



ETHICS AND TEACHING- A COMPLEX DILEMMA

Puneet Mittal
Sadhna Mittal

Abstract

Teachers are an extremely important facet of any society and their role in society is both significant and valuable. The importance of a teacher as an architect of our future generations demands that only the best and the most [intelligent] and competent members of our intelligentsia be allowed to qualify for this noble profession. 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. This ensures that students receive a fair, honest and uncompromising education. A professional code of ethics outlines teachers' main responsibilities towards all the stake holders. Above all, teachers must demonstrate integrity, impartiality and ethical behavior in the classroom and in their conduct with parents and coworkers. The professional ethics are more publicized than ever before. By professional ethics we mean all issues involving ethics and values in the roles of the professions and the conduct of the professions in society. 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. It is easier to talk about professionalism and ethics in a teaching profession. But ground reality is far different. Code of conduct in any field is important, but to implement the same a level playing field for all the stakeholders is equally important.

Introduction

To understand the importance of a teacher let us first look at the following quotes first.

"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge"

Albert Einstein

"Teaching is a very noble profession that shapes the character, caliber, and future of an individual. If the people remember me as a good teacher, that will be the biggest honour for me"

A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

"Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world"

Malala Yousafzai

"A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning"

Brad Henry

Clearly teachers are an extremely important facet of any society for a number of reasons and their role in society is both significant and valuable.

- Teachers are the people who educate the youth of society who in turn become the leaders of the next generation of people
- Teachers are the people who are teaching children and imparting knowledge upon them in their most impressionable years
- What children learn from their teachers at a young age will most likely stay with them in some facet for the rest of their lives

Teachers play an extraordinary part in the lives of children for the formative years of their development and the importance of teachers is something that cannot be understated. They involve themselves in molding their students into responsible citizens of their country.

Within a school, if teachers are well educated and if they are intellectually alive and take keen interest in their job, then only success is ensured. The importance of a teacher as an architect of our future generations demands that only the best and the most [intelligent] and competent members of our intelligentsia be allowed to qualify for this noble profession. 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. 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 behavior in the classroom and in their conduct with parents and coworkers.

Expectations from a teacher

When we speak of good teachers, it means that a teacher must be a model of faith and piety and should have a fairly good knowledge. A teacher should consider it his duty to educate and train his students and should feel responsible for it. He should feel that



his students have been entrusted to him and he should avoid any breach of the trust the society has reposed in him, he should be able to be a sociable person with his roots in the society, people should take him as their well-wisher and a sincere friend who cares for their children. It should be ascertained at all cost that a candidate for this profession has a natural acumen and aptitude for teaching.

Teachers need to actively participate in the social activities in a positive way and know the art of teaching with a deep insight into child psychology. Always dealing with the students in a just manner not losing any self-control is an important part of being a teacher, respecting their students, feelings, ego and trying to understand and resolve their difficulties with grace is important in being a teacher. He should be able to smile in the face of bitter criticism on his opinions, and should not feel ashamed or humiliated to accept his mistakes wholeheartedly. He should be proud of his culture, his national dress and his national language. He should be a missionary, a mentor, a reformer and a guide besides being a dedicated tutor. In other words, he should be a perfect teacher and a perfect education. In other words different roles a teacher plays can be summarized as follows:

Working with Students

A teacher's job is to provide a quality education to all students. A professional code of ethics must address this fact, stating that teachers must not show favoritism or discriminate against students. Teachers also must interact with students appropriately, not taking advantage of students in any way, bullying students or putting them down. Contact with students outside of the classroom or school building must be kept to a minimum and must focus on school-related activities and events.

Student Safety

In addition to a teacher's job to help all students learn, a professional code of ethics also addresses a teacher's responsibility to keep students safe. Teachers must abide by all school and classroom safety procedures to ensure student safety. It's also a teacher's responsibility to report instances of bullying and harassment. If a teacher suspects cases of abuse or neglect, or a student confides in a teacher in cases of abuse or neglect, the teacher is required to report it to the proper authorities, even if the student requests otherwise.

Professional Practice

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.

Working with Colleagues

In a school, teachers must collaborate with administrators, fellow teachers and other employees in order to provide a safe and positive learning experience for students. A teacher must follow the direction of administrators, even if rules or expectations seems unreasonable, in order to avoid undermining an administrator's authority and to set a positive example for students. When disagreements arise between teachers, they must handle the disagreements in private and refrain from talking negatively about colleagues in front of students. In addition, teachers must engage in appropriate relationships with colleagues, keeping personal feelings and adult behaviors out of the school.

Interacting with Stakeholders

Aside from colleagues, teachers have a responsibility to interact positively with parents and other stakeholders in a child's education. Contact with parents must be kept professional, free from arguments and physical contact. If a teacher has an issue with a parent, another teacher or administrator must be present during all meetings. Teachers also must avoid being unduly influenced by parents and other stakeholders when it comes to students' grades or other school-related matters.

Teaching and Professionalism

The professions and professional ethics are more publicized than ever before. Many dramatic violations of ethics in various professions have come to public attention. Other reasons for the greater interest in professional ethics is increase in the total number of professionals and growth in their of percentage in total population, reliance on the advanced technology dominated by the professionals and the view that professionals are vital to nation's future. Public criticism has grown with greater visibility of



professionals and their failures to police their rank effectively.

The term profession, Becker (1962) noted, is an honorific title, a term of approbation that is a highly valued collective symbol. No single occupational group completely fulfills all the criteria of a profession. The extent to which an occupation fulfills the criteria determines whether it will be considered a profession, semi profession or non professional occupation (which may be unskilled, semiskilled or skilled). There is considerable overlap among various investigators' list of criteria of a profession, and almost invariably the development and enforcement of a code of ethics is a criterion (Barber, 1965; Goode, 1966).

What is a Profession?

History

1. "Profess": a public declaration, vow on entering a religious order. a commitment (vows) to serve for a good end.
2. 16th century: commitment to learned pursuits (three learned professions are divinity, law, and medicine, then the military); being an authority on a body of knowledge, belonging to an occupation; being skilled, being a fractioned, not an amateur.
3. 19th century (late): "New professions have come into existence, and the old professions are more esteemed" Oxford English Dictionary

An Occupational Group...

1. Delivers important services
2. Makes a commitment to serve the public
3. Claims a special relationship to the marketplace, not merely in the rough and tumble; distinguished from a trade.

An Occupation Becomes a Profession...

1. When group of individuals sharing the same occupation organize to work in a morally permissible way, or to work to support a moral ideal. (i.e. Doctors organize to cure the sick, librarians organize to promote access to information, etc.)
2. Members set and follow special standards for carrying on their occupational work.

* At least one of these standards must go beyond what law, the marketplace, ordinary morality (what a ordinary moral person must do) and public opinion demand. (i.e. a good mercenary only needs to fulfill the terms of his contract, a good, professional soldier must serve his country honorably, even when ordinary morality, law, and public opinion do not require it.

* These special standards are morally binding to "professed" members of the profession. If a member freely declares (or professes) herself to be part of a profession, she is voluntarily implying that she will follow these special moral codes. If the majority of members of a profession follow the standards, the profession will have a good reputation and members will generally benefit; if the majority of members violate these voluntary standards, professed members of a profession will be at a disadvantage or at the least receive no benefit from declaring a profession.

A Professional Is...

A member of an occupational group (characterized above) who:

1. Sees other members, including those employed elsewhere, as peers/colleagues
2. Exercises judgment in the performance of occupational tasks and follows relevant professional standards.
3. Accepts the profession's agreement to work in a morally permissible way (often expressed as a code of ethics) as determining in part the obligations of the role.

What are professional ethics?

By professional ethics we mean all issues involving ethics and values in the roles of the professions and the conduct of the professions in society. Thus the scope of professional ethics is broad and thereby excludes only strictly private acts and those public acts done as a citizen rather than in a professional role.

One function of professional ethics is to assure clients that the professional services will be rendered in accordance with reasonably high standards and acceptable moral conduct. This confidence enables professionals to exercise relatively independent judgments in decision affecting clients.

Second, since the professional in rendering a public services, ethical records assure the public at large that the professional is serving the public interest and should continue to enjoy public trust, confidence and support.

A third form is to provide a code of uniform rules and behavioral standards by means of which professional conduct can be properly regulated. Such codes help maintain the integrity of the profession and deters increased government interference.

Professional Codes of Ethics



A code of ethics...prescribes how professionals are to pursue their common ideal so that each may do the best she can at a minimal cost to herself and those she cares about (including the public...). The code is to protect each professional from certain pressures (for example, the pressure to cut corners to save money) by making it reasonably likely (and more likely than otherwise) that most other members of the profession will not take advantage of her good conduct...A code is a solution to a coordination problem." (Davis, Michael. "Thinking Like an Engineer" pp.153-4).

(For the next section, it may be helpful to look at a code of ethics. Take a look at the National Association for Professional Engineers Code of Ethics. What sections of the code mention the following obligations?)

Individual Professional Obligations:

1. An individual's professional obligations are derived from the profession and its code, tradition, society's expectations, contracts, laws, and rules of ordinary morality

2. A professional has obligations to his/her Employer

Clients/Customers

Other Professionals- relations of collegiality, specific expectations of reciprocity
Profession as a collectivity

Society - responsibility to serve the public interest

Upshot: A professional is not a mere hired gun; responsibilities go with knowledge and position.

Individual Responsibility:

1. Sphere of tasks – daily/regular responsibilities

2. For outcome caused by one's actions or decisions

3. Liability = answerability for one's actions or decisions

4. Capacity - to appreciate, to control one's behavior

5. Moral responsibility - looking ahead to and caring about what happens to oneself and others.

Levels of failing to meet one's individual responsibility:

Negligence – failure to meet the appropriate standards of care (or that level or quality of service ordinarily provided by other normally competent practitioners of good standing in that field, contemporaneously providing similar services in the same locality and under the same circumstances.

Gross negligence – falling way below the standard of care

Deliberate wrongdoing.

Professional ethics for the teaching profession

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. 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. Basic values of the teaching profession Human values and human rights Our work is founded on values and principles set down in universal human rights, especially the UN convention on the rights of children. These rights must be promoted and defended in early childhood education and in schools. The inviolability of human individual freedom and the need for safety and care are fundamental. Respect and equality Each individual person's personality and integrity must be met with respect. No form of oppression, indoctrination or prejudiced opinions shall be tolerated. All children in early childhood education and all pupils in schools have a right to participate and have their views heard and taken into account. They shall have a right to freedom within the framework of the education community. Professional integrity Ethical consciousness and high professional competence are the basis of the profession's integrity and are essential in creating good conditions for play, learning and building. Our right to methodological freedom and our professional discretion gives us a special responsibility to be open about our academic and pedagogical choices. Society should be confident that we use our professional autonomy both properly and ethically. Privacy Adherence to confidentiality and information standards is crucial in our work. Everyone has a right to privacy. Personal information must be managed in ways that protect the integrity and dignity of children, pupils, parents and colleagues. Electronic information dissemination requires a special critical awareness. Teachers and leaders in education are committed to the professional ethics

Ethical responsibility of the teaching profession – in our work with children, pupils and parents

Our responsibility is to build a trusting relationship with those we work for and with. Our loyalty rests with the children and the pupils, to promote what is in their best interest. Truthful communication of knowledge and high quality pedagogical facilitation is essential.



All teachers and leaders of pedagogical institutions, promote the possibility to play, learning and building for all children and pupil. Their work to be up to date academically and pedagogically. They are caring and are aware of the power. We are expected to ethically evaluate work & promote equality amongst all.

We are knowledgeable, responsible and present grown-ups in children's and pupils' lives. As a professional community we have a common responsibility to develop good education and to promote and develop our profession. We initiate ethical reflection and dialogue with all employees at the work place & cooperates to further develop knowledge, competences and ethical judgment, both internally and in interaction with relevant institutions in higher education and research with aim to create a culture of positive cooperation where all opinions are treated seriously. We work in a culture of openness and facilitates transparency. We help to create enlightened minds without fear.

Professionalism and Code of conduct

A code helps demarcate an occupation as possessing one of the hallmarks of a profession. This characteristic is especially important for those semi professions that aspire to fulfill professional statue. Code of Professional Ethics for School Teachers Introduction 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. For the purpose of this Code, the term "teacher" covers all school teachers, whether in government or private schools, on full-time or part-time basis, at the elementary and secondary levels and the teachers holding administrative and supervisory positions The Code of Professional Ethics for teachers provides a framework of principles to guide them in discharging their obligations towards students, parents, colleagues and community. Increased awareness of the ethical principles governing the teaching profession is essential to ensure 'professionalism' among teachers.

Conclusion

It is easier to talk about professionalism and ethics in a teaching profession. But ground reality is far different. Ethics itself is a vague term. What might be right can be wrong in the views of another. Recent examples of events across the world show the same. The outrage we saw in Jawahar Lal University is the perfect example of how politics is directly affecting our education system. A teachers duty is to produce self thinking right minded individuals not pupil with closed minds. But I would be doing a great injustice if totally blame the teachers for the same. An important reason for this is understood to be the poor salaries of our primary and secondary teachers which are no better than that of clerks. A large number of our teachers is, therefore, frustrated and uninterested. A currently relevant example is prevalent in the way Internal Assessment is being done and how management of educational institutions pressurize teachers to do unethical work. Again, the teaching profession also does not enjoy due respect in the society. The primary and secondary teachers are particularly at a disadvantage. Their status is lower than that of doctors, engineers, advocates, civil servants; even lower than that of semi literate and illiterate traders. It would therefore require great commitment for an intelligent individual, however fond of education and training he may be, to forsake the career of a doctor or engineer in favor of teaching. Teachers must be provided better opportunities, prospects and perks so that they can give their best. And when a teacher gives its best the future is secured. Code of conduct in any field is important, but to implement the same a level playing field for all the stakeholders is equally important.

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