

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Teaching is the most respected profession and exhibit great social responsibility as teachers are the architect of future citizens. In the earlier times teachers were highly respected and important members of the society. But as the society underwent changes and education became job oriented various dimensions were added in the teacher professional and in order to maintain the dignity and high ideals in the profession there has been felt a need of Code of Ethics for Teachers. The professional teaching standards highlight the improvements to be made in the profession of teaching to contribute to the country's progress. The teachers should be considerate towards the needs of students and should be humble to fellow professionals. This paper highlights these responsibilities of teacher and also discusses the professional code of conduct of teachers.

Paper

Teaching is considered one of the most noble professions globally and is associated with social progress. Teacher are the most respected members of society and this is evident throughout the earlier times. Teachers were the centre of the education system and were needed to pass on their knowledge, skills, and ethics optimally to students. With the advancement in Information and Communication technology there have been an evolution in the education system and change in the role of teachers. The professional teaching standards highlight the improvements to be made in the profession of teaching to contribute to the country's progress.

The basic purpose of education is to create skill and knowledge along with awareness and consciousness of our glorious national heritage and the achievements of human civilisation, possessing a basic scientific outlook and commitment to the ideals of patriotism, democracy, secularism, socialism and peace, and the principles outlined in the Preamble to our constitution. Higher education has to produce leaders of society and economy in all areas of manifold activities with a commitment to the aforesaid ideals. Higher education should strive for academic excellence, and progress of arts and science. Education, research and extension should be conducted in conformity with our national needs and priorities and ensure that our best talents make befitting contributions to international endeavour on societal needs.

The principal goal of teachers' work is to help remove the hurdles that teachers face everyday in order to do their jobs. Teachers help students learn the academic basics, but they also teach valuable life lessons by setting a positive example. As role models, teachers must follow a professional code of ethics. The word ethics is connected to specific expectations that society has for professionals in professional settings such as code of ethics. It basically points to certain code of conduct. Ethics are often considered synonymous to morals. It is to state that the word moral is reserved for prescriptive standards of behaviour imposed by some powerful entity which involves a sense of right and wrong. But ethics designate mode of conduct.

Every professional should demonstrate certain qualities like loyalty, collegiality, truthfulness, integrity etc. The same is true the teacher. National Council of Teacher Education has put forward a code of conduct for teachers which reads as below:

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Every teacher should-

- *Recognize* that every child has a fundamental right to education of good quality;
- *Recognize* that education should be directed to the all round development of the human personality;
- *Recognize* the need for developing faith in the guiding principles of our polity, viz., democracy, social justice and secularism;
- *Recognize* the need to promote through education the concept of composite culture of India and a sense of national identity;
- *Recognize* that teachers, being an integral part of the social milieu, share the needs and aspirations of the people;
- *Recognize* the need to enhance self-esteem of teachers;
- *Recognize* the need to organize teaching as a profession for which expert knowledge, specialized skills and dedication are pre-requisites;
- *Recognize* that the community respect and support for the teachers are dependent on the teachers' professionalism, and
- *Recognize* the need for self-direction and self-discipline among members of the teaching community;

This ensures that students receive a fair, honest and uncompromising education. A professional code of ethics outlines teachers' main responsibilities to their students and defines their role in students' lives. Above all, teachers must demonstrate integrity, impartiality and ethical behaviour in the classroom and in their conduct with parents and co-workers.

Students matter most and it is the moral duty of the stakeholders in the education system to imbibe in the students strong moral values and ethics. Learning is by imitation so teachers must model strong character traits, such as perseverance, honesty, respect, lawfulness, patience, fairness, responsibility and unity. As a teacher, one should treat every student with kindness, equality and respect, without showing favouritism, prejudice or partiality. Teachers must maintain confidentiality unless a situation warrants involvement from parents, school administration or law enforcement and never use relationships with students for personal gain.

Commitment to the Job

Teachers must wholly commit to the teaching profession. Every classroom should promote safety, security and acceptance always avoiding any form of bullying, hostility, dishonesty, neglect or offensive conduct. One should obey school policies and account for all funds and resources at disposal. It is the responsibility of a teacher to design lesson plans to meet standards and create a well-rounded education plan that appeals to a wide range of learners.

Keep Learning

A professional code of conduct demands attentiveness to continuing education requirements and career development. One must research new teaching methods, attend classes to maintain your

certifications, consult colleagues for professional advice, participate in curriculum improvements and stay up to date on technical advancements for the classroom. It is the duty of the teacher to ensure that your teaching methods are fresh, relevant and comprehensive. Teachers must engage in educational research to continuously improve their teaching strategies.

Healthy Relationships

In addition to fostering healthy relationships with students, teachers must build strong relationships with parents, school staff, colleagues, guidance counsellors and administrators. One must never discuss private information about colleagues unless disclosure is required by law. Always avoid gossip, including false or mean spirited comments about co-workers.

It is to say that Positive attitude and team spirited mindset can make all the difference. Teachers require that individuals be moral exemplars in and out of the classroom. Teachers possess ethical responsibilities. Kohlberg proposed six stages of moral development. In his view, individuals have the capacity to develop morally over the lifetime. Individuals initially base their ethical decisions on rules and regulations and act in ways to avoid punishment. As individual develop morally, they may eventually reach a stage where their actions are based on universal principles of justice and respect for human life.

Teachers should be motivated by a universal respect for human life and also be guided by principles of caring. Teachers have a fiduciary duty to act in a way that is in the best interest of their students. This overarching responsibility of teachers provides an ethical standard of professional practice to which professional educators must abide and has powerful practical and legal implications for their personal and professional lives.

Professional expectations do not always distinguish between teachers' on or off – duty conduct. Accordingly, teachers must act in their private lives in a way that does not undermine their efficacy in the classroom, demean their employing school entity or damage their position as a moral exemplars in the community.

Besides being moral exemplars, teachers are also expected to model ethical principles through their pedagogy. Ethical lessons are implicitly communicated by the culture of caring and respect that the teacher creates and enforces as well as by his or her academic decision- making and interactions with students, colleagues, parents and community members.

In this age of information and communication technology when information is not indispensable, meaning that students are not dependent on teachers for knowledge. Similarly with the advent of conscious society where the young generation is taught at a very early stage about their life goals due to highly competitive job market, the students realize their potential at a very early stage. They are motivated and self dependent. Fast information flow has created a need or an urge for value additions.

We observe that at all levels there is a great concern about depletion of values among the younger generation. All the educational forums put great emphasis on value based education, indoctrination of moral values so on and so forth.

Another need is establishment of peace. So there is a need of human and peace education. Keeping this scenario apart, we can also say that moral and ethical behaviour is always seen as indispensable component of teacher behaviour. Teachers have great responsibility on their shoulders. They are builders of nation so onus lies with them to establish a just and humane society.

As a guide for the teaching profession, this code of professional ethics may be adopted.

First Principle

The primary obligation of the teaching profession is to guide children, youth and adults in the pursuit of knowledge and skills, to prepare them in ways of democracy and to help them to become happy,

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useful, self supporting citizens. The ultimate strength of individual lies in social responsibility, economic competence and moral strength of the individuals.

Second Principle

The members of the teaching staff share with parents the task of shaping each student's purposes and acts towards socially acceptable ends. The effectiveness of many methods of teaching is dependent upon cooperative relationships with the home.

Third Principle

The teaching profession occupies a position of public trust involving not only the individual teacher's personal conduct, but also the interaction of the school and the community. Education is most effective when these relationships operate in a friendly, cooperative and constructive manner.

Fourth Principle

The members of the teaching profession have inescapable obligations with respect to employment. These obligations are nearly shared employer- employee responsibilities based upon natural respect and good faith.

Fifth Principle

The teaching profession is distinguished from many other occupations by the uniqueness and quality of the professional relationship among all teachers.

Gunzenhauser puts three tenets of professionalism for educators: a) As a professional, an educator is in a position to profess substantive beliefs about the meaning and value of education. In other words, a professional educator has a philosophy of education and engages others who may have different ideas about the meaning and value of education. A philosophy of education grounded on the care of the self is a philosophy of possibility.

b) As a professional, an educator is in a position to exercise ethical and professional judgment. An educator is in a position to continually develop ethical and professional judgment throughout his career and his various positions of responsibilities.

c) As a professional, an educator is in a position to acknowledge and resist opportunities to enact normalization on himself/herself, students and colleagues. One very important part of articulating an active/ ethical professionalism is being clear on the role that resistance plays in order to achieve more defensible educational aims than those that are encouraged by high-stakes accountability policy. To act ethically, an educator needs to understand how and why her work at some level be resistant.

Importance of ethics in education constitutes the repository of their social and cultural values and the medium of their historical memory.

Every teacher should show an equal level of dignity to every person as an individual starting with their first common lesson. Teachers' respect towards the dignity of their students should also be manifested through how they fulfil their professional obligations: one of which is to clarify to the students, at the very beginning, the details of their study, the criteria of evaluation, the dates of their sessions etc.

Teachers at all levels of education should ensure the cognitive, intellectual and moral progress of their students and show them appropriate respect and appreciation. Keeping the set rules and requirements for fulfilling students' obligations and making sure that they do not change in the course of the term or school year merely through the teacher's wilful decisions is also a way of showing respect for the human dignity of students on the part of the teacher. The teacher possesses some obligations towards the stakeholders of the system like students, colleagues and others.

Obligations towards Students

Teachers should treat students with affection and respect the identity of students irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, sex, economic status, language and domicile. Teachers should facilitate students' physical, social, intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual development. Teachers should regard basic human dignity of the child in all aspects of school life. They must be involved in planning and systematic efforts to facilitate the child to actualize his/her potential and talent. Teachers should transact the curriculum in conformity with the values enshrined in the Constitution. Teachers should modify his/her teaching to the individual needs of students. Teachers should be neutral and also exhibit confidentiality of the information concerning students and dispenses such information only to those who are legitimately entitled to it. It is also the duty of the teacher to refrain oneself from subjecting any child to fear, trauma, anxiety, physical punishment and mental and emotional harassment.

2. Obligations towards Parents, Community and Society

Teachers are the guardians of students in the school and they need to establish cordial relations with parents/guardians and prevent oneself from doing any thing which is derogatory to the respect of the child or his/her parents/guardians. Teachers should try to develop respect for the composite culture of India among students and refrains from taking part in such activities as may spread feeling of hatred or enmity among different communities, religious or linguistic groups.

3. Obligation towards the Profession and Colleagues

Teachers should work for his/her continuous professional development. They should try to expand their knowledge and gain purposeful experiences by participating in various professional development activities like in service training programs which help to develop a culture that encourages purposeful collaboration and dialogue among colleagues and stakeholders. They should have humility and consideration for fellow teachers and should treat other members of the profession with respect and dignity.

Teachers should work with honesty and should not accept any kind of favour, bribe or work so that there is no influence on professional decisions or actions. Teachers should develop cordial and polite relations with others. They should maintain confidentiality of information concerning colleagues and dispenses such information only when authorized to do so.

Whoever adopts teaching as a profession assumes the obligation to conduct himself in accordance with the ideals of the profession. A teacher is constantly under the scrutiny of his students and the society at large. Therefore, every teacher should see that there is no incompatibility between his precepts and practice. The national ideals of education which have already been set forth and which he/she should seek to inculcate among students must be his/her own ideals. The profession further requires that the **teachers** should be calm, patient and communicative by temperament and amiable in disposition. **Teachers should** adhere to a responsible pattern of conduct and demeanour expected of them by the community; manage their private affairs in a manner consistent with the dignity of the profession; seek to make **professional** growth continuous through study and research; express free and frank opinion by participation at **professional** meetings, seminars, conferences etc. towards the contribution of knowledge; maintain active membership of **professional** organisations and strive to improve education and profession through them; perform their duties in the form of teaching, tutorial, practical and seminar work conscientiously and with dedication; co-operate and assist in carrying out functions relating to the educational responsibilities of the college and the university such as: assisting in appraising applications for admission, advising and counselling students as well as assisting in the conduct of university and college examinations, including supervision, invigilation and evaluation; and participate in extension, co-curricular-and extra -curricular activities including community service.

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Teachers should respect the right and dignity of the student in expressing his/her opinion; deal justly and impartially with students regardless of their religion, caste, political, economic, social and physical characteristics; recognise the difference in aptitude and capabilities among students and strive to meet their individual needs; encourage students to improve their attainments, develop their personalities and at the same time contribute to community welfare; inculcate among students scientific outlook and respect for physical labour and ideals of democracy, patriotism and peace; be affectionate to the students and not behave in a vindictive manner towards any of them for any reason; pay attention to only the attainment of the student in the assessment of merit; make themselves available to the students even beyond their class hours and help and guide students without any remuneration or reward; aid students to develop an understanding of our national heritage and national values.

Teachers should treat other members of the profession in the same manner as they themselves wish to be treated; speak respectfully of other **teachers** and render assistance for **professional** betterment; refrain from lodging unsubstantiated allegations against colleagues to higher authorities; refrain from allowing considerations of caste, creed, religion, race or sex in their **professional** endeavour.

Teachers should discharge their **professional** responsibilities according to the existing rules and adhere to procedures and methods consistent with their profession in initiating steps through their own institutional bodies and/or **professional** organisations for change of any such rule detrimental to the **professional** interest; refrain from undertaking any other employment and commitment including private tuitions and coaching classes which are likely to interfere with their professional responsibilities: co-operate in the formulation of policies of the institution by accepting various offices and discharge responsibilities which such offices may demand; co-operate through their organisations in the formulation of policies of the other institutions and offices co-operate with the authorities for the betterment of the institutions keeping in view the interest and in conformity with dignity of the profession; should adhere to the conditions of contract; give and expect due notice before a change of position is made and refrain from availing themselves of leave except on unavoidable grounds and as far as practicable with prior intimation, keeping in view their particular responsibility for completion of academic schedule.

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