



Professional ethics and issues in teaching profession

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Abstract

The present paper objects the light on the needs, principles, challenges and constraints in the implementation of Professional Ethics in teachers. Our values, attitudes and actions influence the impact of our work. These ethical principles constitute a common ground for the development of our ethical awareness. It is our responsibility to act in accordance with these values and principles. Speaking about the profession of teacher, it is necessary to consider contemporary global ethical issues in education and educational research. There is an opportunity for students to develop a critical stance towards some of the most pressing ethical issues in education and educational research in contemporary societies. In a school context and with the support of school polices, programs and practices, ethical education helps students to develop for example in depth knowledge and awareness of their own and other cultures. Like the legal eagles and medicos, lakhs of school teachers should also be bound by a stringent code of ethics in a bid to instill professionalism among them. Teaching creates all other professions.

Keywords: ethics towards students, parents, community, colleague, professional issues

Introduction

Because they have a daily influence on the lives of children, teachers are often held to high standards. In the midst of all of their responsibilities, they're required to serve as strong role models and demonstrate ethical behaviors as they interact with students, colleagues, parents and others. Developing and following a professional code of ethics helps make sure teachers act in a professional and ethical manner at all times. Always teaching has been a noble profession in our society. It has the potential to have a great impact in the molding of the next generation and a teacher works as a Friend, Philosopher and Guide in this process. That is why Professional Ethics should be valued for teachers. While a great majority of teachers carry with their heads high this noble tradition and even innovate and teach beyond the classroom setting, a teaching profession can also be riddled with corruption. We have heard of teachers who sought material or sexual favor/s from students and parents in exchange for a higher academic rating. Other teachers have lost the passion to impart knowledge and are simply going through the motions of teaching, for the sake of fulfilling an obligation. It is needed also due to following reasons:- 1. India is in a state of transformation 2. Facing lots of challenges both from the society and individual needs 3. Perplexed with new development and cultural heritage 4. Imbalance between past, present and future 5. Result- Teacher no longer enjoys the same respect and status in the society 6. Development is not commensurate with ethical and cultural values inherent in India. A Teacher is said to be a candle that burns itself to light up the life of others; they should develop appropriate ethics among themselves so that the same values can be developed among students. While a great majority of teachers carry with their heads high this noble tradition and even innovate and teach beyond the classroom setting, other teachers have lost

the passion to impart knowledge and are simply going through the motions of teaching, for the sake of fulfilling an obligation. Now, teaching profession can also be riddled with corruption.

Professional Ethics

A teacher's first moral obligation is to provide excellent instruction. Teachers with a high level of moral professionalism have a deep obligation to help students learn. According to Wynne (1995), teachers with that sense of obligation demonstrate their moral professionalism by:

- Coming to work regularly and on time
- Being well informed about their student-matter
- Planning and conducting classes with care
- Regularly reviewing and updating instructional practices
- Cooperating with, or if necessary, confronting parents of underachieving students
- Cooperating with colleagues and observing school policies so the whole institution works effectively
- Tactfully, but firmly criticizing unsatisfactory school policies and proposing constructive improvement.

It is universally felt that like all other professions, the teaching profession should also have its own Code of Professional Ethics which indeed is a pre-requisite to ensure its dignity and integrity. It is also significant that the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 entrusts teachers with some onerous professional responsibilities to be internalized by them in the performance of their duties. Accordingly, it is considered necessary that the Code of Professional Ethics be evolved and adopted by the teaching community.

Professional Ethics towards Students

Treats all students with love and affection. Respects the value

of being just and impartial to all students irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, sex, economic status, disability, language and place of birth. Facilitates students' physical, social, intellectual, emotional, and moral development. Respects basic human dignity of the child in all aspects of school life. Makes planned and systematic efforts to facilitate the child to actualize his/her potential and talent. Transacts the curriculum in conformity with the values enshrined in the Constitution of India. Adapts his/her teaching to the individual needs of students. Maintains the confidentiality of the information concerning students and dispenses such information only to those who are legitimately entitled to it. Refrains from subjecting any child to fear, trauma, anxiety, physical punishment, sexual abuse, and mental and emotional harassment. Keeps a dignified demeanor commensurate with the expectations from a teacher as a role model.

Professional Ethics towards Parents, Community and Society

Establishes a relationship of trust with parents/guardians in the interest of all round development of students. Desists from doing any thing which is derogatory to the respect of the child or his/her parents/guardians. Strives to develop respect for the composite culture of India among students. Keeps the country uppermost in mind, refrains from taking part in such activities as may spread feelings of hatred or enmity among different communities, religious or linguistic groups.

Professional Ethics towards Profession and Colleagues

Strives for his/her continuous professional development. Creates a culture that encourages purposeful collaboration and dialogue among colleagues and stakeholders. Takes pride in the teaching profession and treats other members of the profession with respect and dignity. Refrains from engaging himself/herself in private tuition or private teaching activity. Refrains from accepting any gift, or favour that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or actions. Refrains from making unsubstantiated allegations against colleagues or higher authorities. Avoids making derogatory statements about colleagues, especially in the presence of pupils, other teachers, officials or parents. Respects the professional standing and opinions of his/her colleagues. Maintains confidentiality of information concerning colleagues and dispenses such information only when authorized to do so. Teachers must maintain ethical behavior in professional practice by accurately representing and maintaining certifications, licenses and other qualifications. Applying for a teaching certificate with false information or lying about meeting the requirements to renew the certificate can lead to a loss of teaching privileges. In addition to qualifications, teachers must practice ethical behavior when it comes to reporting grades and handling assessments. Misrepresenting grades or altering student responses on assessments can lead to criminal charges and the loss of a job.

Challenges and Constraints in the Professional Ethics

The problem is not that we cannot recognise them - it is that the pace of change is intractably slow - and governed by many variables. Teaching reform in many States remains slow - despite significant internal efforts, regular government

reviews, and ongoing calls for change. Resourcing reforms is always an issue. Teachers have a crucial role in improving student outcomes. They are the "leaders of learning in any community". We need to not only lift course and graduate standards but also ensure teachers are well supported - so they can contribute fully to the profession. Four of the most significant challenges facing the teaching sector today are:

1. Improving the professional status of teaching

Raising the status of teaching as a career choice will not only help to attract more able people into teaching – but also develop teaching as a knowledge-based profession. Many of the top-performing school systems internationally are consistently able to attract high-caliber people into teaching - thus driving up the status of the profession and attracting even more able entrants. A good recent development in teacher education in Australia has been the Federal government's new requirement for teaching students to be in the top 30 per cent for literacy and numeracy. Of course, an effective teacher has many more attributes than this - but it is a good start.

2. Improving the teaching curriculum

A second challenge is to re-design the school curriculum to better prepare students for life and work in the 21st century. Of course, the world today is a very different place to what it was 50 years ago. And as the pace of change accelerates and the world becomes increasingly a 'global village' - the curriculum needs to keep pace with the constantly advancing technology, communications, and social networking. Today's curriculum must also reflect the growth in knowledge-based work. The emergence of innovative, multi-disciplinary work teams is placing much greater emphasis on continual workplace learning.

"The school curriculum must continually evolve to equip students for this significantly transformed and constantly changing world - but our systems must provide the resources to enable teachers to do this"

3. Engaging the students

All teachers want their students to learn quickly and efficiently. However, in order to do that, they must know how to differentiate their teaching methods - and also tailor them to meet the many diverse learning needs of the students. In today's technology driven era, lessons need to be both powerful and engaging - especially when student attention spans are tending to diminish far more quickly than ever before. Of course, true learning is all about student engagement and when one considers the sheer number of variables and complexity of planning when running a classroom or lecture theatre; this can be hugely challenging for educators.

Once again - the challenge is to provide teachers with the resources and ongoing professional development to do this.

4. Better pay for teachers

In a recent survey conducted across 21 countries, the *Varkey GEMS Foundation* examined people's popular perception of teachers. Interestingly, although 95 per cent of those surveyed believed teachers should be paid more - they also thought those wages should be performance-based. In fact, across all

countries surveyed, more than 59 per cent stated that teachers should be paid according to the performance of their pupils. Put simply, for most people, putting more value on teaching as a profession means teachers must also assume greater responsibility over the results. The challenge is: how to enable fair and transparent systems to facilitate this. Finally, real improvement in the teaching sector can only come about by looking at 'the bigger picture'. This could involve things like attracting better innovation into the sector by engaging new players and new providers - and drafting new rules and regulations to help boost competitiveness and ease accreditation processes. Some of the Basic challenges faced by a teacher at school level are discussed here:

5. Absence of Incentive

There is almost an absolute lack of incentive, verbal or financial. There is hardly any appreciation (even acknowledgement) from school leadership. Parents are rarely grateful but quick to point out any and all shortcomings.

6. Bureaucratic Work

It's frightening to see the number of lists to be made, forms to be filled, supplies to be distributed, etc. There is an incredible amount of mechanical non-teaching work that not only utilizes precious teaching time but also frustrates teachers on almost a daily basis.

7. Class Size

Most teachers have to handle a class with anywhere between 40 to 80 students. Their primary role then gets reduced to herding children instead of teaching them. Contrary to popular opinion, pure teaching is one of the most exhausting exercises and doing so with 50+ toddlers running around (imagine the minions from Despicable Me) is so incredibly frustrating and futile that in a few years, most teachers give up.

8. Development Options Lacking

There is no scope to develop individually or collectively. Teachers have no say about educational policies or a platform to get together and discuss frequently faced challenges or share successful strategies. There is no sense of a common purpose and no opportunity to learn new skills. As far as the question of money goes, it's a mixed bag. Contract teachers, as far as I know, earn about 20-22k per month, and once hired for good, one's salary really starts to spike up based on one's qualification and some other dumb criteria. A nursery class teacher in my school earns close to 80k, while my principal bags 60k. But getting a permanent job is another task altogether, so largely, I can say that teachers are underpaid as well.

Overcoming the Challenges in Teaching Profession

New faculty members will face a number of challenges as they begin their role as an academic. Each institution, college, department and classroom may face a unique combination of challenges, but they fall into some general categories. Accomplished faculty are not daunted by these challenges, and if new faculty members anticipate them and navigate around, over or through them, their level of success will increase, along with their level of satisfaction. A few of the

common categories are explored, with some suggestions for overcoming them. Talk with colleagues, check on campus policies, brainstorm with students, and be creative. Addressing challenges with a sense of humor helps place the challenges in perspective.

Resource Availability

The availability of resources in institutions varies widely. When interviewing, it is helpful to ask about teaching resources that are of importance to your style of teaching. These may include technology, space, laboratory supplies, models, simulations, specimens, library materials, support for writing/math/technology skills, and many others. Know the budget available to support your teaching, and how to order needed materials. Look for teaching support in the form of grants, equipment, mentoring, and professional development activities. If your campus does not provide them, there may be community, professional or governmental organizations or associations that may help. Being an accomplished instructor can be a bit like being a scavenger, collecting materials over a lifetime of teaching to develop a comprehensive set of teaching support materials. New faculty members should begin developing a wish list of materials and thinking about ways to go about procuring them.

Student Skills

All faculty face students with a wide range of skills, abilities, and experiences. Being aware of the range and how to support students to help them each learn is a characteristic of an accomplished instructor. There are external supports on each campus in the form of centers for writing, math, and computer skills. There are counseling centers to help students address emotional issues that may interfere with learning. Some skills are discipline specific and need to be explicitly taught. These can be incorporated into course content, or required as modules to be completed outside of class, as appropriate. Accomplished faculty address the diverse needs of their students by becoming aware of the needs, locating resources to support students and making referrals, and teaching those skills that are critical to student learning success.

Student Behavior

In spite of college students being adults, their expectations for what is appropriate in a college classroom varies widely. New faculty members need to address behavior directly. Most often appropriate behavior is addressed in the form of policies outlined in the course syllabus and discussed when going over the syllabus. If issues still arise, it is most effective to address them quickly and directly. Issues may include: plagiarism, ethical dilemmas, rudeness, disrespect, attendance, lack of preparation for class, interruptions or inattentiveness, among others. New faculty members are most successful when they have anticipated the possible issues, and determined a response in advance. Many issues are appropriately addressed in the syllabus, and discussed at the beginning of class. This practice helps avoid many problems by clarifying expectations and consequences before an incident occurs.

Classroom Environment

College classrooms are shared by many people and this multi-

use situation can cause challenges. Classrooms may be occupied when class is scheduled to begin, tables and desks may be dirty, trash left behind by previous students, trash cans overflowing, whiteboards may be filled with writing from other classes, equipment broken or malfunctioning, or furniture may have been rearranged. Some classes have more enrolled students than chairs, others are awkwardly arranged for the style of teaching planned. Many campuses are overcrowded leaving few options, but new faculty members can be prepared by looking at the space assigned and finding out if there are alternative spaces available, alternative ways to arrange the room, replacement equipment or repair personnel available, or alternative equipment types to support their teaching. You will never know unless you ask, and do a bit of investigation. Sometimes the squeaky wheel does get the grease.

Issues of Difference

University faculty members have long noted particular challenges faced by individuals who differ from their colleagues and community in any of a number of ways. This may include gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, urban / rural, or political commitments, among others. While typically a university community better addresses these issues of difference than other settings, there remain some particular challenges for instructors, and these may be particularly acute for new faculty members. These situations are best addressed directly, openly and early on to minimize the impact on an individual's career.

Conclusion

“Teachers and leaders in education are committed to the professional ethics and can never shirk their professional responsibilities”

Teaching creates all other professions. A Teacher is said to be a candle that burns itself to light up the life of others; they should develop appropriate ethics among themselves so that the same values can be developed among students. Teachers are not only guides and guardians in schools but also second parents. We also want to revitalize the image of and respect for teaching as a vocation by increasing public awareness on the value of teachers in society and in national development and to use the occasion to call on everyone to contribute in making teaching as an attractive profession and in giving teachers the needed support and assistance. We are one profession of teachers and leaders in early childhood education and in primary and secondary schools. Our political mandate is to promote learning, development and building for all children and pupils.

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