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Rhetorical Analysis

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign professor Robert Bruno expresses his concerns of the status of professionalism of teachers in his article, “When Did the U.S. Stop Seeing Teachers as Professionals?” Bruno wrote this article to inform readers, his target audience most likely being college students and government workers, why teachers’ sense of professionalism is rapidly decreasing. Being as Bruno is a professor himself, he is passionate in his article and shows his anger and frustration with non-educators. In “When Did the U.S. Stop Seeing Teachers as Professionals?” published on *Harvard Business Review* on June 20, 2018, Robert Bruno successfully uses his experience as a professor, statistics of teachers in the industry, and appeal of emotions for teachers, students, and parents to inform readers that the educational system is in a desperate need for reform.

Bruno’s main purpose in writing this article is to inform readers what is happening with the status of professionalism in teachers and why. Education reform is one of the biggest forefronts the United States is currently facing, and it has been for a long time. However, it seems that now more than ever, there are stories of teachers going on strike. Even with these stories, however, they are not covered as much as they should be, and Bruno took this opportunity to accurately inform readers about what is truly going on. He states that he does, in

fact, believe that teachers are feeling as if they are less professional than they used to be and that state legislatures and local governments are to blame.

Bruno's profession as a professor appeals to ethos - the appeal of character. He started out as a high school history teacher, but then went on to get various degrees - a Ph.D. in political theory and B.D and M.D in political science. Not only has he been a professor for numerous years, but he is also the director of the Labor Education Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign ("Bruno, Robert"). Bruno undoubtedly has knowledge about the education system, as he has been involved in it for a few decades. Moreover, his credentials are related to political science, which gives him additional knowledge of the government and their behaviors. So, not only is he a professor, which gives him a comprehension on the issues related to education reform but because of his education in political science, he is also informed about how the government specifically treats those in the education field. Because of his credentials, he can easily appeal to readers as knowledgeable on the topic, which then helps to establish trust between him and his readers.

Bruno also uses logos - the appeal to logic - to persuade and inform readers on the topic and how teachers feel about it. For example, he states, "Eighty-five percent of teachers said they went into the profession because they wanted to 'make a difference in children's lives,' beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic" (Bruno 3). He explains this for readers to understand that most teachers become teachers not only to help children academically but also socially. Not only this, but the quote also explains that most teachers already decide that they want to help children before actually going into the profession, which shows how passionate they are about helping children. This helps lay the foundation for his position that the education system is to blame for

the decline of the standards and professionalism of teachers and not teachers themselves because, just like Bruno states, most teachers want to make a difference in children's lives. Bruno additionally uses logos when stating, "They work 60-plus hour work weeks, are in near-constant communication with parents, and must collect copious amounts of student data, among many other administrative and technological tasks. Stagnant job growth in the industry has also led to increased class sizes" (Bruno 5). By describing the day-by-day life that teachers go through, he informs readers how busy teachers are with their workload normally. However, with the government decreasing its sense of professionalism in teachers, the job rate is declining. Because there is a shortage of teachers, class size has substantially increased, resulting in more work for the teacher. Because of this, some teachers may be forced to work longer hours. This can add stress to teachers, especially if teaching is not their only job, as they may be required to put teaching before everything else.

Bruno ends with using pathos - the appeal to emotion - by describing the bigger impact of what this situation causes. Bruno quotes Mary Hatwood Futrell, the President of the National Educators Association, who said, "We may at last be on the brink of realizing the centuries-old dream of American teachers: professional status, professional compensation... professional autonomy" (Bruno 6). This quote implies how there are multiple areas of conflict from the declined sense of professionalism in teachers. If teachers are seeing themselves as less professional, then that could show in their effort to teach and their success at teaching. If a teacher's success and approval rates in the classroom decline, then that could then negatively affect the children that are being taught by that teacher. This could be evident from their grades in the class to their behavior towards peers, teachers, friends, and family. As a result, parents

could then become worried about teachers and the education system as a whole for their children's' sake. Bruno uses pathos again by stating that there is no greater risk of going into the education field than any other field (Bruno 2). By saying this, he expresses the fear that teachers have about their own professions. Teaching is a stressful job as is, but now teachers fear that they will not be appropriately compensated for their hard work. Moreover, the demand for teachers is declining, as many people see the problems in the profession and ignore it all together. However, by portraying the fear in teachers, people will be able to more readily understand the position that teachers have with education reform more and sympathize for them.

Although Bruno does a good job of informing readers what is happening, there is slight bias as to what he writes. While he does have first-hand knowledge of the topic because he is a professor himself, this could lead to over-heightened emotions and over-generalization. For example, he states that most teachers become teachers so that they can make a difference in children's lives (Bruno 3), and then later reiterates his statement by stating that most are still passionate about what they do despite obvious issues in the education system (Bruno 5). So, this paints a picture that most are content with the position they are in. Moreover, the sense of professionalism as a whole is subjective to the teacher, or at least more subjective than Bruno makes it out to be. He argues that because schools are funded less and teachers are disregarded while the government focuses their spending on other areas, they feel or are seen as less professional than they used to be. However, money is not the definitive answer when determining if one is a professional. Rather, some people see professionalism defined by how receptive students are and how well they understand the ideas presented to them. Many teachers are still able to feel as though they are professionals because of their satisfaction with their

presentation of their subject and the success of their students in their course. Even though all teachers do have a curriculum that they have to follow, how they give the information is completely up to them. So, although Bruno feels as though teachers are limited in their work, they are not completely limited and still have room to put in some creativity.

Overall, Bruno is successful in informing readers about the issue of professionalism in teachers because of his usage of his own experience being a professor, facts and statistics about the education system and its employees, and appeal to emotions for teachers and families alike. His purpose is not only to inform readers that there concerns in the education system but to also persuade them to help by turning to communities and joining the cause until the government recognizes them. By writing this article, he hopes that he can raise more awareness of the issues in the education field and call for a cause to finally truly reform the system.

Works Cited

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