Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Research (JIMR)
E-ISSN:1936-6264| Impact Factor: 8.886| UGC CARE II
Vol. **20** Issue **01**, **Jan-** 2025
Available online at: https://livejimrjournal.in/
(An open access scholarly, peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary, monthly, and fully refereed journal.)

Professional Ethics in Teaching

Dr. Sandeep Kaur
Assistant Professor of Economics, Guru Nanak College, Budhlada (Punjab)

ABSTRACT

In the education system, on the front line teachers play a pivotal role in making the children ethical. Apart from disseminating knowledge or imparting information to students, a teacher can raise the morality of a student by encouraging ethical practices. Presently, ethics is the most concerning issue because the youth generation indulges in unethical activities randomly. For providing good quality education it is necessary that a teacher should be professionally competent and up to date in its profession and must follow certain codes of conduct such as professional ethics. There are three pillars of teaching which interact with each other i.e. teacher, student and society. Therefore, in this paper, I tried to focus on three types of ethical responsibilities of a teacher in the education system i.e. ethical responsibilities towards Students, Parents, Community and Society, ethical responsibilities towards the Profession and colleagues. Furthermore, the paper also highlights some suggestions and strategies that must be used by a teacher to ensure the development of teaching professionalism and for improved learning outcomes.

Keywords: Education, Ethical Responsibilities, Professional Ethics, Teacher, Teaching.

Introduction

The main purpose of education is to create skills, grasp knowledge and spread awareness about our glorious national heritage. The values enshrined in our constitution lay stress on attaining a basic scientific outlook and commitment to patriotism, democracy, secularism, socialism and peace. Education should strive for academic excellence and progress of the arts and sciences in conformity with our national needs and priorities. The teaching profession has a distinguished record of service in the whole World. Ethics of teaching investigates ethical and moral aspects of teachers´ work in the education process; it characterises his/her position in the education system, also with his/her moral attitude in issues connecting ethics and morality with this profession. Ethics of teaching works also with the analysis of moral problems of teaching and tries to find solutions and give instruction for the solution of real moral problems that can exist in the daily practice of the teaching profession. It also often results in the formulation of codes of ethics for teachers, for the teaching profession. Professions have their own distinctive values and ethical commitments.

Genesis of ethics

Ethics is the branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct, duties and obligations. The term ethics derives from the Ancient Greek word ethikos, which is derived from the word ethos (habit "custom"). As a branch of philosophy, ethics investigates the questions "What is the best way for people to live?" and "What actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances?" In practice, ethics seeks to resolve questions of human morality, by defining concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime. It involves critical reflection on morality, and the ability to make choices between values and to examine the moral dimensions of relationships. In everyday life, ethics guides individuals and societies in making choices that align with principles like fairness, honesty, respect and compassion. Therefore, Ethics is the science which enables us to understand humanity as it is and humanity as it could be and then instructs us on how to move from reality to the ideal.

Meaning of Professional Ethics

Professional ethics helps us as early childhood educators to think about our responsibilities to children, families, communities, and society and to address some of the difficult situations we face every day. Professional ethics refers to the set of standards, moral principles, and values adopted by the professional community that guide the behaviour and decision-making of individuals within a specific profession. It gives us boundaries that how professionals should act to maintain integrity, accountability, and trust while performing their duties and interacting with clients, colleagues, and the public. In simple words professional ethics are certain rules and regulations followed by professionals and it is the most important identifying feature of their profession.

Moreover, professional ethics involves reflection on professional responsibility that is carried out collectively and systematically by the membership of a profession which ensures that individuals adhere to the ethical standards of their field, fostering respect, fairness, and professionalism. It helps to maintain the credibility and reputation of the profession while protecting the interests of all stakeholders.

In teaching, there are three pillars which interact with each other i.e., teacher, student, and society. All of us are aware that our main responsibility is to the student and the development of his/her full potential. In this respect we need to devote all our efforts towards excellence, the acquisition of knowledge and the observance of democratic principles. We must maintain a high level of competence and to do this we need to engage in continuous professional development throughout our careers so that we can follow our ethics. The Code of Professional Ethics for teachers provides a framework of principles to guide them in discharging their obligations towards students, parents, colleagues and the community. Increased awareness of the ethical principles governing the teaching profession is essential to ensure professionalism' among teachers.

The one problem with the code of ethics is that we can't always have the answers in black and white. Sometimes there are grey areas where the answers aren't so simple. Professional ethics are also known as Ethical Business Practices.

Code of Ethics

A teacher's fundamental responsibilities include constructing courses and classroom environments that encourage learning, evaluating learning fairly, and treating students respectfully. Ethical teaching means engaging in behaviours that meet these responsibilities in ways expected by students, your institution, and your discipline. These responsibilities form the primary elements of ethical behaviour in teaching and are embedded within ethical codes and principles for teachers. The Code of Ethics is a document that maps the profession's responsibility to society describes the code as the aspiration of all educators and also provides standards by which to judge conduct. Furthermore, a Code of ethics is a written set of principles designed by an organization for its employees to help them conduct their actions according to its primary values and ethical standards. Code of ethics designed to help professionals conduct business honestly and with integrity. A code of ethics document may outline the mission and values of the business or organization, how professionals are supposed to approach problems, the ethical principles based on the organization's core values and the standards to which the professional will be held. One of the most important things about a code is that it lets a professional speak with a collective voice. It supports practitioners in their work, so they base their decisions on the core values of the profession rather than on their values and morality. Core values are at the heart of the profession's moral commitments.

Hence, a code of conduct identifies a set of principles, which describe the professional conduct, personal

conduct and professional competence expected of a teacher by their colleagues and the community. It is based on the values set out in the accompanying Code of Ethics, namely Integrity, Respect and Responsibility.

Purpose of the Code of Conduct

The code of conduct sets out principles of action and standards of behaviour, how the members of the group will operate or work. The Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers applies to all registered teachers and it is not a disciplinary tool. The Code of Conduct codifies what is already common practice within the teaching profession. Its purpose is to:

1. Provide a set of principles which will guide teachers in their everyday conduct and assist them in solving ethical dilemmas.
2. It helps to develop a positive attitude towards the teaching profession and also Inculcates the feelings of professionalism among teachers.
3. Serves as a guiding compass as teachers seek to steer an ethical and respectful course through their career in teaching and to uphold the honour and dignity of the teaching profession.
4. Promote public confidence or trust in the teaching profession.
5. Inform the education community and the wider public of their understanding and expectations of the teaching profession.

Core Values

A core value describes consciously and knowingly embraced commitments which are held by early childhood professionals because they contribute to society. It is a professional compass for use in making a decision. Core values are deeply rooted in the history of the field of early childhood education. Standards of ethical behaviour in early childhood education are based on a commitment to the following core values:

(i) Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle. (ii) Base our work on knowledge regarding child development. (iii) Appreciate and support the close attachment between the child and family. (iv) Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society. (v) Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual such as child, family member, and colleague. (vi) Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust, respect and positive regard. (vii) Practical implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as a set of values universally accepted as essential for children to be able to fulfil their potential. (viii) Establishing multi-cultural programmes that help young children integrate spiritual/religious with secular learning, or bridge the gaps of experience often faced by multiple languages or multiple cultural groups.

Hence, the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct can be used to clarify our thinking and prioritise teacher's fundamental responsibilities.

NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct

A code of ethics is a hallmark of every profession as it assures society that a profession is providing the public good only with acceptable moral conduct. NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct was prepared under the auspices of the Ethics Commission of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. In 1987, NAEYC formed a commission to oversee the work on ethics. Based on input from the field and with the guidance of the Ethics Commission, the NAEYC Governing Board approved the Code of Ethical Conduct in 1989. The NAEYC Code provides optional and voluntary ethical guidelines for responsible behaviour and sets forth a common basis for resolving the principal ethical dilemmas encountered in early childhood education. The NAEYC Code appears to have the most extensive effort to give invaluable help in facing the hard decisions of its members with ethical implications.

In addition to the core values spelt out in the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, early childhood program administrators commit themselves to the following additional core values. We commit to

- Recognize that we have many responsibilities—to children, families, personnel, governing boards, sponsoring agencies, funders, regulatory agencies, the community, and the profession—and that the well-being of the children in our care is our primary responsibility, above our sobligations to other constituencies.
- Recognize the importance of and maintain a humane and fulfilling work environment for personnel and volunteers.
- Be committed to the professional development of staff.

Thus, NAEYC recognizes that many daily decisions required of those who work with young children are of a moral and ethical nature.

Professional Ethics

Teachers' professional conduct is characterised by the quality of the relationships they have with their students, students' parents or guardians, families and Communities and their colleagues. The Code of Ethics of the Education Profession indicates the aspiration of all educators and provides standards by which to judge conduct. The educator recognizes the magnitude of the responsibility inherent in the teaching process as given below:

Ethical Obligations towards Students

Childhood is a unique and valuable stage in the human life cycle. A teacher's responsibility is to provide care and education in settings that are safe, healthy, nurturing, and responsive for each child. For this purpose, an educator shall always maintain a professional relationship in and outside the classroom with all students.

(i) Treat all students with love and affection:

Treating all children with love and affection irrespective of their school performance, their parental background, religious or caste affiliations and achievement level is the core of the teaching-learning process. Students who do not perform well in their studies are generally deprived of teachers' consideration for them. Teachers should create trust, confidence, interest, enthusiasm and hope and not fear frustration and disappointment in the students. They should also communicate well and appropriately with their students and maintain a safe and challenging learning environment. Teachers always base program practices upon current knowledge and research in the field of early childhood education, child development, and related disciplines, as well as on particular knowledge of each child.

(ii) Respects basic human right and dignity of the student in expressing his/her feelings:

In a democratic country, there is a need to recognize that each child has its rights and dignity as a human being. Violation of the rights of the child is often observed in our schooling process. For example, many times teachers prohibit students from expressing their feelings. Any derogatory remark by the teacher affects the child's self-esteem which, in turn, affects his/her learning progress. Therefore, support the right of each child to play and learn in an inclusive environment that meets the needs of children with and without disabilities. A school must ensure that the rules framed for maintaining discipline, which have the pre-condition of a proper teaching-learning process, are such as do not violate the basic human dignity of the child.

(iii) Makes planned and systematic efforts to facilitate the child to actualize his/her potential and talent:

The prime responsibility of every teacher is recognizing the potential and talent of each child. Therefore, to assess children only appropriate instruments and strategies are used that have the potential to benefit children. To provide enough care and attention to children, children's creativity, potential and talent need to be recognized. The teacher should recognize the multiple talents such as sports, music, dance and other creative endeavours amongst children. To actualize children's potential to the fullest extent the teacher should continuously observe the children and also interact with experts to ascertain their talents. He/she will have to integrate the knowledge about the child with the strategies of transacting curriculum.

(iv) Alter or reorganize his/her teaching to the individual needs of students:

It is a great challenge for the teacher to understand each child's needs in matters of acquiring knowledge and this is possible only when the teacher becomes conscious of such a role and strives to continuously keep abreast of the pedagogies of attending to the individual needs. As an active developer, the Learners actively formulate their knowledge, in which children are engaged in questioning, debates, exploration etc., by connecting new ideas to existing ideas based on different activities in which they may be involved. Allowing children to ask questions that require them to relate what they are learning in school to things happening outside. To advocate for and ensure that all children, including those with special needs, have access to the support services needed to be successful. While planning his/her teaching, the teacher should take into consideration the children's personal background and previous knowledge. Therefore, the teacher should always adopt a child-centred pedagogy.

(v) Respect a student's privacy in sensitive matters, such as health or family problems, and only reveal confidential matters when appropriate:

It is the ethical responsibility of teachers to maintain the confidentiality of a student's private information regarding his/her health or family problems which he/she has shared with the teacher or the teacher has obtained from different sources. The information could be shared in certain cases with others very judiciously for the betterment of students; the information may be communicated in true spirit. Such confidential information is dispensed only to those who are legitimately entitled to it. The close interaction between the teachers and the taught builds the trust and respect vital for the development of the personality of the child. Hence, the professional educator does not reveal confidential information concerning students, unless required by law.

(vi) Facilitates student's Physical, social, intellectual, emotional, and moral development:

Childhood is a period of growth and change requiring the development of a child's physical and mental capabilities to the fullest. Because a physically fatigued person cannot do mental work properly; on the other side mentally fatigued person cannot do physical work properly. Therefore, physical education would benefit them for their all-around development and also help them understand the social context, its problems societal values and to inculcate emotional intelligence through the teaching-learning process. The teacher should act as a facilitator for the students to engage them in diverse activities for their physical, intellectual, social, emotional and moral development. The physical development of students as an important aim of education should be encouraged through physical education activities. Nowadays physical education has become a part of school curricula all over the world. The teacher should develop many social qualities through games and sports like dutifulness, discipline, loyalty, cooperation, sincerity, tolerance, punctuality, morality, etc., which promote feelings of friendship and brotherhood in the children. Physical and emotional security is the cornerstone for all learning right from the primary to the secondary school years and even afterwards. Hence, it is the responsibility of a teacher to create and maintain safe and healthy settings that foster children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development and that respect their dignity and their contributions.

(vii) Respect 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;

School is a place where social justice and equity have to be practised and valued by the teachers. It is the ethical responsibility of teachers to support all children in maintaining the use of their home language and in learning English or support all children with experiences in a language that they know. Teachers always ensure that each child's culture, language, ethnicity, and family structure are recognized and valued in the program. Teachers' own belief in democratic principles, tolerance, social justice and equity prepare a better climate for students' learning of these values. Impartial attitude and non-discriminatory practices towards all students should be ingrained in the school practices. Hence, in their professional role, teachers interact with students without displaying bias or preference.

(viii) Abstain from subjecting any child to fear, stress, anxiety, physical punishment, sexual abuse, and mental and emotional harassment;

The teacher should take all suitable measures to defend the child from all forms of physical or mental violence. Any kind of corporal punishment such as rapping on the knuckles, running on the school grounds, kneeling or standing for long hours, being beaten with a ruler, pinching, slapping, child sexual abuse, locking up children in classrooms, electric shock, and emotional harassment by teachers has larger implications for child's life, all acts leading to physical and mental injury, need to be consciously avoided. They exercise their responsibilities in ways that recognise that there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with students. Nowadays we often read in newspapers that the relationship between a student and a teacher is not an ideal one. A teacher always remembers that a professional relationship will be violated if a teacher has a sexual relationship with a student or uses sexual allusion. The teaching community needs to abstain from such activities as violate child rights.

Ethical Responsibilities towards Parents, Community and Society:

There may be situations where parents may bring problems relating to their wards to teachers, which require composure on the part of the teacher to deal with both parents and the students. It is the ethical responsibility of a teacher to share information about each child's education and development with families and to help them understand and appreciate the current knowledge base of the early childhood profession. Parents sometimes tend to ignore the faults of their children despite the teacher bringing the same to their notice and through communications with family members they support them in their task of nurturing children. If parents in such circumstances are responded with cordiality there may be positive results from this outcome. Students at the school stage are at an impressionable age therefore the good work done by the student can be shared with the parents as this is likely to lead to better appreciation of the school. To develop relationships of mutual trust and create partnerships with the families, teachers welcome all family members and encourage them to participate in laying the foundation for a better environment of understanding between the student and parents, including involvement in shared decision-making. For constructing a support network, when needed, foster families' efforts and participate in building networks by providing them with opportunities to interact with program staff, other families, community resources, and professional services, which have an impact on the education or well-being of a student. Teachers should be respectful of and courteous to parents. Often respect the dignity and preferences of each family and recognize that their students come from a diverse range of cultures, languages, customs, and beliefs to ensure a culturally consistent environment for all children and families.

Undoubtedly, a composite culture has an outcome of the long interaction and cooperation among a diverse range of culture streams in the country which has drawn the best from various strands. The value of composite culture requires equal tolerance and respect for all cultures and therefore, it is the onerous responsibility of the teacher to develop tolerance and equal respect for all religions, faiths and languages in the students. The concept of being an Indian first and that all religions and communities have contributed to the evolution of the composite culture must be instilled among students through example. A teacher should understand the difference between education and propaganda because he is the central figure in the educational system and connects with students both in and outside the classroom. Therefore, in no case, the teacher should use the platform of the school for the propagation of his/her personal views about different religions, regions or castes, if these are not in tune with the principles of our Constitution.

Ethical Responsibilities towards the Profession and Colleagues;

(i) Strives for his/her continuous professional development;

In a knowledge-driven society, a teacher must strive continuously for his professional development by using modified pedagogical practices and becoming a lifelong learner. To reap the benefits of the latest advancements in different areas of knowledge, which will equip him/her to engage the students with updated knowledge, the study of newspapers, magazines, professional journals and new books in his/her field of specialization; discussion with colleagues on different themes of education; undertaking research and experimentation, participation in study circles, seminars, conferences, workshops, uses the internet to explore new knowledge through search engine etc. and participation in INSET programmes through face to face or distance mode are some of the strategies which a teacher can use to grow professionally and also to move upwards in the professional hierarchy. The teacher's motivations to learn continuously also encourage the students to learn through research, experimentation, discussions, observations, etc. to access updated knowledge.

(ii) Treats other members of the profession with respect and dignity;

To establish and maintain relationships of respect, trust, confidentiality, collaboration, and cooperation with co-workers, a teacher must share resources with co-workers, collaborating to ensure that the best possible early childhood care and education program is provided. Moreover, a teacher must realise that all members of the teaching profession, irrespective of their academic and professional qualifications, deserve to be treated with respect and dignity and always support co-workers in meeting their professional needs and in their professional development. In staff meetings, all newly enrolled or junior teachers should be encouraged to express their views freely without any hesitance and given momentousness and support in their efforts to implement updated education policy that enhances the development of the students served. Even a teacher with higher pay scales, holding a postgraduate degree, should treat the views expressed by primary school teachers, holding lower pay scales, with equal respect irrespective of their work. A senior teacher never tries to derogate the potential of any newly recruited or junior teacher based on age, caste, religion, sex or state to which they belonged.

(iii) Abstain from derogatory statements about colleagues, accepting any gift which influences professional status, giving private tuition and making unsubstantiated allegations against colleagues:

If a teacher criticises the behaviour, teaching style, dressing sense, caste or professional competence of a colleague in the presence of students, parents, other colleagues and school officials it should be violating principles of teaching and professional ethics. A teacher, by doing this unethical act, is certainly attempting to derogate the teacher in the eyes of pupils, parents or school officials. A teacher has a difference of opinion with colleagues on purely professional matters but the mode of expression of the difference in opinion should be polite and dignified. The Teacher should abstain from accepting expensive gifts from students, book publishers, sports materials or science equipment from their suppliers as they would expect higher marks in the internal assessment or selection for participation in cultural activities and sports tournaments, to recommend their books or help them in acquiring purchase orders for their materials respectively. Teachers have to be role models for the students of the impressionable age. If sometimes the students offer flowers or greeting cards out of respect and affection for the teachers these should be accepted with a smile. The teacher also should not accept gifts or favours from the parents of the students, as it may be against their professional ethics.

Some persons are employed as full-time regular teachers but engaged in tuition work for three to four hours before or after school hours would affect the quality of their work in schools adversely. A full-time regular teacher, who spends more time on giving tuition, hurts his school duties because he/she has utilized less time for reading or for making preparations for teaching which is very necessary for updating his/ her knowledge. Giving private tuition to one's students may lead to a violation of many ethical principles as the teacher is likely to develop a soft corner for such students and he/she may be tempted to favour them in many ways and thereby may do injustice to other students who may not have sought his/her assistance through private tuition. It is a practice at many places that some teachers attempt to seek favours from the school authorities and belittle other colleagues due to professional jealousy. It is often observed that with a sizeable number of teachers, there is always a possibility that a teacher will have a circle of close friends which is quite natural.

But it will be unethical if leads to the formation of groups having mutually conflicting interests. A teacher violates professional ethics if a group of teachers submit representations or complaints against their colleagues and if a teacher is found abusing children sexually or instigating students of one community against students of another community. If a teacher observes that some of his colleagues violating the ethical principles then a teacher must to bring it to the notice of the senior colleagues and file complaints only when he/she has first- hand knowledge of the said violation and in no case it should be based on mere here say. A teacher shall also maintain confidentiality in dealing with issues related to an employee's job performance and shall respect an employee's right to privacy regarding personal issues.

Conclusion

In the present time, to enrich the system of education and carrying out the tasks of individuals in a well-organized manner, it is mandatory to take into consideration professional ethics. Professional ethics not only help individuals carry out their tasks and activities in a well-organized manner and attain job satisfaction, but they are also able to retain their jobs. The educators need to ensure that apart from making provision of knowledge and information in terms of academic concepts, they need to impart information in terms of professional ethics which helps them to render an effective contribution towards promoting the well-being of the community and nation and emerge into moral and ethical human beings. Moreover, as a profession, we must hold ourselves to the highest standards to provide safe, healthy, nurturing and responsive settings for children when making decisions. Like all other professions, 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 listed in the Code of Professional Ethics for teachers. Professional ethics are not mandatory for the educators but students and other members who are connected with educational institutions also upgrade their knowledge in terms of professional ethics.

References

1. Bone, J. (2005). An ethical journey: Rights, relationships and reflexivity. Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 30, 1-6.
2. Farrell, B.J. and Cobbin, D.M. 2002. "Codes of ethics: their evolution, development and other controversies". In: The Journal of Management Development 21(2), 152-163.
3. 3. Feeney, S., & N.K. Freeman. 2002. Early childhood education as an emerging profession: Ongoing conversations. Exchange (143): 38–41.
4. Feeney, S. 2010. Ethics Today in Early Care and Education Review, Reflection, and Future. Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct. NAEYC. 72- 77.
5. NAEYC. 2004. Code of ethicl conduct: Supplement for early childhood adult educators. A joint position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE), and American Associate Degree Early Childhood Teacher Educators (ACCESS). www.naeyc. org/fil es/na eyc/file/positions/ethics04.pdf
6. National Education Association. (2002–2011). Code of ethics. Retrieved from National Education website: http://www.nea.o rg/home/30442.htm