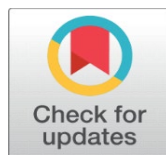
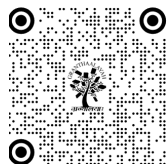


TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

This research paper attempts to study school teachers' perspectives on the professional ethics required of them. The authors mainly studied the awareness and understanding of teachers on some essential professional ethics. It has been found that teachers are confronted with many moral issues while discharging their responsibilities and in decision-making. The paper's significant findings highlighted the need for a professional code of conduct for teachers considering policy perspectives that guide them in discharging their duties as teachers. The paper highlighted the need to incorporate the ethics curriculum in pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes, which is essential to empower them and support them to understand their role as professionals. The study further emphasises the need to develop a framework on professional ethics for teachers and use the developed framework during their professional development programmes at different levels.

Keywords: Ethics, Profession, Professional Ethics, Elementary Teachers

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is considered as important for the individuals as well as for the society. The progress of civilisation is impossible without education because it preserves and transfers knowledge through generation to generation. Nowadays our focus is more on the education category to a certain extent than the milieu of education for the significant education that brings in actuality of individual societal, countrywide, and comprehensive requirements. The main goals of education are the development of a person's skills, knowledge, value and ethics, and also make him communicate for universal hood, removing obstacles of caste, creed and class. In view of the community's goals and aspirations, a teacher is the most significant factor in attaining social progress and developing a generation with intellectual, philosophical, psychological, and moral qualities. Teacher education and code of professional conduct for a teaching profession play significant role to guide a teacher to discharge his responsibilities. Teacher without professional ethics will definitely impact the overall development of their students. Also, it is expected from the student they become role model for their student. Teacher has to become motivators, problem solver, counsellor and social leader. It is his/her responsibility to guide the student and counsel the parent towards the education and well-being of children. Teachers, who are self-

committed and motivated to their profession and have a sense of professional ethics, will safeguard that they do fairness to their students, community, society, colleagues and their profession (Naaz, 2020).

Many documents like RTE act 2009, talks about the role and responsibility of teachers. The act highlighted or emphasised that the teachers' responsibilities to manage the problems faced by the student, provide them quality education and excel the students to his fullest potential. The teacher's primary responsibility is to help students handle difficulties, issues, and impediments that arise during their developmental process, and they must have the vision to help their pupils reach their full potential. The quality of the education system largely depends on the quality of teachers. Also, the quality of education depends upon the commitment of teachers towards their profession, and it is acknowledged and accepted universally (Habib, 2019).

Professional ethics is a term that relates to a professional's accepted organisational and personal standards of behavior. The profession's definitions largely emphasised long periods of academic training and competencies. A profession should have specific knowledge about their profession, rigors professional training and must have knowledge of profession code of conduct of that profession (NCFTE-2010). Framework NCFTE define the profession as: "A profession is characterised by a sufficiently long period of academic training, an organised body of knowledge on which the undertaking is based, an appropriate duration of formal and rigorous professional training in tandem with practical experience in the field and a code of professional ethics that binds its members into a fraternity".

Professional ethics are moral principles that a teacher must adhere to when teaching and learning, and the ethical standards serve as a foundation for distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable actions. Professional ethics are valuable methods teachers use in their interactions with students, teammates, and society (David Carr, 2000).

Professional ethics serve as guidance for teachers to provide quality education and inculcate positive value among their students; it would definitely make students aware of their expected transformation in behaviour and attitudes. Teachers who follow professional ethics will treat their students with love, care, devotion, and dedication. Professional ethics are becoming the need of a teacher to discharge their duties with professional commitments and responsibilities. Teaching is considered a noble profession because it helps produce responsible citizens and develop quality human resources, socialised personalities, and innovative and creative human beings. A professional code of ethics for teachers is highly required to assist them in educating the students efficiently and effectively (Sherpa, 2018).

2. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR A TEACHER AND POLICIES PERSPECTIVES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIA

Teaching is a process of educating the children in a healthy environment. It is expected that teachers must know professional ethics to discharge their duties effectively and efficiently. During teaching, it is essential to avoid actions or actions that may cause students educational or emotional harm.

The forthcoming paragraphs highlight the different policy perspectives regarding the professional ethics of a teacher with particular reference to India. In 1944, **the Sergeant Committee** stressed that any curricula without an ethical basis would be useless. The **Secondary Education Commission (1952-53)** observed that the growth of a student's character would depend, to a considerable extent, on religious and moral instruction. Commission further mention that a teacher is the most accountable and responsible person in society. **NCF-1975** suggested that the role of teacher must be as a guide, helper, and above all, as a wise friend whom the children look to gladly and confidently in case of difficulty, when they do not see the way or when they need some information. The **NPE- 1986** has also guided for the preparation of a code of professional ethics for teachers to ensure that teachers perform their duties in accordance with acceptable norms. The Policy also emphasises the teachers' accountability to pupils, parents, the community, and their profession. **NCF 2005** described the role of teachers, their autonomy and professional independence.

NCERT Framework 2005: Education for Values in Schools, is mainly focused on the education for values in schools. This framework also emphasises a teacher's obligations and responsibilities, as well as their personal and professional growth. Teachers must possess humanitarian qualities to promote values in the classroom. It also advises teacher behaviours such as patient listening, adaptability, being kind and compassionate, admitting mistakes, respecting the dignity of children, and being continually aware of the influence on students. The **RTE-Act 2009**, also direct the state to ensure free and compulsory quality elementary education, also its sections under a separate chapter talks about the role and responsibilities of teacher to provide quality child centred education in barrier free environment.

NCTE Draft-2010: Code of Professional Ethics for School Teachers provides a framework of principles to guide them in discharging their obligations towards students, parents, colleagues and community. Increased awareness of the teaching profession's ethical principles is essential to ensure 'professionalism' among teachers. **National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009)** states that a teacher must be prepared not just to educate but also to comprehend students and the parent community for children to attend school regularly and learn. Teaching is a vocation, and teacher education is a process of professional preparation for teachers, according to the title 'Professionalization of Teacher Education.'

New National Education Policy 2020 states that, teacher training necessitates diversified perspectives and knowledge, the building of dispositions and attitudes, and the practise of teaching under the guidance of the best mentors. Teachers must be well-versed in Indian values, languages, knowledge, ethos, and traditions, especially tribal traditions while being current on educational and pedagogical achievements from a policy standpoint.

Many of the research studies highlighted the professional ethics need for school teachers. Professional ethics are as important in the teaching profession as other professions. Professional ethics must be practiced by all the teaching professionals, which may help them become role models for everyone in society (**Kumari, 2016**). Because ethical principles deal a lot in producing better and perfect personalities (**Jayamma & Sumangala, 2012**). As ethical consciousness and high professional competence are the basis of the profession's integrity and are essential in creating a good play, learning, and balding conditions (**Mukharji & Rath, 2016**).

A professional code of ethics for teachers is highly required to assist them in educating the students efficiently and effectively (**Sherpa, 2018**). In fact, professionalisation of teachers should provide them with more professional space to transform their ethical considerations into practice (**Lijia et. al., 2015**). Primary and middle school teachers universally have a correct understanding of the significance of ethics for teachers (**Shan 2015**). According to other earlier studies, education system in India has the potential to nurture the desired value system (**Prakash & Jayamma, 2012**). And personal values of student-teachers have a direct bearing on the professional ethics of student-teachers (**Naaz, 2020**). According to one study conducted in Bangladesh, practically all selected instructors in Bangladesh had positive attitudes on ethical issues in the classroom. Still, ethics remained by and extensive absent in some of the teachers' behaviour and practices (**Jahan & Mohammad 2015**). But in other study the participants were acquainted with the issues of professionalism and sought to enhance their professional development (**Ifanti & Fotopoulou 2011**).

Recent policy frameworks, reports, and documents related to the professional ethics of teachers revealed that teachers' professional ethics is an essential course of study for all teacher educators, as well as in-service and pre-service teachers. The study of professional ethics in context of education has been an emerging research area for scholars and researchers.

It can be concluded from the theoretical perspectives and research work conducted around professional ethics that teachers are considered as the main pillars in the process of education. The teacher's responsibility, honesty, sincerity, hard-work, confidence, and commitment towards profession make him a professional teacher. Professionally well-trained, competent, performing, and committed teachers always prove to be the tangible assets of any nation (**Habib, 2019**). The present research paper was an attempt to study elementary school teachers' awareness of professional ethics and explore and analyse their perception of the need and importance of professional ethics.

3. OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH PAPER

Considering the significance of professional ethics for teachers, researchers tried to study the following objectives:

- 1) To explore awareness about professional ethics among elementary school's teachers.
- 2) To explore and analyse the perception of elementary school teachers for the need of professional ethics.

METHOD: Descriptive research design was used in the present research paper.

Sampling: Convenient sampling technique has been used to select the 10 schools. 3 teachers were selected by using random sampling technique out of 6-8 teachers from every school. Further five heads of school out of ten were selected for present study.

Tools: Two tools were prepared by the investigator for collection of data:

Interview Schedule for Teachers

Interview Schedule for Head-teachers

Data Collection: To build a theoretical perspective of the study regarding the awareness, need and importance of professional ethics for teachers, a range of literature, including books, journals, magazines, official records, reports of commissions and conferences, research papers, dissertations, articles, documents, and other relative sources were consulted. Data on awareness, need, and importance of professional ethics was collected from elementary teachers and Head-teachers.

Tabulation of Data and Statistical Techniques Used: The collected data was converted in terms of frequencies and percentages, which are displayed in the tables. Themes were identified from the collected data and analysed.

4. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH WORK

In the light of analysis and interpretations of data, following findings have been drawn with the help of following themes:

Teacher's awareness about professional ethics

Majority of teachers were aware of ethics like being role models, respecting the uniqueness and diversity of students, having patience, having a peaceful mind, overall development of students, politeness, providing equal opportunity to the students being calm, treating students with love and care, adjustment with students and context, attachment with students, and truthfulness.

In contrast to the previous finding, a few teachers were literally not aware of some essential ethics like accountability, discipline, transparency, and confidentiality, which are very important for the teaching profession.

It is accepted by majority of teachers that they can respect the ideas of students only when he/she has the patience to listen their students.

All the teachers were aware that the virtue of respecting others and elders is a good habit and further they accepted that it should be the responsibility of teacher to illustrate few real examples and provide practical experiences to students. Through these activities students will learn about these virtues.

Many of the teachers have common understanding about the ethics of Love and Care. They further accepted that love and care are very important ethics to be considered for the healthy development of the children at elementary stage. Most teachers believe they should care for children's learning and well-being in and outside the class.

Most of the selected teachers are aware about the value of truthfulness, providing equal opportunity to the students and a healthy attachment with students. They further responded that truthfulness should be reflected in teachers' actions.

Fifty percent of the respondents were of the view that a teacher's work and conduct should be very transparent, many of the participants were not aware of word transparency what does it stand in terms of behavior and conduct.

In similar ways equal number of the teachers believe that a teacher should be an excellent listener. He must listen student's ideas, whether it is valuable or not. It helps a teacher to understand his student correctly.

Sources of Awareness of Professional Ethics

All the teachers have the view that they learn about values and ethics from different sources like; family, friends, peers, and teachers and from school education. About two third of participants believe they made their understanding of ethics from religious books, other literature on ethics, relationships, and from life experiences. They accepted that they sometimes make their decision by observing colleagues and elders.

Most of the teachers said that they have their own understanding of right and wrong, which is developed through different experiences of life. Further they accepted that their own understanding helps them to make the right decision and perform good behaviour, and helps them to come out from any moral dilemma.

Few of the teachers accepted that they have made their understanding of ethics and values from the teachers' training programme organised for them. Same numbers of teachers claimed that they have studied about ethics in their course of pre-service teacher education programme.

In contrast few of them denied to study or received any education about ethics in their pre-service or in-service education programmes.

Perception of teachers about the need and importance of professional ethics

Most of the teachers accepted that teaching profession also needs professional ethics like other professions. Only few of them have the view that there is no need for professional ethics in the teaching profession because they do not consider teaching as a profession.

Larger majority of teachers responded that they need to learn about their role and responsibility, and only professional ethics can enable them to discharge their responsibilities in right manner.

To become an accountable teacher, it is important that teachers must have proper sensitivity and deep understanding about professional code of conducts as accepted by many of the participant teachers. They further emphasised that they should be educated about those conducts which make them accountable towards parents, students, institution, and society.

Majority of them claimed that it is responsibility of the education system to develop a framework of desired professional ethics for elementary teachers. They further added that content/course on professional ethics to be developed for pre-service teachers' education courses in India like other countries.

Most of the teachers were in favour of designing separate short-term programmes for developing professional ethics among in-service teachers. Specific sessions should be included in the training modules of in-service teachers. This activity should be the part of the routine modules of in-service educational programmes.

They further admitted that there is no such kind of courses they have ever gone through in their journey as teachers.

5. CONCLUSION

Teachers at all levels of education should focus on imparting quality education. It is the prime duty of the teacher to bring the finest development among the learners. Teachers should show equal dignity to their profession, institution, students, colleagues, and parents. NCTE (2010) has given a draft of code of professional ethics for school teachers, including teachers' obligation towards students, parents, colleagues, management, and society. It can be concluded from the findings of this research paper that teachers at elementary level were not very much aware about some common professional ethics like: accountability, discipline, transparency, confidentiality. Also, they were not using their understanding about professional ethics in discharging their duties in school or classroom. Teachers need to establish and enforce acceptable ethical standards to be self-regulating and accountable as professionals (Campbell, 2000). Also, most of the teachers were aware of ethics like being role models before the students in terms of respecting elders, having patience, having a peaceful mind, truthfulness, politeness and being calm. Children learn from others through observing their behaviour. Teachers should be sensitive in terms of their behavioural traits. Most of the teachers had understanding to treat their students with love and care, provide them equal opportunities to participate in different scholastic and co-scholastic activities. This is desirable from the teachers in context of Policy and right of children to education. Therefore, a need emerged from this research work to educate in-service teacher, and to develop and include the content of professional ethics in pre-service teacher education programs. Similar has also been suggested by Campbell (2000). She has also suggested in her one of the studies that, "Teachers need ethical standards that can act as a guide and resource to help them cope with the ethical complexities and dilemmas inherent in the practice of teaching".

This study further depicted that most of the teachers have developed their understanding of ethics and virtues from family, friends, and colleagues, religious books and literature and experiences of life, while only a few teachers accepted that they had developed their understanding of ethics from the in-service and pre-service training program. Hence it is suggested that resource material should be provided to the teachers, as well as community engagement should be the essential part of the pre-service teacher education programmes.

Another concern raised by the respondents that there is no such in service-training program, workshop, or seminars specially designed for development of professional ethics among them. Hence there is a need to include such session on professional ethics in all in -service training programmes organised for in-service teachers. Special module on short term courses can be developed for in service teachers on professional ethics. These efforts can help the teachers for making their understanding about professional ethics and they can keep them updated with the changing time and adequately fulfil their responsibility. There should be a framework of professional ethics which can update their knowledge and

enable them to behave professionally in class rooms and workplace. They need such framework of ethics which aware them about their obligations towards teaching profession, students, parents, and society.

The knowledge of professional ethics for school teachers is highly required. There is urgent need to design large numbers of activities and projects for pre-service teachers to develop professional ethics among them. The present model of teacher preparation in India highly required some immediate transformations specially around professional ethics.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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