There are many, who may not readily agree that Radiography is a profession, because it does not have all the expected of a classical profession.

Up to latter part of 18th century in the old countries of Europe particularly, in Britain, the word profession used, without qualification, was usually understood as extending to four great groups:
- Clergy,
- Lawyers,
- Medical Practitioners, and
- Military Officers.

Rectors and Vicars were professional men but the status of the curators was ambiguous and non-conformist ministers were not regarded as professional men.

Barristers were professionals, but most attorneys and solicitors were not. Army officers, with private means, were professionals, but were not. If therefore radiography was born in the 18th century, England, it may be right not to describe the radiographers as professionals. In the late 20th century, the concept of profession has changed.

There has been development of a wide range of recognized professions and societies. The development has been relatively similar in different countries of the world, though it has developed at varying rates. There are considerable differences in the range and strength of professional associations and the legal recognition accorded to professional qualifications and associations.

The exclusiveness of the 18th century had been broken in modern times as a result of the blurry of class distinction.

I do not intend to go more into the semantics of what is a profession or what is a "developing profession"
DEFINING PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

The above criteria describe fully well the nature of a profession. SCHEIN (1972) presents a list of features which may be summarized as follows:

- The essence of professionalism is the delivery of the service in response to the need of the client and there should be mutual trust and confidence between the client and the professional. In Radiography, the client is the patient and the specialist medical practitioner (Radiologist). The Radiographer has responsibility to them both, I shall return to this later.

DEFINITION DETAILS

- The ideal professional expert possesses expertise, which the ideal Radiographer would possess. To identify relevant characteristics which help to define these characteristics, which the ideal Radiographer would possess. The characteristics are to be discussed under 3 headings:
  - Attitudes and personal characteristics
  - Experience and knowledge
  - Skills

DEFINING PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

- Radiography may lack full professionalism, but it is possible to identify relevant characteristics which help to define these characteristics, which the ideal Radiographer would possess. The characteristics are to be discussed under 3 headings:
  - Attitudes and personal characteristics
  - Experience and knowledge
  - Skills

EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

- The ideal professional expert possesses recognized professional qualification – this is ideal, but does not mean that expert with no formal qualification cannot be produced. These experts have gained their expertise on the job. In developing he should move towards full professionalisation. It is vital that practitioners hold recognised professional qualifications.

- Has acquired a proficiency practical experience in a variety of techniques and procedures. Reinforcement of the working experience constantly, even when a Radiographer has attained a managerial or teaching position in an establishment. The reinforcement will provide opportunity to remain in constant contact with the realities faced by his patients and colleagues.

ATITUDES AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- The ideal professional expertise

- Professionals profess to know better than others on matters concerning their specialty. The professional's knowledge is acquired through a prolonged period of training and is based on established general principles, theories or propositions. His learning qualifies him to pronounce authoritatively on matters within his own field, but not outside.

- The professional considers that only he and his peers are qualified to assess his performance and he therefore resist judgment by outsiders. This grants the profession an autonomy and also necessitates the safeguarding of clients' rights by development of code of professional ethics and conduct.

- The professional's calling is a full time occupation to which he has a stable lifetime commitment. Professionals form professional associations which determine admission and certification of members and set standards for the profession.

- The professional does not advertise his services or seek clients.

SKILLS

- An ideal professional expert should be a good practicing Radiographer. Nothing can detract on the prestige of professional expert quite so much as a poor performance. Nothing detracts on the prestige of the professional expert quite so much as a poor performance.

- Radiographers should be skilled in all aspects of Radiographic techniques, research and quality assurance tests.

- Radiographic expert should have specialist knowledge and experience with radiographic technology. He should appreciate the techniques of designing and operating an effective radiographic service.

- He should be well informed regarding the latest advances in scientific and medical radiology, which the aspiring Radiographer should be acquainted with as to contribute to the advancement of Radiographic technique. Theory as well as practice should be designed and developed.

- A professional expert should be tolerant and confident in his personal resources to cope with confusing situations. Should be aware of his knowledge is limited and should be aware of need to continue to learn and improve.

- Respected authority - He should earn respect without flaunting his expertise.

- Patients’ interests must be safeguarded at all times, particularly when one comes into possession of information about the patient in the course of professional practice.
In order to equip a student to enter the profession, the student must have a sound and well balanced education.

In this paper I am not going into curriculum development. I shall only divide the education and training into:

- Pre – registration and training
- Continuous education as a professional

In Nigeria – Radiography education started in 1947 as a local training which prepared assistant practitioners to assist qualified Radiographers trained in the UK.

In 1965, the local school was recognised by the UK College of Radiographers to train in accordance with rules and regulations of the College.

In 1980, the University degree was introduced by one Nigerian University.

At present all Radiographers are expected to acquire University degree before entering the profession.

Advanced education and degrees in Radiography is being developed as part of continuous education and training in the Universities up to masters degrees and PhDs.

In Nigeria, the Radiography profession was statutorily recognised as one of the health professions in 1987. With her regulatory body – Radiographers Registration Board of Nigeria (RNRBN). The act establishing the body also grants it power to approve the qualifications to practice medical Radiography in Nigeria.

Establishing the regulatory body defines the profession and the regulations of the College.

Clincial Radiographers – Radiographers working in the clinical areas must be developed and made to enjoy their chosen profession.

It is therefore recommended that the profession should adopt minimum of 4-tier system of work progression namely:

- Assistant Practitioner
- Practitioner
- Specialist/ Advanced practitioner
- Consultant Practitioner

Do not wish to dwell much on Assistant practitioners and practitioners. Qualified Radiographers work autonomously as practitioners. They supervise the work of assistants, students and other workers. Specialists or advance practitioners handle more complex and specialized techniques, should be able to make reports and be a team leader. I have identified that AME and BRP will be areas in which Radiographers could reach advanced and Consultant levels.

In the light of the present knowledge a maximum permissible radiation dose has been set for Radiographers, other related radiation workers and the public generally. No maximum permissible dose has been set for the patients. It is therefore a great responsibility that Radiographers should ensure that the radiation dose to patients and others is kept at absolute minimum. Research and reports have assured us that the present radiation population dose shows no cause for alarm, but it is clearly the responsibilities and duties of Radiographers to future generations to subject themselves to as little radiation as possible and to expose patients to only necessary radiation at all times and to keep the gonads away from radiation when possible.

The purpose of the need to emphasize the expertise characteristics and the responsibilities is to demonstrate clearly that the duties of the Radiographers do not end in the manipulation of equipment. In fact the Radiographer has a very close contact with the patients and care of patient forms part of his major role.
CONCLUSION

- In conclusion, Radiography must make provision for educational advancement for all categories of career ladder points so as to encourage and promote recruitment, retention and career satisfaction. It is also necessary to fight and get the profession state-recognition so as to be a self regulatory profession. “Seek first the statutory state recognition of the profession and all other progressions shall be added to your career”

THANKS FOR YOUR TIME