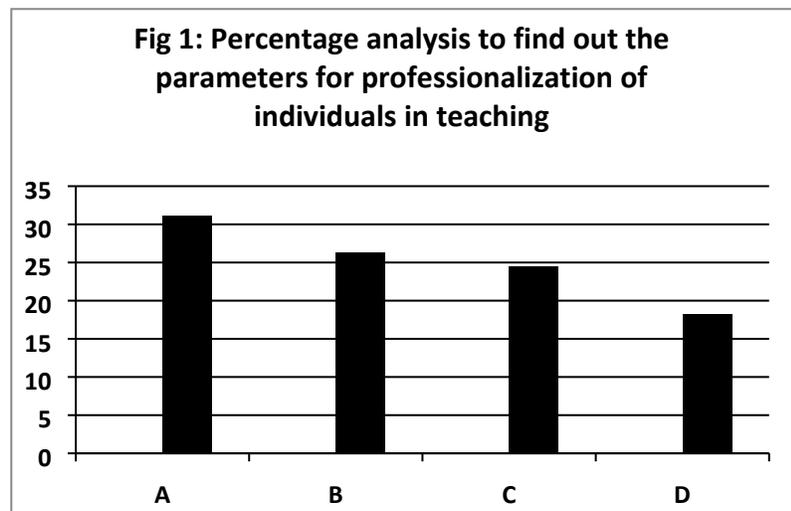
Table 1: Percentage analysis to find out the parameters for professionalization of individuals in teaching

Responses	Freq.	Percentage (%)
Teachers are certified people who can undergo professional training through learning theoretical and practical's during their course of study.	224	31.11**
Teaching methodology and techniques are taught. The subject taught during the course have clear-cut information about child development and care, educational needs, rules by the government roles and characteristics of how a teacher should be, for each subject she will undertake in teaching.	189	26.25
Teachers' syllabus is chalked out by the education department in accordance to the syllabus considering the requirements of students for their academic development.	176	24.44
The teachers gets certified after being evaluated on the basis of written and practical's.	131	18.19*
Total	720	100

SOURCE: Field survey

** The highest percentage frequency

* The least percentage frequency



SOURCE: Field survey

- A Teachers are certified people who can undergo professional training through learning theoretical and practical's during their course of study.
- B Teaching methodology and techniques are taught. The subject taught during the course have clear-cut information about child development and care, educational needs, rules by the government roles and characteristics of how a teacher should be, for each subject she will undertake in teaching.
- C Teachers' syllabus is chalked out by the education department in accordance to the syllabus considering the requirements of students for their academic development.
- D The teachers gets certified after being evaluated on the basis of written and practical's.

The above table 1 and fig. 1 presents the percentage analysis to find out the parameter for professionalization of individuals teaching. From the result, it was observed that the highest percentage 224(31.11%) affirmed that the parameter for professionalization of individuals

teaching is that teachers are certified people who can undergo professional training through learning theoretical and practical's during their course of study. Second to the highest respondents said the parameter to be that teaching methodology and techniques are taught and that the subject taught during the course have clear-cut information about child development and care, educational needs, rules by the government roles and characteristics of how a teacher should be, for each subject she will undertake in teaching 189(26.25%). 176(24.44%) of the respondent being the second to the least said teacher's syllabus is chalked out by the education department in accordance to the syllabus considering the requirements of students for their academic development, while the least respondent on the subject matter 131(18.19%) said the teachers gets certified after being evaluated on the basis of written and practical's.

Research question two

The research question sought to know specific areas where teachers perform better than cheaters in the classroom.

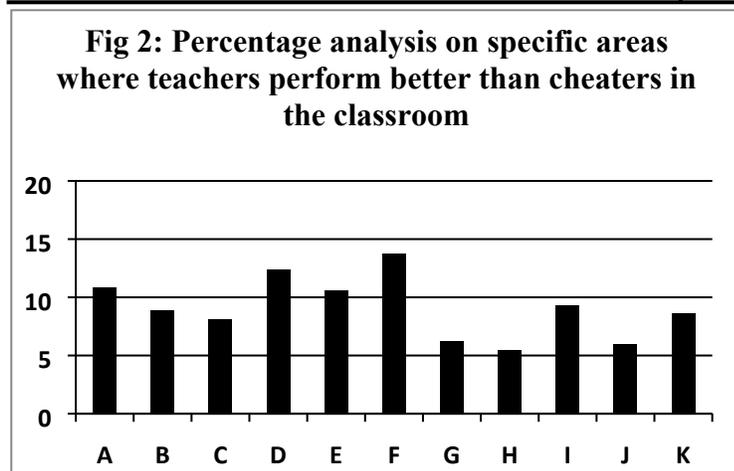
Table 2: Percentage analysis on specific areas where teachers perform better than cheaters in the classroom

Responses	Freq.	Percentage (%)
Course completion	78	10.83
Discipline	64	8.89
Attention to individual students	58	8.06
Teaching style	89	12.36
Use of learning materials	76	10.56
Knowledge of the subject matter	99	13.75**
Encourage students to ask questions	45	6.25
Creativity: encourages students to think outside the box	39	5.42*
Classroom management ability	67	9.31
Give well structured tests and examinations	43	5.97
Creates interest in the subject	62	8.61
Total	720	100

SOURCE: Field survey

** **The highest percentage frequency**

* **The least percentage frequency**



- A Course completion
- B Discipline
- C Attention to individual students
- D Teaching style
- E Use of learning materials
- F Knowledge of the subject matter
- G Encourage students to ask questions
- H Creativity: encourages students to think outside the box
- I Classroom management ability
- J Give well structured tests and examinations
- K Creates interest in the subject.

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 2 and fig 2 presents the percentage analysis to find out if teachers perform better than cheaters in the classroom. From the result, it was observed that the highest percentage of respondent 99(13.75%) affirm that the reason why teachers perform better than cheaters is because of their knowledge of the subject matter, seconded to the highest percentage 89(12.36%) said it is because of their teaching style. 78(10.83%) of the respondent being the third to the highest on list said is the course completion, the fourth to the highest respondent on the list 76(10.56%) said use of learning materials. This was followed by the respondent who said classroom management ability 67(9.31%), the sixth on the list said discipline 64(8.89%). 62(8.61%) of the respondent being the seventh on the list said they create interest in the subject. The eight respondents on the list 58(8.06%) said their attention to individual students, this was followed by 45(6.25%) of the respondent who were identified as the ninth to the highest on the list who said teachers encourage students to ask questions. Second to the least on the list 43(5.97%) said teachers give well-structured tests and examination than cheaters, while least percentage of the respondent 39(5.42%) said teachers encourages students to think outside the box while cheaters don't.

Research question three

The research question sought to know the reasons cheaters are reluctant to be trained as teachers.

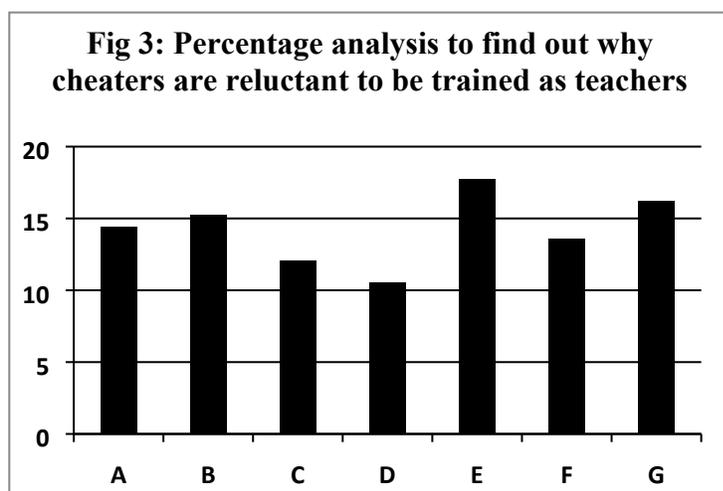
Table 3: Percentage analysis to find out why cheaters are reluctant to be trained as teachers

Responses	Freq.	Percentage (%)
Heavy workloads	104	14.44
Working environment	110	15.28
Indiscipline among students	87	12.08
Parents interference in school work	76	10.56*
Poor pay package; (very little incentives) no money to go for PGDE progress	128	17.78**
Challenging student’s behaviour	98	13.61
Negative public image; low status of teachers	117	16.25
Total	300	100

SOURCE: Field survey

** The highest percentage frequency

* The least percentage frequency



- A Heavy workloads
- B Working environment
- C Indiscipline among students
- D Parents interference in school work
- E Poor pay package; (very little incentives) no money to go for PGDE progress
- F Challenging student’s behaviour
- G Negative public image; low status of teachers

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 3 and figure 3 present the percentage analysis to find out why cheaters are reluctant to be trained as teachers. From the result, it was observed that the highest percentage of respondents 128(17.78%) said cheaters are reluctant to be trained as teachers because of poor pay package; (very little incentives) no money to go for PGDE progress, while the seconded to the highest respondent 117(16.25%) said it is because of negative public image; low status of teachers. 110(15.28%) identified as the third on the list said it is because of the working environment. 104(14.44%) identified as the fourth on the list said heavy workloads, while the fifth on the list 98(13.6%) said challenging student’s behaviour. Second to the least respondent on the list 87(12.08%) said indiscipline among students, while the least respondent on the subject matter 76(10.56%) said parents interference in school work.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the research, it was concluded that teachers perform significantly better than cheaters in their classroom deliverables and teaching is a profession that must be occupied by only professionals who are trained in the art and act of teaching and cheaters that are interested to become teachers should be encouraged to undergo a PGDE program as this will give them a more foundational base in the art and act of teaching. Also the TRCN deadline of December 2019 must be encouraged as this will drive away cheaters from our educational system and teaching will take its place among the committee of professions.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are deemed necessary.

1. Teaching should be made a profession for only teachers.
2. Due to December 2019 deadline by the TRCN, most schools (especially the rural ones) will experience shortage of teachers. Thus government must make adequate arrangement through proper budgeting to employ good number of trained teachers to fill in the gap that will be created by the exit of the cheaters.
3. Government can adopt a special salary structure for teachers in order to encourage the young ones into this profession. Thus with a good pay package and good working environment, the negative public image of teachers will change and best brain will be attracted to teaching career.
4. The TRCN deadline of December 2019 should be backed up by law that will be used to punish offenders and this will deter cheaters from entering into the classrooms.
5. Cheaters who are interested to become teachers should be encouraged by giving them extra one year to enroll for a PGDE programme. With this, they will be exposed to the foundational preparations for the profession.

REFERENCES

- Bahr, N. and Ferreira (2018). 7 Reasons People no Longer want to be Teachers. Retrieved online @ www.bigthink.com, March 4, 2019
- Ekeng, M. (2019). Principles and Methods of Teaching. Uyo: New Wisdom Prints.
- Hotaman, D. (2017). The Teaching Profession. Retrieved online @ www.qauora.com, September 20, 2019.
- James, V. (2019). Why I Quit Teaching. Retrieved online at www.viktorjames.com, May 10, 2019.
- Udo, O. (2007). Teachers and Nation Bulding. Uyo: Ankon Network Services
- Okon, B. (2016). Teaching as a Subversive Activity. Journal of Education Curriculum. Vol.2(2) p.45-52