

ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL BODIES RELATED TO TEACHER EDUCATION

1.0 Introduction

In the last two lessons you learnt about professionalism and what it means to be a professional. In the latter lesson we focused on the significance of professional bodies and the necessity of being a member of a professional body. In this lesson we will concentrate on the roles and the functions of professional bodies.

The professional association, in general, serves as an agent of the profession. Many professions spawn associations representing particular interests of its individual specialties and sub-specialties; but there is usually at least one association that purports to represent the profession as a whole. The main association usually engages in a number of activities e.g. dissemination of knowledge by different means like conferences and publications, establishment of official standards by which to evaluate products and personnel, framing administrative rules, fighting legal battles on behalf of the professionals, negotiations with the State and many other activities. According to Friedson (1986) a professional association's leaders have political authority as representatives of the profession, an authority that is enhanced when a profession is perceived by politicians as a voting bloc. In so far as the association engages in collective bargaining its leaders have the political and economic authority to negotiate with the employers as well.

There are different categories of professional bodies of teachers. Freedom of association for teachers is enunciated in the "Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers" adopted at an intergovernmental conference convened by UNESCO in 1966 (Pepin, 1990). Some of the professional bodies of teachers may be categorized as trade unions. Are these 'trade union type' teacher organizations basically different from other professional organizations? Though it is not easy to draw clear distinctions between different types of professional organizations, a basic difference is recognized between a professional organization and a trade union. Teacher (trade) unions are defined as formal organizations of teachers for the purpose of bargaining collectively with their employers. Their activities encompass interest directly related to the material conditions of teaching or protests about the arbitrary control exerted by school boards, inspectors,

denominational or private organizations or the state over teachers' working and social lives. In contrast, a professional association of teachers is supposed to work for the advancement of the profession so that its members may completely fulfill their social duty.

During the 1980s, however, questions were raised as to the role of teacher trade unions. Some have suggested that unions had outlived their roles in collective bargaining and they should become "professional unions" at the workplace (Kerchner and Mitchell, 1988). At the same time, trade unions in some countries have matured into large complex organizations which are not only self-serving of the wide interests of teachers, but are concerned with the quality of schooling (including teaching) as well as a range of public policy issues unrelated to education (Spaull, 1998).

Laws establishing professional organizations have traditionally been composed mainly of members of the profession or occupation to be regulated. The justification usually offered for this policy is that it provides an expert understanding of the practice of the profession. While it is recognized that such expertise is necessary for judging technical competence, many issues before such regulatory bodies are issues of broad public policy. For example, should teachers who teach at the primary level be graduates or trained teachers who have followed a specific primary school training programme? In recognition of this broader role to be played by these professional bodies, their composition is expanded in some countries to include not only members of that particular profession but others like, government officials, representatives of voluntary agencies, and citizens.

Question 1

Reflect on the reasons as to why you would want to be a member of a professional organization.

2.0 Definition of a professional body

There are many definitions that attempt to define what exactly is meant by a professional body. Therefore it is relevant at this stage to understand how exactly one could define a professional body. According to the definition of the Census Bureau of The United States a professional body could be defined as an-

Establishment primarily engaged in promoting the professional interests

of their members and the profession as a whole. These establishments may conduct research, develop statistics, sponsor quality and certification standards, lobby public officials, or publish news letters, books or periodicals for distribution to their members.

(NAICS U.S. Census Bureau, 2002).

It could therefore be said that a professional association helps to build the framework within which its members practice. It provides the sanctions so that members undertake their obligations and responsibilities to society and thus in essence is disciplinary. The association ensures that its members are able to provide the best possible service to their clients. That is the main reason why a professional association sponsors quality and certification standards, conducts research and also concentrates on dissemination of knowledge. When a professional fails in his obligations by acting in an incompetent or unethical way that is unprofessional, the association guards and protects the public by withdrawing the right to practice from that member. All these characteristics are common to all the professional organizations irrespective of the profession that a particular organization represents. However, there may be specific rules and regulations related to the particular field the professional association represents. In some countries, as in Norway and Sweden, professional associations have an industrial function and, together with trade unions, serve as the collective bargaining agent. Negotiations with the State pertaining to remuneration, working conditions, policy issues and professional development are some of the issues that most professional organizations are concerned with. This aspect is important as it provides motivation and support for the members of the organization.

Many aspects of the management in the professional organizations are related to policy and administration. Assignment and supervision of personnel, conditions of employment, including remuneration, and job roles and responsibilities are components of the management policy adopted by the particular professional organization. Some of these may require legislation that would result in effective management. Consequently, rules and regulations are laid down in many countries when such professional organizations are formed. Rules are normally laid down pertaining to the composition, concerns, roles,

and functions and responsibilities of the professional body. These rules are applicable to all professional bodies related to teacher education as well.

3.1 Different aspects of Professional organizations

3.1.1 Composition of the professional body

As stated above, a professional body normally comprises individuals who practice that particular profession. In the case of a professional body related to teacher education the members of the body would be primarily teacher educators. But it could have representations from other important interest groups and bodies like the State, NGOs, and student and parent bodies.

3.1.2 Concerns

A professional organization related to teacher education would be concerned with the quality of the services provided by the teacher educators. Consequently the organization should have the powers to lay down the qualifications of personnel and the range of functions to be performed in order to ensure the maintenance of quality.

3.1.3 Roles and functions

The role played by a professional organization is that of a professional watch-dog and care-taker. A teacher educator professional body could play a vital role in setting standards in the area of expertise, namely, teacher education. This will ensure that the standards of knowledge, skill and competence required by the profession are appropriate and relevant to the needs of the teacher educators. Some of the important roles would be as follows:

- Play a prominent role along with the State and the other authorities concerned with teacher education in programme validation and quality assurance.
- Recommend standards for the profession and also monitor the maintenance of standards.

- Recommend standards for different teacher education programme, for designing and developing licensing examinations, and for certifying personnel as having met required standards.
- Propose appropriate rules and regulations regarding recruitment, qualifications and remuneration along with matters of professional conduct.
- Maintain standards within the profession by establishing a Board of Regents or any other professional accreditation body like the Medical Council.
- Recommend policy and develop standards to ensure continued competence by developing required curricula and continuing education programmes.
- Play a significant role in formulating new policies and initiatives for the profession
- Set ethical standards/codes of practice and take disciplinary actions concerning the members. (In some countries the professional associations are quasi-governmental organizations which are very much concerned with the ethical issues related to the particular profession. But even where professional associations have no official role in ethical matters, the voice of the association is an important influence on ethical decisions and standards).

3.1.4 Responsibilities of a professional body specifically related to education

In addition to the roles and functions spelled out above for a professional organization, any such organization concerned with education would have certain additional roles. These are -

- Upgrading and updating knowledge relevant to education in keeping with the current needs. It must engage teachers in concrete tasks of teaching assessment, observation and reflection that would illuminate the process of learning and development.

- Taking necessary steps and precautions for quality assurance, it must be grounded in inquiry, reflection and experimentation that are participant driven.
- Contemplating on current issues and problems related to education and providing a forum for arriving at amicable solutions; must be collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators and a focus on teachers' communities of practice rather than on individual teachers; must be sustained, ongoing, intensive and supported by modeling, coaching and the collective solving of specific problems of practice.
- Networking with national and international organizations with the intention of providing opportunities for the professional development of the members..
- Safeguarding the rights and privileges of the members.
- Providing opportunities for dissemination of knowledge by adopting various methods and media.

Question 2

Discuss the roles and functions of a professional body with specific reference to teacher education

3.2 Professional bodies in selected countries

There are different categories of professional organizations in different countries. In this section we will have a brief look professional bodies in a few countries including those in Sri Lanka. These are illustrative of the variety that exists in the constitution and functioning of professional organizations concerned with teachers and teacher education.

3.2.1 Professional organizations in U.S.A.

During the last decade, the U.S. education community witnessed a proliferation of standards-driven reform efforts. The primary objectives of these efforts were (1) to increase student achievement to a level that is competitive with that of other industrialized nations (Shanker, 1994); (2) to restore public confidence in education and (3) to provide a brief overview of the work of several influential standards-setting bodies and summarize the primary ways in which classroom teachers are involved. It was in

relation to the last that some of the professional organizations in U.S.A. became very powerful.

3.2.1.1 National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)

NBPTS was formed in 1987 on the recommendations of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy to articulate standards of excellence, related to what teachers should know and be able to do (Baratz-Snowden, 1993). The goal of the NBPTS is to establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. The primary mission of the NBPTS is to develop and operate a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers. At present the NBPTS has developed an assessment system that is used to determine eligibility for National Board certification. The first of these assessments were made available nationwide during 1994-1995. Although National Board certification is voluntary, a number of states have incorporated NBPTS standards into their school improvement plans.

The policy positions of the NBPTS is based on five core propositions about teachers (NCTAF, 1996). These are-

- Teachers are committed to the students and their learning,
- Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to the students,
- Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring students' learning,
- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from their experiences,
- Teachers are members of learning communities. (You would remember that these aspects were discussed in one of the previous lessons).

3.2.1.2 The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC)

INTASC is a consortium of more than 30 states and professional organizations formed in 1987 and sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers. The purpose of INTASC is to facilitate collaboration among states that are interested in rethinking

standards for initial teacher licensing and developing new techniques to assess teacher performance and to promote teacher professional development.

INTASC has developed performance-based standards for initial licensure of teachers that are built upon and compatible with the advanced certification standards of the NBPTS. They articulate what entering teachers should know, be able to do and be like in order to practice responsibly and begin their development towards accomplished professional teaching. INTASC also has decided that the appropriate benchmarks for teaching standards should be based on consideration of what students need in order to learn effectively rather than on current systems of teacher preparation. INTASC has articulated standards for a common core of teaching knowledge and skill that should be acquired by all teachers and is articulating additional specific standards for disciplinary areas and levels of schooling. These core standards are expressed as core principles, some of which are listed below:

- The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry and structures of the disciplines the teacher teaches and should create learning experiences that are meaningful to the students
- The teacher understands how children learn and develop and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development
- The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
- The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving and performance skills.
- The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behaviour to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning and self motivation
- The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, non-verbal and media communication to foster active inquiry, collaboration and supportive interaction in the classroom

- The teacher plans instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, the community and curriculum goals
- The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social and physical development of the learner
- The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effect of the choices and actions on the others (e.g. students, parents, community)
- The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well being.

When you go through the above list you will probably recollect what you learnt in Essential Readings 1 and 2 on Professional Attitudes and Skills and Teacher as a Professional. In fact, this list is reproduction of the Attitudes and Skills that a teacher is expected to develop. What is significant is that the development of the attributes that a teacher is required to develop is not a task assigned to teacher education only, but is continuously supported, enhanced and monitored by the professional bodies that teachers are members of.

3.2.1.3 The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)

National accreditation for teacher education programs in the US is conducted by the NCATE which was founded in 1954. NCATE comprises of 30 professional associations and organizations of teachers, content area specialists and local and state policy makers. By 1997, five hundred and thirty two (532) of the approximately 1200 teacher education institutions in the US are NCATE accredited. The NCATE standards emphasize prospective teacher performance in the context of solid preparation in liberal arts and professional studies. The standards focus on four categories, namely,

- design of professional education (e.g. conceptual framework, curriculum design, quality of instruction, quality of field experiences)
- candidates in professional education (e.g. qualifications, diversity, assessment of competency)

- professional education faculty (qualifications, diversity assignments, professional development)
- the unit for professional education (e.g. governance, resources).

A current goal of NCATE is to increase collaboration with state departments of education to reduce or eliminate the redundancy of both state and NCATE program assessment, to integrate state and national professional standards, and to increase the rigor of the review of teacher education programs. As part of their State Partnership Program, NCATE has agreements with 40 of the 50 states to conduct joint reviews of schools of education. In these partnerships, states are now requiring all teacher education programs to undergo NCATE assessment or to undergo state assessment using the NCATE standards.

A third partnership option being actively pursued by NCATE as part of their New Professional Teacher project is to help create a professional continuum for teaching that links program accreditation to initial licensure and to advance certification standards. In this framework, a state would establish a comprehensive performance-based licensing system that meets the NCATE criteria. In turn when accrediting programs, NCATE would consider the performance of the program's teacher candidates throughout their preparation and assess the success record of the program's graduates on standards based- licensure assessments. Currently NCATE is working with both INTASC and NBPTS to develop compatible standards throughout the professional teaching career.

3.2.2 Barbados Union of Teachers

Teachers in Barbados have organized themselves into a professional organization mainly for their professional development. It is said that efforts in this direction began as far back as the final decade of the 19th century. As time passed the teachers consolidated themselves into a more formalized organization under the banner of Barbados Union of Teachers and established subject organizations to cater to their specific disciplines. In due course the teachers have become a powerful element espousing educational policy, suggesting strategies in the system for the development of education in the country, and advocating for reforms in the educational sector. The Barbadian teachers in their quest to be taken seriously as professionals have improved and continue to improve the standards of the profession by continuous training and raising the quality of the profession by obtaining further professional qualifications. They have extended their

interest beyond the classroom to become enthusiastic leaders and participants in other national and community organizations.

The rights, as well as the responsibilities, of teachers are prescribed by law in the Barbados. There are those rights, which teachers enjoy with all other citizens and are found in the Constitution of Barbados. There are also rights, which the teachers enjoy as employees of the State. These are set down in the rules, which govern a teacher's employment, and there are also rights, which they enjoy as a consequence of collective bargaining by their union. Some of these are the determination of salaries and terms and conditions of service, security of tenure and the right to have grievances and disputes addressed and settled accordingly, and that they should be free from liability in the reasonable execution of their duties.

3.2.3 Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) of Ireland

FETAC's primary responsibility is to make and promote its own awards. It is committed to working with the State and all other bodies that are interested in promoting the national qualifications framework in endeavouring to ensure that learner's achievements are recognized both nationally and internationally. They believe that it is in the learners' interest that all their learning should be recognized formally through the framework, and that the national qualifications framework must be of the highest quality. It is the FETAC's contention that only a coherent approach to the development of the framework will result in a system, which is inclusive of all learning. At the moment, there is a range of awarding bodies in Ireland.

FETAC recognises the significant role that professional bodies have played and continue to play in Ireland today. Therefore they have laid down the following propositions in relation to the professional bodies.

- Professional bodies could have a standard setting role in partnership with the Council in their areas of expertise. This process will ensure that the standards of knowledge, skill and competence required by the Council are appropriate and relevant to the needs of the profession.
- Professional bodies could have a role in the Council's procedures for programme validation, quality assurance and monitoring of standards.

- Professional bodies directly involved in the delivery of programmes could have their programmes validated by the Council, and the awards made on successful completion of the programmes would thereby be included in the national qualifications framework, providing learners with the possibility of wider transfer and progression opportunities than were available up to then.

3.2.4 Professional Associations of U.K. and Scotland

Below is a list of some of the professional organizations of U.K.

- Association of University Teachers (AUT)
- Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)
- National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)
- National association of School Masters and Union of Teachers (NASUWT)
- Professional Association of Teachers (PAT)
- National Union of Teachers (NUT)

We shall discuss in brief the functions and activities of one of these bodies, namely, Association of University Teachers (AUT)

3.2.4.1 Association of University Teachers (AUT)

AUT is a trade union and professional association of over 48,700 members representing all types of professional staff primarily in the U.K university sector. It provides daily updated latest national and local news analysis and briefings for teachers. In addition it provides high quality support and services for academics, researchers, administrators, librarians, computer staff and postgraduate tutors.

The Association negotiates members' salaries and conditions of employment, and represents their views on professional matters affecting higher education. It also provides them with access to advice, information and personal representation if they experience problems at work. This includes matters of grievance, discipline, overwork, discrimination and redundancy. The Association has influence with ministers, members of parliament and other decision-makers who help to improve higher education at every

level. AUT is also committed to increasing the participation of students from non-traditional backgrounds and to the promotion of equal opportunities.

As the key voice of higher education the AUT develops policies on a wide range of issues that have impact on the members and the sector as a whole. The main policy making body of the organization is the Annual Conference known as the 'Council'. The Conference is held each year in spring. The democratic structure of the association operates from the bottom up, with members belonging to 114 local associations, or branches, which are based in higher education institutions throughout the UK. Representatives from the local associations decide the policy and priorities at meetings of the ruling council body. In between council meetings, AUT is run by its Executive Committee, which is elected from among and by members. Occasionally special meetings are convened when major issues of importance need debate and policy decisions. The Council is supported by the work of specialist research officers and national officials who advise the different sub-committees.

3.2.5 Professional Associations in Sri Lanka

3.2.5.1 Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Education (SLAAED)

SLAAED was formed in 1992 with the intention of lobbying concerned groups, individuals and other agencies in matters related to education. The membership of the association has continued to be small over the years. It consists of a Council of Management elected at the Annual General Meeting held each year at the scheduled time. This management committee undertakes the responsibility of implementation and monitoring of programmes and other activities. One of the specific roles that the association is playing is that of advocacy.

As it has a large pool of education experts who have specializations related to various fields of education it is possible for SLAAED to work as an apex organization providing leadership in education. However, the association has had to limit its activities due to financial constraints. The association depends on donor agencies and other kinds of financial support for its sustenance. Some of the activities undertaken by the association are -

- The Association promotes and fosters professionalism among the members of the association and all others related to the teaching profession through

implementation of programmes conceived in collaboration with the members, the State and other agencies concerned with education.

- By virtue of the above activity, the Association offers suggestions and monitor changes introduced into the educational system of the country.
- It undertakes research with the intention of providing guidelines for further development of education as well as for the maintenance of quality standards.
- It disseminates knowledge by publications e.g. quarterly news bulletin, research findings, seminars and workshops
- The association also carries out awareness raising programmes on all important issues related to education
- Association encourages links with all national, international and other global associations related to education in pursuit of excellence, new knowledge and quality maintenance.

3.2.5.2 National Authority on Teacher Education (NATE)

NATE was formed as an organization which was under the direct control of the State. As such it was not truly a professional body. The matters that came within its purview was teacher recruitment, teacher education teacher deployment, and policy formulations. It was considered that teacher education in the country had developed in an unplanned and haphazard way without national policy, consequently, there was a mismatch between demand and supply, both in terms of overall numbers and the specific demands for various subject disciplines. As stated in the NATE Act, the main purpose of its establishment was to rectify this anomaly by realigning the teacher education programmes of Sri Lanka with ground reality and to actual status of demand and supply of teachers.

NATE therefore was looked upon as a national policy making authority on teacher education and as the national coordinating authority responsible for meeting the national needs and priorities through various teacher education programmes. At the time of its formation it was the intention of the State to make NATE responsible for planning, monitoring, accrediting and maintaining the quality of teacher education programmes offered by institutions that come within the national system. Consequently NATE was

expected to design, develop and implement staff and teacher development programmes in collaboration with other key players in teacher education.

NATE however had a short life span due to various political reasons and was abolished even though it was thought that NATE could bring new life to the teaching profession and give it much needed recognition.

3.2.5.3 Lanka Jathika Guru Sangamaya (Sri Lanka National Teachers' Union)

Among the large number of teacher trade unions that have been established in Sri Lanka, a major union is the Lanka Jathika Guru Sangamaya.

The aims and objectives of the Lanka Jathika Guru Sangamaya are listed below.

1. To organize all teachers attached to the Department of Education
2. Make the members aware of their rights and privileges in the correct perspective and to uplift their professional status
3. To promote and upgrade the economic, social and cultural standards of the country
4. To participate in the professional struggles and assist members victimized and penalized in such struggles
5. To act promptly to ameliorate the difficulties of teachers placed in difficult circumstances, members who have retired from service, and dependants of members who have died while in service
6. To act with dedication to build up a system of education where each and every child is enabled to realize his/her maximum potential, and
7. To collaborate with other trade unions to eradicate the ills in existing economic, political and social system with a view to creating a free and just society.

From the above aims and objectives you will understand that the above Union is not narrowly focused on merely achieving self-interests of its members.

3.2.5.4 Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science (SLAAS)

SLAAS, one of the oldest professional organizations in Sri Lanka, was established in 1944. It has expanded in various directions since its inception. Its membership is drawn from all disciplines of sciences and social sciences including education. It provides a forum for the members for healthy discussions, exchange of views, to present new ideas and findings while at the same time encouraging them to seek knowledge through research. It encourages both senior and junior members by identifying excellent scientific research for conferring various awards.

Summary

From the above discussion you would have gained an awareness of how professional bodies function, why they are set up and how membership in professional bodies support teachers and teacher educators in their career development. You would also have noted that a thin line separates professional bodies entirely devoted to the professional development of its members, trade unions whose main purpose is to ensure the protection of the rights of its members with regard to salary and conditions of service but are yet entering into the area of professional development and state organizations which attempt to maintain professional quality. In sum, there is much overlapping in the areas of operation of all these bodies. At the same time, this means that the opportunity for teachers and other professionals to benefit from membership in these bodies has widened.

Objectives

The specific objectives of this lesson are-

- To make you understand the definition of a professional organization.
- To make you aware of the roles and functions of a professional body.
- To emphasize the value of being a member of a professional organization.
- To acquaint you with at least a few of the professional bodies concerned with teachers/teacher educators in different countries.

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