

## PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' QUALITY AS PREDICTORS OF THEIR ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR SUSTAINABLE TEACHER EDUCATION

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### Abstract

*The study investigated prospective teachers' quality and variables associated with developing ethical conduct in them in a Nigerian University. A descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted using a sample of 400 prospective teachers, randomly selected across the 3 selected Departments in the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were raised and tested in the study. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, and mean rating were used for the demographic information and answering of the research questions. While inferential statistics of regression and ANOVA were used to test the hypotheses generated at the 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that consistent corrections are the most significant teacher quality that influences the prospective teachers' ethical conduct, while the university teachers' area of specialisation is a great quality that influences prospective teachers' ethical conduct. There was a significant relationship between university teachers' quality and other variables on the prospective teachers' ethical conduct. Also, both female and male university teachers contribute to the prospective teachers' ethical conduct. The study recommends that university education should be recognised as the level of education capable of equipping Nigerian students with competencies to contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's development.*

**Keywords:** Ethical Conduct, Prospective Teachers, University Teachers, University Teachers' Gender, University Teachers' Specialisation

### Introduction

Over the years, many accolades are accorded to teachers every World Teachers' Day, teachers could only receive such special acknowledgement and expression of approval of good work from their students based on their unique qualities and abilities, therefore, other education stakeholders, Government, school administrators, school owners, parents, and students must emphasize respecting, upholding and sustaining the unique potentials of teachers as they play the numerous roles of giving information, imparting knowledge, developing skills, giving a deep insight into subjects or courses taught, having a visionary view on a subject and teaches to think in that manner including clarifying values for them and leading them to choose right. These roles indicate that education remains a tool for building and sustaining positive societal values. It follows that the quality of teacher education programmes determines the quality of teachers in Nigerian schools. Hence, the training of teachers remains an important aspect that directly influences their quality and competency (Tonga & Aksoy, 2014).

Ozturk et al (2016) submitted that the competencies students acquire through education are affected by their teachers' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and their consciousness as citizens. Also, Personality traits of teachers, such as self-concept, self-respect, pro-activeness, social control, diligence and positive attitude to work are other qualities expected to influence the quality of prospective teachers. Alhaji & Umar (2017) confirmed that these personal attributes are desirable when a teacher views teaching as a cause beyond oneself; a teacher who lacks these qualities is likely to fall short of expectations to foster the social, emotional and psychological development of students.

Prospective teachers are categorised as students who have enrolled on teacher education programmes at the colleges of education or the Faculty of Education across universities in Nigeria. Mohammed et al (2024) described teachers who possess this type of quality as lifelong learners in their area of specialisation because they use their experience to develop the ability to set high expectations for their students and render the necessary support to achieve such. This is the focus of this study, which is targeted at the prospective teachers, who should be the concern of all teachers at all levels, if the main goal of education is to be achieved fully.

Teachers' expertise and specialisation enable them to deliver quality instructions, address the diverse needs of students and sustain best practices in teaching. Tonga and Aksoy (2014) assumed that university teachers who have received sufficient training will train the prospective teachers to become responsible social, national and international citizens. The study of Ezendu and Utazi (2014) revealed that teachers' area of specialisation influences their knowledge and level of competence performance in teaching at the secondary school level. Zulikifli and Kutty (2022) reported that appropriate teachers' behaviour was the most frequent motivational strategy influencing their teaching. Teachers are to embrace and sustain the learning-by-doing strategy. Mohammed et al (2024) assessed teachers' variables on students' academic performance in Yobe State. Their study revealed that teachers' variables, such as qualification and teaching experience, significantly influence the academic performance of Economics Students.

Gender issues have become a global phenomenon and should not be left out of education; moreover, gender is considered in this study not only because the authors of this paper are females, but gender issues are now gaining ground in education. It became necessary to investigate whether being female or male may likely influence the development of the ethical conduct of prospective teachers. The National Policy on Education provides broad objectives for Nigeria, with the hope that quality education would drive the development of individuals who are morally sound, patriotic and effective citizens. (FRN, 2014). Bwoi (2017) identified codes of conduct that can guide teachers in shaping their ethical behaviour while discharging their duties; these include commitment to duty, moral stability, personal/unique traits, emotional intelligence and so on. According to Yusuf, (2023), Social Studies curriculum and programmes implementation are the potentials that would involve the prospective teachers in the social education process with emphasis on the growth of skills, values, and attitudes required for citizens to attain a free and egalitarian society, hence, social studies and other related subjects should be taught effectively by teachers and diligently studied by students at all level of education. For Nigeria to grow into a vibrant nation like other developed countries, value-based pedagogy is germane.

The objective of this study is to examine the level of teacher quality that enhanced the ethical conduct of the prospective teachers in selected departments in the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin. Hence, the question is whether the prospective teacher's ethical conduct is dependent on:

1. University teachers' quality
2. University teachers' area of specialisation
3. University teachers' gender

### Methodology

The study is a predictive design. All prospective teachers in the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, constitute the population for the study. The study sampled 400 prospective teachers across three departments in the selected Faculty. 198 questionnaires were used in the study. A self-constructed questionnaire with 7 and 8 items each on prospective teachers' quality and ethical conduct, respectively. The questionnaire sought demographic information about the prospective teachers using a four-point Likert Scale varying from Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1). Cronbach's Alpha was used for the reliability of the items of the questionnaire, which yielded a value of 0.86. This shows that the instrument is reliable. The data collected were analysed using mean rating to answer research questions. Regression and ANOVA analysis were used to test the hypotheses.

### Results

This study was on 400 prospective teachers. The data collected were analysed and presented in the following order:

#### Answering the Research Questions

**Research Question 1:** What is the teacher's quality that predicts the ethical conduct of prospective teachers?

**Table 1: Mean Value of the Teachers' Quality and Other Variables**

Teachers' Quality and Selected Variables	Mean	SD	Rank
good University teacher is consistent in correcting their students to improve their character and conduct.	3.58	0.69	1 <sup>st</sup>
some undergraduates, teachers who are passionate about developing ethical conduct appear to be difficult people	3.44	0.69	2 <sup>nd</sup>
university teachers who consistently exhibit ethical behaviour in their instructional delivery can influence their students positively	3.32	0.89	5 <sup>th</sup>
university teachers' persuasive communication can encourage undergraduate students to learn and engage in positive behaviour	3.36	0.71	4 <sup>th</sup>
university teachers' area of specialisation is a great quality that influences my moral conduct	3.39	0.74	3 <sup>rd</sup>
both female and male university teachers appear to be passionate about building the moral conduct of students	3.08	0.84	6 <sup>th</sup>
behavioural indulgence by university teachers of undergraduates can impact them positively	1.92	1.02	7 <sup>th</sup>
<b>weighted mean</b>	<b>3.15</b>		

As shown in Table 1, the responses of the prospective teachers on teachers' quality and selected variables which predict their ethical conduct. Only item number 7, with the lowest value of 1.92, revealed that prospective teachers opined that indulging students cannot develop desirable ethical conduct in them.

**Research Question 2:** What is the ethical conduct exhibited by prospective teachers for sustainable teacher education?

**Table 2: Mean Value of Ethical Conduct of Prospective Teachers**

S/ N	Teachers' Ethical Conduct	Mean	SD	Rank
1	University teachers who are consistent and maintain their integrity in their dealings with students truly develop the ethical conduct of students.	3.55	0.76	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	The university teacher's emphasis on critical thinking skills enhanced my moral reasoning abilities.	3.35	0.75	6 <sup>th</sup>
3	I now respect other people's opinions because my university teachers fostered a culture of respect in me.	3.34	0.83	7 <sup>th</sup>
4	My university teachers always stressed virtues such as integrity, selflessness, and compassion, and I now practice these virtues	3.36	0.87	5 <sup>th</sup>
5	Teachers who practice what they teach contribute significantly to my moral development	3.43	0.80	2 <sup>nd</sup>
6	The moral values instilled by my university teachers have influenced my character both within and outside the university	3.38	0.71	4 <sup>th</sup>
7	Teachers who support and encourage undergraduate students willingly allow them to uphold moral standards	3.41	0.73	3 <sup>rd</sup>
8	My university teachers' application of punishment and support has helped me overcome immorality	3.34	0.83	7 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Weighted mean</b>		<b>3.40</b>		

Table 2 shows the prospective teachers' responses to desirable ethical conduct.

**Hypothesis 1:** Teachers' quality and area of specialisation will not significantly predict prospective teachers' ethical conduct for sustainable teacher education

**Table 3: Regression Analysis on the Prediction of Teachers Quality, on Prospective Teachers Ethical Conduct.**

Model	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Squares	F-value	Sig.
Regression	17589.502	2	1702.731		
Residual	78875.008	392	77.029	42.727	0.000
Total	96465.302	391			

- a. Dependent variable: Prospective teachers' ethical conduct
- b. Predictors: University teachers' quality (areas of specialisation and gender)

Table 3 indicates a calculated F-value of 42.727 with a p-value of 0.000 at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value of (0.000) is less than the 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, the combination of the independent variables (Teachers' quality, area of specialisation and gender) significantly predicts the dependent variable, prospective teachers' ethical conduct.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the prospective teachers' ethical conduct based on the department.

**Table 4: ANOVA on the Ethical Conduct of Prospective Teachers, based on Department**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	53.113	2	26.557	1.417	.245
Within Groups	3692.08	397	18.742		
Total	3745.19	399			

$\alpha=0.05$   $P > 0.05$   $H_0$  Retained

Table 4 shows the result of the one-way between-groups analysis of variance, which was conducted to explore the ethical conduct of prospective teachers, based on the department. This was analysed based on categorising the respondents into three groups. There was no statistically significant difference at the  $p > 0.05$  level of significance among the respondents across the three groups:  $F(2, 397) = 1.417, p = .245$ . This implies that the null hypothesis is therefore retained.

### Discussion of Findings

The teacher quality that predicts prospective teachers' ethical conduct includes all items of the questionnaire, showing a 3.08 mean value and above. However, the study revealed that a good University teacher who is consistent in correcting their students to improve their character and conduct is the most significant teacher quality that influences prospective teachers' ethical conduct. This is an indication that university teachers who discharge their duties passionately are still present in Nigerian universities. This finding is supported by Mohammed et al (2024), who posited that teachers who set high expectations for their students and render the necessary support to achieve such are regarded as quality teachers. Also, Jekayinfa and Oladiran (2011) have challenged teachers, irrespective of the subject they teach, that they are expected to render selfless, committed and dedicated services.

The study also revealed that the ethical conduct of the prospective teachers is desirable. This was indicated in the mean value of each item that measures the ethical conduct of the prospective teachers; the result shows that the prospective teachers have acquired sufficient training and the potential to contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's development in their capacity through their calling. This finding is supported by Tonga and Aksoy (2014), who assumed that university teachers who have received sufficient training will train the prospective teachers to become responsible social, national and international citizens who will contribute to the growth and development of the community they find themselves in.

In addition, the study this study revealed that teachers' quality and other variables such as university teachers' gender and areas of specialisation significantly predict prospective teachers' ethical conduct. This finding is consistent with the findings of Yusuf et al (2016), whose study recommended that experts in Social Studies are expected to be well-versed in the necessary skills and have a positive character to serve as role models for future leaders. Also. The finding is supported by the study of Zulikifli and Kutty (2022), whose study on the relationship between the specialisation of teaching subjects and teachers' motivational strategies indicated that appropriate teachers' behaviour was the most frequent motivational strategy that influenced their teaching. It was revealed in this study that prospective teachers from the three departments agreed about teacher quality and other variables that contributed to their ethical conduct. The interpretation of the findings of this study, put

together, is an indication that Nigeria is blessed with human resources who are fully equipped to drive the development of the country.

### Conclusion

On the whole, this study has revealed that qualified and competent teachers demonstrate the actions related to such qualification in their conduct while discharging their tripartite roles as intellectuals. It could therefore be concluded that university teachers should be consistent in correcting their students and should not relent in their efforts, no matter the challenges. Such perseverance is worthwhile to continue to produce prospective teachers who will not only be qualified in their field but also be competent and confident to embrace the future without fear. Also, the items on the teachers' quality with the lower mean value "behavioural indulgence by university teachers of undergraduates can impact them positively" showed that it is unethical for any teachers to allow behavioural indulgence of students to prevent the short-term and long-term consequences because, there is the possibility that such students may develop a sense of entitlement, and inadequate preparations for the expectations of the real world. For long-term effects, students may develop an entitlement mentality, where they expect special treatment and become disgruntled when such treatment is not received. Academically, behavioural indulgence of students could lead to inadequate skill development; such students may fail to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. These essential skills remain part of the content of Social Studies and Civic Education (specialisation of the lead author) at the higher education level in Nigeria and should be embraced and recognised.

### Recommendations

1. University education, particularly teacher education, should be recognised as the level of education that can communicate a positive Nigerian story to students through persuasive messages for the realisation of the Nigerian dream.
2. Also, the already established support system that would sustain the motivation of the university teachers and professional growth should be made effective.
3. University and teacher educators should take cognisance of the behavioural indulgence of their students; the mean value of the item that measures this is extremely low at 1.92. Behavioural indulgence in this study connotes impulsive or reckless behaviour of some students to the extent of flaunting the established rules in the university; this should be discouraged for academic standards, excellence and sustainable development.

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