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Understanding Code of Professional Ethics in Teaching

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Abstract

Values enable us to discriminate between right and wrong and they are the reflection of one's personality and outlook towards life. Values and ethics in professional front help us to be responsible, dynamic and a good professional. A code of ethics is a set of guiding principle which is premeditated to set out acceptable behaviors for members of a particular group or a profession. A code of ethics recommends how professionals can pursue their common ideal so that each may do the best possible. The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession represent a vision of professional practice. At the heart of a strong and effective teaching profession is a commitment to students and their learning. Teachers serve as role models who should recognize that their conduct, both on and off the job, can profoundly have impact on their professional image. Lapses in judgment can have adverse impact on the students, damage teachers' credibility and erode public trust in schools and the profession. The present scenario in an educational set up is an evidence of how rapidly value crisis and ethical dilemmas are prevailing. Teaching moral values is the dire need for shaping one's personality and thereby leading towards better inter-relationships among individuals. Although teachers spend most of their time in teaching, sometimes ethical concern issues do crop in. Teachers may face many tough ethical dilemmas and circumstances where an individual's own moral code is contested with that of colleagues, administrators and the school community. Several evidences are their when teachers and administrators make poor decisions and do not take into reflection on the ethical consideration. Teachers have to face many dilemmas in their teaching career. The paper aims at overcoming value crisis and ethical dilemmas in preparation of student teachers in the training process. Code of Professional Ethics for school teachers is an endeavor to provide direction and guidance to the teachers in enhancing the dignity of their professional work. Researcher has put some ethical dilemmas to student teacher. The purpose of such exercise was to know the ethical sense in student teachers; how they behave in tough situations.

Keywords: Ethics, Ethical Dilemmas, teaching profession

1. Introduction

If man has been placed on the highest pedestal among all other living being and is considered to be the best of creation, it is because of his higher power of judgment and because of certain values which distinguish him from other species. Man can understand what is right and what is wrong and can determine his goal, plan his actions and judge his doing from a moral angle. He has certain attributes or is expected to have certain attributes, which entitle him to be called "The noblest of creation", whereas these qualities are missing in the beasts or the brutes. It is this value system which distinguishes man from other living creatures. Man and values are inseparable. The values embody man's conception of 'ought', which is indicative of the quality of beliefs and norms worth pursuing and preserving at all costs for an individual or a group.

Values are the guiding principle decisive in day-to-day behaviors' as also in critical life situation. No society can survive without a moral order. A system of moral/human/spiritual values is indispensable to group living. Values are guiding star for man, which provide the prime motivating force behind his thoughts, emotion and action; have to be moral and spiritual, if the social cultural and spiritual life of man has to be such as brings peace, progress and welfare of both, the individual and the society.

The degeneration of values in a society could be fatal for the society itself. The order in the society should be such that the values are cared for and observed in lives. Education in any form, by and large, sub serves this purpose of inculcating values among the off springs on whose

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shoulders the future of our civilization rest. In the Indian tradition the value of Intellectual is expressed in a famous saying:

“Education develops a disciplined mind, disciplined mind leads to worthiness, worthiness brings prosperity, and prosperity enables a person to lead a dutiful life and ultimately to happiness.”

There are different kinds of controls and disciplines. The only kind of discipline that can be accepted as a part of educational process is self-discipline. Whatever devices we use, the goal must be to produce a person who is in control of his own emotions, who can prevent them from influencing his moral decisions. The control should be truly self-control. It is then a matter of giving pupils or helping them to attain control of their feelings. Education then must help us to understand our emotions in order to give us this kind of conscious control over them. “Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know; it means teaching them to behave as they do not behave” worded by Ruskin. For any humane society, it is inevitable that morally righteous behavior is practiced by the individuals who orate it.

It is impossible to talk of ethics without first considering some complementary and related terms. The three terms: ethics, morals, values are easily confused. They are defined as follows:

- ethics describes a generally accepted set of moral principles
- morals describes the goodness or badness or right or wrong of actions
- Values describe individual or personal standards of what is valuable or important.

Problems may arise where individuals allow their personal values to interfere with their actions, thereby potentially bringing their actions into conflict with stated ethical standards.

What is Ethics?

A person who knows the difference between right and wrong and chooses right is moral. A person whose morality is reflected in his willingness to do the right thing – even if it is hard or dangerous – is ethical. Ethics are moral values in action.

Etymology of Ethics and Ethical Behaviour

The etymology basis of the word ethics is Greek word ethos, meaning natural or customary conduct. Ethics and ethical are often used synonymously with morality and moral, as when reference is made to ethics or morality of a person or group, or to their ethical or moral values. But there is difference between the moral and ethics. To distinguish between ethic and morality as it distinguishes matters of individual character from those of social custom. A code of ethics is an attempt to define basic rules or principles for determining what constitutes good or right behavior. In other word it attempts to determine what we ought to do. A code of ethics in common usage is often configured as a code of good conduct – defining what constitutes good or right behavior in terms of series of rules.

An ethical behavior is characterized by honesty, fairness and equity in interpersonal, professional and academic relationships. The ethical behavior respects the dignity, diversity, equity fairness honesty respect rights of individuals and groups of people.

Rationale of Ethics in Teaching Profession

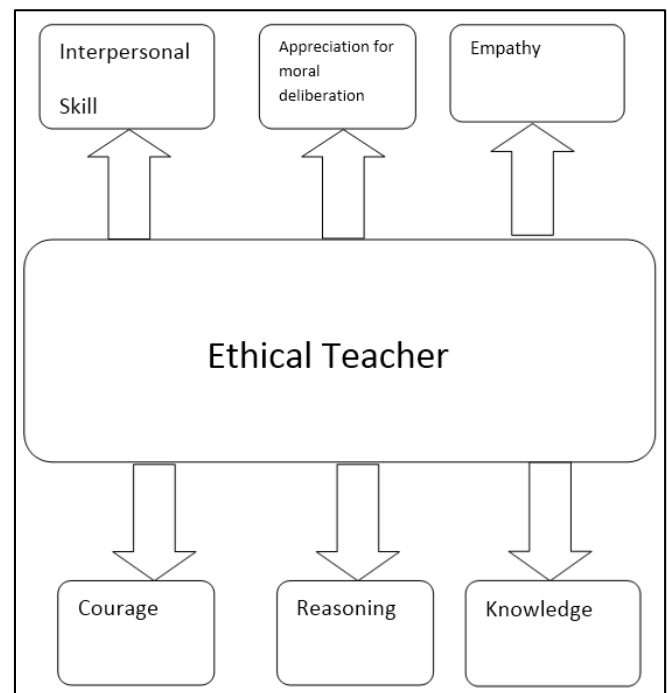
“Education is man making process” said Swami Vivekananda. The man makers are the teacher who plays a vital role in imparting education. But what does ethics has to do with teachers? Teachers have a unique set of ethical relationships and obligations that are embedded in their work therefore teachers, carry a special ethical burden.

The need of professional ethics for the teachers may be summed up in the words of Laurie, “if a teacher has not an ideal aim he had better take to shop keeping at once, he well there doubtless find an ideal within his capacity.” The National Commission for school teachers recommended that the code should be prepared in consultation with the teachers’ organizations and formulation must be done at a national level.

The National Commission for teachers’ higher education 1983-85 stressed the necessity for professional ethics and values.

Currently, no common code of ethics is applicable to all the members of teaching profession. But the question arises who is an ethical teacher? Ethical teacher should exhibit the six demonstrated characteristics.

Who is an Ethical Teacher?



Teachers have several obligations towards Students:

- Teacher should treat all students with love and affection.
- Teacher should respect the all students irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, sex, economic status, disability, language and place of birth.
- Teacher should help students Physical, social, intellectual, emotional, and moral development.
- He should respect basic human dignity of the child in all aspects of school life.
- He makes planned and systematic efforts to facilitate the child to actualize his/her potential and talent.
- He adapts his teaching to the individual needs of students.
- He should not discriminate against any child on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or political beliefs.
- He should present as a role model to the society.

Teacher has also some obligations towards Parents, Community and Society

He establishes a relationship of trust with parents/guardians in the interest of all round development of students.

He strives to develop respect for the composite culture of India among students.

He should refrain from taking part in such activities as which may spread feelings of hatred or enmity among different communities, religious or linguistic groups.

Teacher has also some obligations towards the Profession and Colleagues:

- (i) Strives for his/her continuous professional development.
- (ii) Creates a culture that encourages purposeful collaboration and dialogue among colleagues and stakeholders.
- (iii) Teacher should treat other members of the profession with respect and dignity.
- (iv) Refrains from engaging himself/herself in private tuition.
- (v) Refrains from accepting any gift, or favor that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or actions.
- (vi) Teacher should not make malicious or intentionally false statements about a colleague.
- (vii) Avoids making insulting statements about colleagues, especially in the presence of students, other teachers, officials or parents.
- (viii) Respects the professional position and opinions of his/her colleagues.
- (ix) Maintains confidentiality of information concerning colleagues and dispenses such information only when authorized to do so.

Ethical Dilemmas in Teaching

Although teachers spend most of their time in teaching, sometimes ethical concern issues do crop in. Teachers may face many tough ethical dilemmas and circumstances where an individual's own moral code is contested with that of colleagues, administrators and the school community. Several evidences are their when teachers and administrators make poor decisions and do not take into reflection on the ethical consideration. The example is one of critical incidents in the subcategory "be more flexible". In this example, the tension between caring for the pupils and school rules has led the teacher to an opposite conclusion, to be less formal in the future. Teachers have to face many dilemmas in their teaching career. Sometimes teachers feel that some policies do counter the student circumstances, making them questionable and unfair. When the teachers do not question these types of rules and policies they are acting in an unethical way. At the same time, if the teacher simply does not enforce the rules and policies considering it unethical they send wrong message to students their parents and other stakeholders. Many teachers avoid "rocking the boat", but this is a disservice to the students and does not uphold the ethical responsibility of their students.

Code of Professional Ethics for school teachers is an endeavor to provide direction and guidance to the teachers in enhancing the dignity of their professional work. Researcher has put some ethical dilemmas to student teacher. The purpose of such exercise was to know the ethical sense in student teachers; how they behave in tough situations.

Objectives

- To inspire teachers to reflect and uphold the honor and dignity of the teaching profession.
- To identify the ethical responsibilities and commitments in the teaching profession.
- To guide ethical decisions and actions in the teaching profession.
- To prepare student teachers for better adaptability at work place.
- To sensitize the student-teachers about ethical situations.

2. Method

In order to achieve the objectives stated above and to test the corresponding hypotheses a sample of 80 subjects studying in B.Ed. from affiliated colleges from GGSIPU Delhi was taken. Certain Ethical dilemmas were chosen by the investigator herself. In keeping with the objectives and In order to obtain the responses given by subjects on five ethical dilemmas were administered to each subject and their opinion on ethical dilemmas was computed. Ethical Dilemma is a situation involving ethical conflict, where the individual has to act or reflect on the ethical consideration.

Ethical Dilemma Dilemma

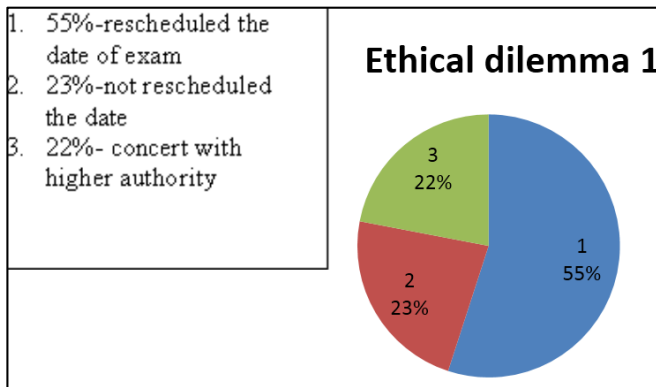
Ravi was an excellent pupil in twelfth class. He was also studying for the entrance examinations to get into medical school. He was having a very hectic schedule and undergoing pressure. The day before the pre-board examination, he asked the teacher if he could take the test at a later date as he was preparing for entrance to medical college. The teacher told him that there was no VIP treatment in the exams; the date of the exam had been set a month earlier and he should have been prepared. During the exam, he was caught trying to copy from a note and his exam was disqualified. He lost a whole year because of that one missing test even though he qualified in the entrance to medical college. The teacher was a little disappointed to realize that she had taken a rash decision without thinking about the outcome. She regretted her lack of flexibility. Maybe she should have postponed the pre-board exam for him and for a few other pupils for whom the date of the exam was inconvenient.

- What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?

23% teachers were of the opinion that if they had been not flexible and not postponed the exam, it will become the habit of students. Students will also take things lightly. A message will go that exams date can be rescheduled and make them more in disciplined. This could further get translated in their behavior not to take things seriously.

22% teachers were of the view that if they had the authority they would have allowed change of date if given valid reasons. Some also said to check the record whether such request was made for the first time from the pupil and is not repetitive and he is not taking advantage.

55% of the teachers were also of the opinion that the examination date could have been rescheduled to accommodate the pupil as the ultimate objective is to make a career. At times rigidity leads to abnormal results. The dates are changed owing to various reasons so it can be changed to help the pupils.



Dilemma2

Ms. D, a third year 7th grade math teacher, complains to her next door neighbor about a difficult student in her class, identifying the child by name and providing specific details about the student’s academic record. Ms. D says that the neighbor doesn’t know the student personally, so there should be no problem discussing the student and the situation.

What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?

The teacher is in a position of confidentiality and should not disclose the intricate details of students to anyone. If by any chance the identity is revealed the student will be in dire situation. , If the teacher has to seek advice or guidance she should never reveal the child identity. No body or any teachers have a right to disclose the identity of the individual.

95% teachers have of the opinion that the child will get exposed and can be embarrassed. This will make the situation more grim and unmanageable. The personal details or information are not meant to be disclosed. Only 5% teachers have a different opinion.

Dilemma3

Ms. H teaches ninth grade English. She gives the class directions for a writing assignment that is to be completed by the end of the period. Jolly isn’t paying attention and missed the directions. He frequently bothers his classmates by humming, tapping his pen, reminding them of the rules or speaking out of turn. He asks for the directions to be repeated. The other students in the class begin to make fun of Jolly and ridicule him for not paying attention once again. Ms. H, feeling frustrated because she is asked to repeat the instructions once again, continues passing out materials and ignores jolly and the other students.

What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?

In this dilemma three views of the teachers were received. 70% teachers have a view that teacher should not ignore Josh, as there might be a behavioral problem which needs to be corrected professionally. If ignored the problem may escalate beyond repair. The teacher should seek professional help to the child.

20% have a view, being a teacher, Ms. H has to try and channelize his energy in the right direction, so as to keep him busy and occupied.

10% have a opinion that Teacher should pay attention on jolly. Once she instructs her and then ignores her. After her

class she can help her to do the assignment. In the class she has to keep the busy in the completing assignment because she has to care the students of whole class.

Dilemma 4

Across the country, school officials are grappling with the growth of social media and the implications for their schools. Technological communication between students and teachers outside of school is often at the heart of the problem. More and more, school officials are making ethical and policy decisions balancing the ease of communication with student safety and decorum. Scores of teachers have e-mailed or texted their way into the headlines, crossing the bounds of appropriate relationships with students by engaging in inappropriate emailing and/or texting. Often, the problem with this form of communication is that it can obscure the boundaries between teacher and student. It is important for educators to understand the benefits as well as the dangers of using electronic communication with students.

What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?

85% teachers were of the view that the site of the college or the email should not be used for personal information. The personal lives should not be discussed. The mail can be seen by anybody. The gap is to be maintained. The email should be strictly in relation to studies and affairs.

15% teachers thought that email exchange will increase the interaction. It will not limit the interaction only to class rooms and come out of time boundaries. The gap should still be maintained.

Dilemma 5

Teacher K, teaches in 7th Grade but is often critical of teacher F, who uses innovative method of teaching which is time consuming. Teacher F is repeatedly criticized by the colleagues for not completing the syllabus as per the schedule though the students are very happy with teaching of Teacher F. Principal also reprimanded teacher F and asked for explanation.

What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?

It is professional ethics and code of conduct to never speak about a person who is not present in the scenario. 45% teachers have view that the teacher should focus on completion of syllabus, even though the students love innovative methods.

55% teachers have view that she has to use innovative methods because students were very happy. But the teacher F asked for explanation, she has to explain the planning about completion of course. She can plan for course and use innovative methods and also complete the course.

3. Conclusion

Code of Professional Ethics for school teachers is an endeavor to provide direction and guidance to the teachers in enhancing the dignity of their professional work. The author tries to provide an insight towards the conduct of teacher in a workplace for better adjustment to overcome crisis and for preparation of ethically sound and morally upright teachers:

This also provides the code of conduct, foster belief in role of values and ethics while facing dilemmas and to overcome crisis. This helped them in understanding and facing the situations in a better way at their respective workplaces.

It also helps in sensitizing the students about the role of values in our life to prepare them for better adaptability at workplace for promoting an ethical behavior and help them in decision making. It also helps the teacher trainees to overcome dilemmas and helps them in preparing a better teacher.

It also aid in understanding and identifying the causes of value degradation and to sensitize students about the role of values in our life. This has been an added help in preparation of better life and formation of ethically correct individuals.

The teaching profession should also move towards self-regulation, which implies that every teacher should have the inner urge to adhere to the ethical principles. The teacher should inspire his students through his value system.

“The mediocre teacher tells.

The good teacher explains.

The superior teacher demonstrates.

The great teacher inspires.” William Arthur Ward

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