

## Professional Ethics in Teaching in Higher Education; India

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### Abstract

Professional ethics represent a cornerstone of effective and trustworthy practices in any field. They encompass the principles and standards that guide behavior, ensuring that professionals act with integrity, responsibility, and respect towards others. In essence, professional ethics help define what is acceptable conduct in various professions, thereby establishing a framework for making sound decisions and maintaining public trust. A profession is a social calling that ensure a vocation which provides one with the means to earn one's livelihood. Professional ethics is based on certain ethical values and norms which a profession is supposed to follow. It is necessary to reveal, sustain and enhance certain basic human values. These values are kindness, care and compassion trust and reliability, truthfulness and honesty, justice and fairness, performance of a duty for the benefit of others, non-violence and non-injury, and accountability and social responsibility. A value is defined as a principle that promotes well-being or prevents harm. Values are our guidelines for our success our paradigm about what is acceptable. Values are the scales we used to weigh our choices for our actions, whether to move towards or away from something. Personal values are defined as: Emotional beliefs in principles regarded as particularly favorable or important for the individual. A personal value can be defined as an absolute or relative ethical value, the assumption of which can be basis for ethical actions. Personal Ethics deals with how we treat others in our day to day lives. Professional Ethics often involves choices in an organizational level rather than a personal level.

***Try not to become a man of success rather becomes a man of value*** – Albert Einstein.

In this paper I am going to explain the meaning and definition of professional ethics in teaching, characteristics, types and several challenges of professional ethics in teaching.

## Introduction:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ ४७ ॥

Karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana

Mā karma-phala-heturbhūrmā te saṅgo 'stv akarmani. -Verse 47,

chapter 2, Gita

That means, you have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty.

*Bhāgavad Gitā* advises everybody to perform his duty given by God in a dispassionate manner without being inquisitive about the fruits of labour the work ethics propounded by the *Bhāgavad Gitā* work as a type of yoga (meditation) known as the Karma Yoga is defined as the skill in the performance of any work or duty.

A Professional ethics is the fulfillment of the final cause of a profession. Work ethics and professional ethics are interrelated categories. Work was considered as a divine will and it was believed that by participating in a work, a person could associate himself with the divine act of creation.

## What Is Professional Ethics?

First of all we have to clarify the meaning of the term 'profession'. The term profession denotes a social calling that provides opportunities for a vocation as a means to earn one's bread. The salient features of profession are as follow.

- The basis of Professional Ethics is a few ethical values and norms which a professional is obliged to follow.
- A profession demands such skill as, commitment, special knowledge, dedication and dignity. A profession has its basis on expertise and special abilities.
- A professional man is obliged to take oath on such crucial social duties and ideal behavior when he enters into a profession such as a doctor, engineer, teacher, etc. The oath is the confession and the promise to practice certain standards of ethics for

these public services and perform his duties sincerely showing the spirit of service and dedication.

- A profession, far from being mere monetary gain or temptation, it is something else and that is social service. Its main goal is to serve society with sincerity and devotion. The objective of a profession is to serve rather than exploiting others financially and authoritatively.
- The main objective of profession is to provide some public services with due social responsibilities. Mainly there are three basic social responsibilities and these are;
  - Responsibility for the community
  - Responsibility for the profession, and
  - Responsibility for the consumers or the victim

### **Professional Ethics and Human Values**

Professional ethics is very much essential for the purpose of revealing, sustaining and enhancing a few basic human values. Some of these values are kindness, care pity, sympathy, loyalty, fidelity, compassion, trust, reliability, truthfulness, honesty, sincerity, justice and fairness, performance of such yeomen services such as, non-violence and non-injury, and accountability and social responsibility. Following are the three deferent types of human values closely associated with profession:

- Human values and professional values should be complement to each other.
- The influence of professional values and actions on the values of the consumers, receivers and victims.
- Professional values and socio-cultural values.

The above mentioned values are closely associated with each other. The beneficial impact of such association may be constructive, in the sense that they may amplify their forces, move in the same route and increase the social and ethical values. This may be termed as co-operative association. On the other hand, interactions may also be antagonistic in nature and there may be a conflict of values, resulting in the disturbance of social-cohesiveness, brewing tension.

Another possible outcome of the association of these values may be a situation of co-operative tussle. In a situation like this, the initial value conflicts may be resolved peacefully by the affected parties through cooperation and all of them will have a win-win situation that will maximize their goals. Cooperative conflict is not a conflict qua conflict, but there are differences of opinions that ultimately lead to the maximization of common goals. For instance, a patient may not agree to undergo surgery as suggested by his doctor for fear of potential excruciating pain but is ready to suffer silently, the inconveniences created by the disease. Once the doctor assures him that the pain is very negligible and temporary as it is a laser surgery, the patient agrees to it and both of them achieve the common goal of disease elimination.

## **Types of Professional Ethics**

There are several types of professional ethics, such as

- Journal ethics
- Medical ethics
- Media ethics
- Engineer ethics
- Teaching ethics, etc.

In this paper I am going to discuss on professional ethics of a teacher in detail.

## **Professional Ethics in Teaching**

The profession of teaching is ingrained in the gradual development of minds and its final molding of future generations. Teachers as educators, have greater responsibilities for imparting knowledge as well as for providing proper shape to ethical behavior. So far as the ethics in teaching is concerned, it ensures the fact that educators act with dignity, integrity, fairness, neutrality, and respect, creating a congenial environment which is very much essential for learning and personal growth. Here's a detail overview at the pivotal ethical principles that provide guidelines to the educator in the vocation of teaching and the challenges faced by him/her.

## Major Principles of Professional Ethics in Teaching

### 1. Dedication to Student Welfare:

- **Principle:** Teachers are committed to the overall development of the students. Creating a safe and assisting learning ambience, paying due attention to the various needs of the students, and nurturing their mental and emotional development are such a few principles.
- **Application:** Teachers should pay importance to just, equal and unbiased attention and to all pupils, individual needs of the learners, and should play the role of the students' best interests.

### 2. Integrity and Honesty:

- **Principle:** Teachers must display honesty so far as their professional conducts such as grading, reporting, and interactions with students, parents, and colleagues are concerned.
- **Application:** This implies avoiding providing special attention to a particular student or a group of students, maintaining factual records, and providing reliable and neutral feedback on student performance. It also implies maintaining academic standards and remaining aloof from any type of academic dishonesty or tendency to copy from others.

### 3. Confidentiality:

- **Principle:** Teachers must keep the privacy of student information intact and uphold confidentiality so far as the sensitive matters are concerned.
- **Application:** This involves protecting personal information of the students, maintaining the confidentiality of performance and records of the academy, and tackling sensitive issues quite judiciously.

### 4. Respect and Fairness:

- **Principle:** Respecting all students, colleagues, and parents are its basis. Teachers should treat each and every individual with dignity and fairness, whatever their religious, social, economic or political background may be.

- **Application:** This includes nurturing an inclusive classroom, staffroom, whole campus and social environment, avoiding segregation, and addressing any form of bullying or harassing instantly with due effect.

5. **Professional Competence:**

- **Principle:** Teachers should keep himself searching for continuous professional development so that he should keep himself updated with educational best practices as well as subject knowledge.
- **Application:** involving in ongoing education, taking part in professional developmental opportunities, and searching for feedback so that teaching practices can be improved and these are vital for maintaining competence.

6. **Ethical Relationships:**

- **Principle:** Teachers should uphold professional boundaries so far as their relationships with pupils, colleagues, and guardians are concerned.
- **Application:** Drawing clear boundaries between two relationships viz. personal and professional helps to maintain a dignified and professional learning ambience.

## Challenges in Maintaining Professional Ethics in Teaching

1. **Balancing Several Roles:**

- **Challenge:** Teachers play various roles in teaching institutions; these roles include educator, counselor, and even mediator. Establishing parity among these roles and maintaining ethical standards simultaneously can be very much challenging.
- **Response:** Drawing clear boundaries, asking for support from colleagues and supervisors can help handle these responsibilities of a teacher quite effectively.

2. **Handling Diverse Needs:**

- **Challenge:** Addressing the students with diverse needs, such as those with disabilities or those from different cultural, economic, religious, political and social backgrounds, may lead teacher to moral challenges.
- **Response:** Teachers should venture to be responsive so far as culture is concerned. He should pay due attention to differentiate instruction, and search for additional resources or training so that students' needs to be provided effectively.

### 3. Addressing Unethical Behavior:

- **Challenge:** Tackling the unethical behavior from various people such as students, parents, or even colleagues may give rise to complicity and may involve personal or vocational hazards.
- **Response:** Teachers should abide by the authorized and established procedures so far as the matter of reporting unethical behavior is concerned. He should seek proper guidance from administrators of the institution, and highlight on formative resolution.

### 4. Pressure and Workload:

- **Challenge:** A few factors such as heavy workloads, pressures related to administrative works, evaluations of the performance of the pupils and obligation to extra co-curricular and social welfare activities as well as various government schemes implemented time to time can sometimes lead to ethical compromises.
- **Response:** Effective and judicious time management, asking for help from colleagues, and concentrating on ethical practices even in tumultuous situation can help overcome these challenges.

### 5. Disparity and Institutional Discrimination:

- **Challenge:** A few teachers hold high designation provided by the institution and they look down upon the others who do not have the same. A few other faculties who are junior so far as their age is concerned but superior in terms degrees, do not pay reverence to the seniors and treat them as futile elements.

- **Response:** Proper value education, ethical practices, nurturing such mentality that will make one think the institution as his/her home, removing ego, mentality to get satisfied with whatever he/she gets, focusing on teaching instead of power can help overcome these challenges. The head of the institution should administer moral judgment in this concern.

## Promoting Ethical Behavior in Teaching

### 1. Practicing Moral Behavior and Professional Development:

- Comprehensive and continuous moral practices helps teachers stay updated to the latest standards and moral conflicts in education.

### 2. Transparent Policies and Guidelines:

- Institutions as well as higher authorities should have transparent and specific policies so far as moral conduct is concerned, including procedures for tackling grumbles and moral conflict.

### 3. Support Systems:

- Offering support through proper guidance of mentors, moral advising, and networks related to the profession can help teachers overcome moral dilemmas and uphold their commitment to moral standards.

### 4. Creating Environment for Open Dialogue:

- Building a congenial environment in which everyone will feel encouraged to discuss on the issues of morality openly helps promote a culture of clarity and acceptability.

### 5. Practice back to the Classical Indian Philosophical Tradition:

- If teachers follow the principles of the Classical Indian Moral philosophy, such as Theory of *Maitri Bhāvanā*, *Tyāga*, *Ahiṃsā* of Buddhism which Gandhiji had uplifted to the *Prema Bhāvanā*, and the theory of Self-realization of Upaniṣadas will inculcate value, honesty, integrity, love, affection wisdom and sympathy to others.

Both The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and the University Grants Commission (UGC) in India prescribe detail guidelines to make it sure that teachers must abide by high standards of professional ethics. Here's a gist of the guidelines of professional ethics prescribed by these two bodies:

### **NCTE Guidelines on Professional Ethics:**

The NCTE, the statutory body associated with regulation and maintenance of standards in teacher education in our nation, asserting multiple ethical principles and standards for teachers. These are as follow:

#### **1. Commitment to the Profession:**

- Educators should display a commitment to the vocation of teaching through comprehensive and continuous professional development, sincere obligation to educational standards, and playing significant role to the overall development of the system of education.

#### **2. Respect for Student Rights:**

- Teachers are obliged to pay due reverence to the rights of students, so that a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment can be ensured. This includes maintaining students' right to privacy as well as their confidentiality.

#### **3. Professional Integrity:**

- Teachers should aim to act with solidarity and sincerity while dealing with profession, in such aspects as just and impartial assessment and reporting of the performance of the student, and refraining from any dishonesty or misbehavior.

#### **4. Respect for Diversity:**

- Teachers must be cautious in respecting and providing proper value to diversity in the classroom, treating all the learners justly without bothering anything of their social, political, religious, economic background, culture, or abilities.

#### **5. Avoidance of Exploitation:**

- Teachers should refrain from any type of exploitation or temptation of students for personal gain or privilege.

**6. Professional Conduct:**

- Teachers must maintain professional behavior inside as well as outside the institutional environment, these behavior are avoidance of conflicts of interest and upholding proper dissociation with students.

## UGC Guidelines on Professional Ethics

The University Grants Commission (UGC), provides guidelines and modifies these guidelines time to time which oversees higher education institutions in India, for professional ethics applicable to teachers in colleges and universities. On 17<sup>th</sup> of February, 1989, a committee of 14 members under the chairpersonship of Yash Pal, UGC formed a Task Force report on code of professional ethics for university and college teachers. The guidelines prescribed by the Task Force are as follow:

**Teachers should-**

- Adhere to responsible pattern of conduct and demeanor 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 meeting, seminars, conference etc. towards the contribution of knowledge;
- Maintain active membership of professional organization 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;
- Cooperate 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 counseling 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

## **Ethical Relationship between Teacher and Students:**

### **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, cast, political, economic, social and physical characteristics;
- Recognize 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 the 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 toward 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 hour and help and guide students without any remuneration or reward;
- Aid students to develop an understanding national heritage and national goals;
- and
- Refrain from inciting students against students, colleagues or administration.

Ethical relation between Teachers with his Colleagues

Teachers should

- Treat other members of the profession in the same manner s 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 cast, creed, religion, race, or sex in their professional endeavor.

### **Ethical relation between and authorities, non-teaching staff, guardians and society:**

Teachers should maintain healthy ethical relationship with authorities, non-teaching staffs, guardians and society for the overall development of the institution in fostering creativity for the betterment of the institution.

UGC made a modification of the guidelines of the year 1989 in May, 2023 under the title '**Mulya Pravah 2.0 Inclusion of Human Values and Professional Ethics in Higher Education Institutions**'. Here professional ethics of teachers have been pointed out in detail.

Here it has been mentioned that human values and professional ethics are intertwined and while explaining the role of teacher in professional ethics it has been said-

Teaching is a very noble profession, a teacher has a very crucial role in shaping the character, personality, and career of the student so the teacher would-

- Act as role models with examples worth emulating by the students such as good conduct, and a good standard of dress, speech and behavior.
- Act as facilitator, guide and mentor of students.
- Create a conducive environment for the teaching-learning process and strive for innovative practices and increasing knowledge.
- Refrain from harassment of students in any form.

- Refrain from any type of discrimination and appreciate and respect diversity among students.
- Inculcate human values, appreciation of cultural heritage, have a scientific outlook and concern for the environment among students and others.
- Encourage students to actively participate in scheme and/or activities of national priorities.
- Actively work for national integration and communal harmony.
- Be sensitive to social needs and development.
- Abide by acts, statutes, ordinance, rules, policies and procedures of the university and respect its ideal, vision, mission, cultural practices and traditions.
- Practice utmost integrity in the assimilation, dissemination, evaluation, creation, and implementation of knowledge.

### Conclusion:

Teaching has been accepted as the most reliable and dignified among all the professions age after age. If we cast a glance to the traditional Indian thought we will find that the *Gurus* had responsibilities towards students, colleagues and society and they did it sincerely. If there is any institutional guideline in any book, it is to be found in Buddhist educational system. This tradition has been going on in continuous process in the field of knowledge, understanding and wisdom. It is an unfortunate thing that most of those who accept teaching as their profession, nowadays, are concerned more and more with their achievement rather than their dedication to their duties. As a result the constitutional fundamental rights as well as national integrity are under peril which is not a good thing at all. We can get rid of it if we follow the principles of traditional Indian philosophy especially Buddhism *Maitri Bhāvanā*, practice of *Ahimsā Tyāga*, self-realization of Advaitavada. Rishi Arabinda also presented it before us impressively.

Apart from this, both the Government of West Bengal and the Government of India and different government bodies have prescribed transparent instructions for professional ethics in teaching emphasizing on solidarity, reverence, and commitment to excellency

of education. Teachers are obliged to abide by these instructions, so that they contribute significantly in creating a positive learning environment, uphold professional dealings, and continuously venture for personal as well as professional development. These instructions are indispensable for maintaining the quality and solidarity of education and nurturing faith and respect within the community of education. Lastly M.K.Gandhi Said-

*Keep your words positive because your words become your behavior,  
Keep your behavior positive because your behavior become your habits,  
Keep your habits positive because your habits become your values,  
Keep your values positive because your values become your destiny.*

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