

# TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS : STUDY FROM PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract:** Educational institution is a place of teaching-learning where teachers come to teach and learners come to learn. Teacher who is considered as a treasure of knowledge and builder of nation must be careful of his conduct within the institution. He/she is responsible for progressive behaviour adoption and all round development of the learner. As a social agent he not only interacts with his learners but also with colleagues, nonteaching staff and broadly different members of society. Nobody would teach a teacher about professional ethics as it is assumed that being a teaching professional he/she is well versed with that. Any kind of misconduct observed in the educational institution should be rectified by himself/herself by following certain principles which can not be taught. He/she being a mature individual must know what is good or bad or proceed himself/herself by following certain professional ethics.

The objective of the study is the theoretical knowledge and application of professional ethics in higher education institution. In the vital place of learning value erosion must not be encouraged and everybody should know about misjustice. This study tries to explain tit-bits of professional ethics in higher education institution and preventive measures where necessary.

**Index Terms-** Teaching, learning, higher education

## Introduction :

An educational institution is a place where people acquire knowledge. Some formal institutions are preschools, primary schools, secondary schools and higher education. They provide a large variety of teaching learning environments to adopt progressive behaviour, shaping our attitudes and prepare us for behaving in a certain manner in defined situation.

Higher education is the most fundamental constituent, and it requires careful attention and evaluation to foresee prospective outcomes in a given country. It is indeed a reward for citizens, gives knowledge and respect, makes an individual self-assured. Higher education institutions are often referred to as professional organizations driven by values and norms associated with academia. In a higher education institutions - most prominently universities – a teacher has certain functions. In addition to teaching, these are research and contributing to society by any welfare means. A teacher in higher education institution should be well acquainted with the values, professional ethics while discharging his responsibilities. According to Adam Grant “The mark of higher education isn't the knowledge you accumulate in your head. It's the skill you gain about how to learn.” Education is the key to success in life, and teachers make a lasting impact in the lives of their students. According to NPE'86 Higher education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical, social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skill. Being at the apex of the educational pyramid, it has also a key role in producing teachers for the education system. In a higher education institution teacher, learner, administrative staff and nonteaching staff are all the human component. So in a place of teaching learning a teacher must be very careful about his conduct with all human components of the institution.

Education has three essential pillars in higher education system. These are

- 1. Quality teaching – This is ensured through the recruitment of right man in right place policy which enhances the probability of sincere teaching and consciousness about their duties and responsibilities. Teachers are considered as a treasure of knowledge so his punctuality and sincerity reflect their professionalism. They must be treated as respected professionals.**
- 2. Quality tools for teaching and learning – It includes curricula and inclusive teaching and learning materials and resources. These may be provided through the application of information and communication technology, that is, by harnessing the enormous power of the internet and the capacity and accessibility of modern technology to assist and support teaching and learning wherever necessary according to the curriculum.**
- 3. Quality environments for teaching and learning –It should be supportive, comfortable, safe and secure, with the appropriate facilities to encourage student learning and to enable teachers to teach effectively and to achieve the goal of providing quality education for all the students.**

### **Teaching : Texture of nurturing**

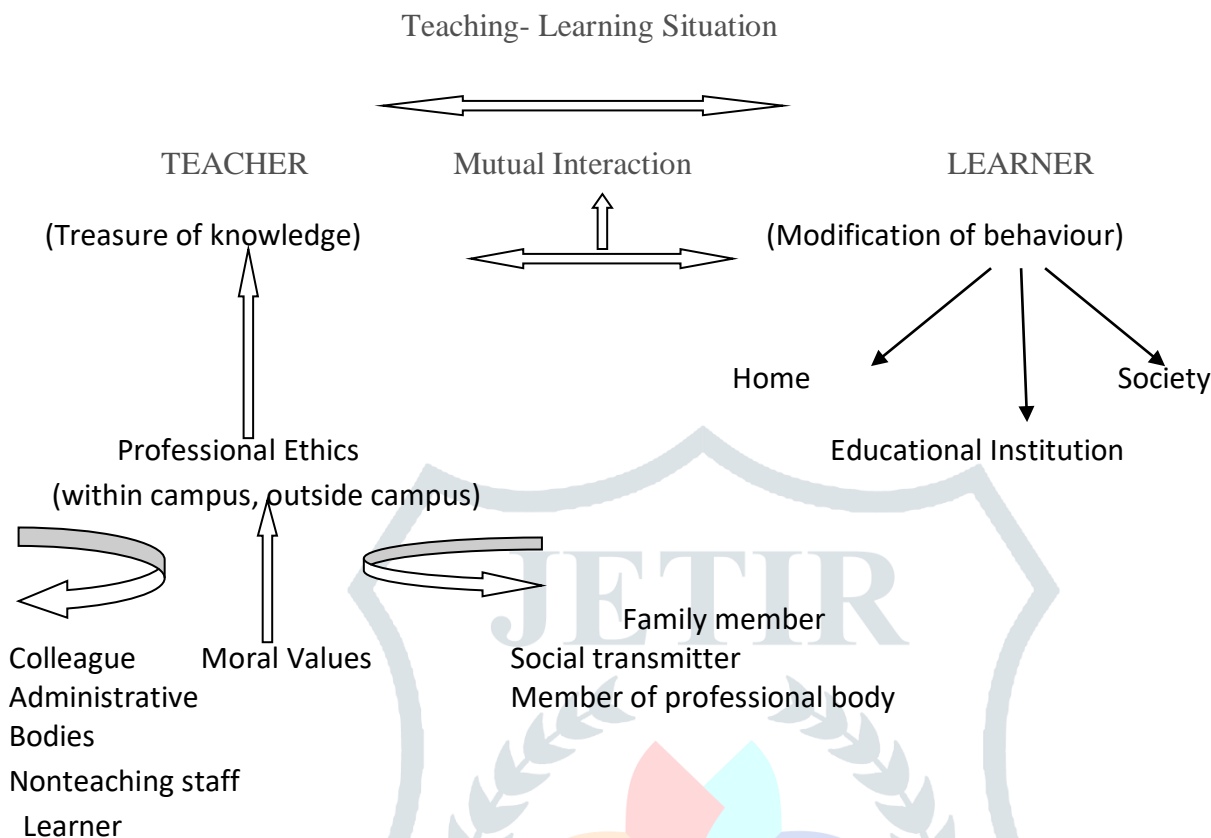
Teaching is an intimate contact between a more matured personality and a less matured one which is designed to further the education of the latter. It is texture of nurturing. A teacher is an important person in the life of students and can help them to become better human beings. Therefore, it becomes all the more important for him to keep improving the teaching process and practices for all round development of students. One of the commitments of the teacher is to assist the learner to adopt progressive behaviour by which the learner not only gather new knowledge but also try to adapt himself in the changing environment. As a teacher is considered the treasure of knowledge his behaviour must be controlled not only in the classroom teaching learning situation but also in front of their colleagues, nonteaching or any other member within the campus and beyond the campus. As a professional a teacher has certain commitment towards it. He should not work on vested interest of himself or for a particular group. He must be a man of principle, rather than an exploiter. Ethics education is about recognizing the real power of one's innate ethical sense and how it influences our behaviour. He must inculcate some ethical values which is based upon certain moralities. When professional ethics fails uncongenial environment rises which disrupts the regular task of the approved employees within and outside the campus. At the entry level the teacher must know his duties, responsibilities and code of conduct otherwise he, the transmitter of knowledge, will not be able to familiarize within the working environment and will be a causal agent of value erosion. As a result total higher education system will be completely or partially collapsed.

**Objectives :** The objective of the study is the theoretical knowledge and application of professional ethics in higher education institution.

### **Theoretical Framework :**

Teachers have an innate ethical sense that urges them to make predictable choices. Reason often acts only as a mechanism to justify these choices. Ethics is a collection of moral standards by which each person should be guided in their private and professional life. It tells us right from wrong, and how to live moral lives. The teaching profession has its own code of ethics, which describes the process of grading students and teachers behaviour in the classroom as well as outside the premises of the institution. Ethics education is about recognizing the real power of one's innate ethical sense and how it influences our behaviour. Ethical behaviour is simply finding the balance between self interest and group responsibility which is not entirely learned behaviour standing in opposition to an instinct. Acting ethically which is very much fighting against an addiction and is not entirely free of struggle. Teacher's ethical behaviour must be considered on following two plateaus. Firstly the legal one i.e, administrative where all aspects of teacher's behaviour, teaching procedures and assessment of students are framed into a set of regulations drawn up by autonomous body. And secondly, at the personal level, which includes a teacher's own attitude and conduct

that is not prescribed by law. The teacher's code of ethics comprises his duties, responsibilities, attitude, honesty, fairness. One can becoming a good teacher by becoming a good human being.



All professions are occupations, but not all occupations are professions. A profession has certain qualities namely shared education, training requirement for admission, special uncommon knowledge, positive social need, adherence to certain values, autonomy in decision and penalty for substandard performance. Professionalism has certain components namely skill, competency in work and relational element – work will be beneficial to others. As a transmitter of knowledge he must inculcate values about what to do and what not to do within or outside the campus. It will be applicable not for himself but also occurrence for others catastrophe by his misconduct. He should not be an agent of creating academic barrier to other colleagues within the campus. Work itself does not have moral status, execution of work has moral status. Making choice with reasons is known as morality where as ethics is the study of morality. The term Ethics and morality often use interchangeably. Professional ethics means moral expectations specific to the occupational group.

### Profession, Ethics and Professional Ethics :

A “Self-regulated occupational group capable of legally prohibiting others (including incompetent or unethical members) from practicing” is known as profession.

Criteria of a profession :

A profession must be characterised by certain qualities like group identity, knowledge used in the service of others, positive social need, individual judgment (some) autonomy in decisions and adherence to certain values. Professionalism means skill and competency in the particular work, relational element-work will be beneficial to others

- Work itself doesn't have moral status, execution of work has moral status

**Ethics** : According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary, ethics can be defined as "the discipline dealing with what is good and bad or right and wrong" or "a group of moral principles or set of values," or "the principles of conduct governing an individual or a profession : standards of behaviour"

**Professional Ethics** : Lindsey and Prentice (1985) elaborate definition for librarians: "Ethics is a system of values and rules that spell out what is right and what is good. It is primarily concerned with the rightness, goodness, and obligatory character or "oughtness" of conduct. Ethics directly asks what kinds of acts are right or wrong, good or bad, or ought or ought not to be done, and what the terms involved mean".

## Ethics and Morality

- Morality – making choices with reasons
- Ethics – the study of How the choice are made i.e., "ethics is the study of morality".

## Purposes of Code of Ethics

Like other profession teaching as a profession also has certain criteria to clarify the ethics of the profession

- to inspire the quality of behaviour which reflects the honour and dignity of the profession.
- to encourage and emphasise those positive attributes of professional conduct that characterise strong and effective teaching.
- to enable members of the profession to appraise and reflect on their ethical decisions.

## Professional Ethics For Teachers

Teaching is a profession, and as such, it has a code of professional ethics. There are different definitions of the word "profession." One way to define it is to list the traits common to law, medicine, the church, and other occupations we traditionally think of as professional. (Professions rely on advanced education; they command respect and high salaries ; they have codes of ethics.) Another definition holds that a profession – like a guild or a union – is a way of organizing work. When workers are organized in a profession, there is an assumption that the workers themselves are responsible for defining their tasks, accrediting their professional colleagues, guaranteeing the quality of their work, and so forth. By this definition, a "profession" is a way or organizing work that gives its practitioners high levels of both autonomy and responsibility. A code of professional ethics is a guide to autonomous practitioners, helping maintain high standards of service.

## Code of Ethics for teachers :

Each teacher, after entering the teaching profession, assumes a number of obligations, one of which is to adhere to a set of principles which defines professional conduct. He is committed to the attainment of the highest standard of professional service .He must be a social agent to modify the behaviour of learner. He must act as a facilitator by which learner's innate potentialities should be nurtured in proper way. He must have some commitment, that may be

1. Autonomy to treat people with rights that are to be honoured
2. Justice to share power and prevent the abuse of power
3. Responsible care to do good and minimize harm to others.

The professional interactions of teachers are governed by following certain fundamental principles .As a teacher of an autonomous institution his behaviour should be controlled by himself ,he must not be seen himself as a dictator and an agent of abuse of power. In any situation if injustice arises (irrespective of caste, creed, sex, behavioural aspect, humiliation) every teacher must protest against the malpractice to create harmony and congenial environment within the institution and minimize

to do harm to others. Opportunities should be given to apologise and enable him to identify his personal problems and develop his proper conduct with colleagues, students and other members accordingly to maintain a healthy environment and achieve desired objectives. A safe workplace is a right for all individual irrespective of class, caste, sex.

## Ethical criteria for teaching profession for teachers

Teachers should show a positive attitude that reflect a commitment of excellence to the profession. They need to keep their responsibilities and efforts in perspective while dealing with difficult situation.

### 1. Responsibilities of the teacher to learners

Teacher's first moral obligation is to provide excellent instruction. They have a deep obligation to help learners learn and nurture the capacities of all learners to think and act with developing independence, and strive to encourage an informed appreciation of the fundamental values of a democratic society. Teachers will strive to

(a) develop and maintain professional relationships with learners based upon the best interests of those learners.

(b) base their professional practice on continuous professional learning, the best knowledge available about curriculum content and pedagogy, together with their knowledge about those they teach.

(c) cater for the varied learning needs of diverse learners.

(d) promote physical, intellectual, emotional, social, moral and spiritual development that means all round development of learners.

(e) Teachers shall not take advantage of their special position by discouraging student expression of opinions that conflict with their own, or by threatening rather he will encourage reflective thinking.. The teacher will treat the ideas, needs, weaknesses and failures of every student in a privileged manner.

### 2. Responsibilities of the teacher to his colleagues.

Moral sensitivity, the awareness of how our actions affect other people. It involves cause and effect relationship and role taking responsibility.

(a) Teachers will give their colleagues active cooperation and encouragement in their individual development as teachers.

(b) They own their institution and the profession reasonable tact, both as to content and place, in the utterance of criticism. They shall not enhance their own stand by using unfair practices with regard to their colleagues.

(c) It shall be ethical for a teacher to defend a colleague against attack when he/she thinks that attack to be unjust.

(d) A teacher will not attempt to compel other members of the faculty by any means.

### 3. Responsibilities of the teacher to his/her institution

a) Coming to work regularly and on time

b) Being well informed about the learner manner

c) Planning the lesson regularly

d) Conducting classes with proper instructional strategy

e) Propose constructive improvement by following certain policy of the institution.

## Breaches of the teachers' code of ethics

A few particular breaches are listed below

- Improper relationship with students
- Violation of clearly stated rules and educational procedures.
- Wrong attitude towards the teaching profession and colleagues .
- Imposing on students personal views irrelevant to the subject of a lesson .
- Exposing students to any kind of embarrassment .
- Invading students privacy.
- Engaging students in unethical behaviour

## Conclusion :

Human beings have an innate ethical sense to make choices. Ethics is a collection of moral values by which each person should be guided in their professional and social life. It helps us to differentiate right from wrong. Ethics education is about selfrealization that means the real power of one's innate ethical sense and how it affects our behaviour. The teaching profession has its own code of ethics. The teacher's code of ethics comprises of his/her commitment, duties, responsibilities, attitude, honesty, and fairness. All teachers should be compassionate, creative, collegial, confident, courageous, dedicated, dependable, empathetic, energetic, enthusiastic, mature, nurturing, optimistic, passionate, respectful and responsible. Teaching is captivating, because as Eugene P. Bertin expressed it. "Teaching is leaving a vestige of oneself in the development of another. And surely the student is a bank where you can deposit your most precious treasures." Teacher's ethics is a core of education process, because without such no progress can be achieved. Teachers' ethics promotes mutual understanding between teacher and students. The aim of educational process is not only give knowledge or information but induce personal growth of students.

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### I. Political Intervention:

i) Causes of degradation of professional ethics in higher educational institution due to political intervention, dominance of one group of employee over others, malpractice by using media, creating uncongenial T-L situation within or beyond the campus and threatening the service of others by dominance of political power over a long period, misuse of human resources within or beyond the campus to create phobia of others.

### II. Professional Ethics :

- i) Causes of degradation of professional ethics in higher educational institution due to not knowing the professional code of conduct and misuse of economic power.
- ii) Not familiarizing within the campus and tendency to supersede others (for fame) by any means.
- iii) Interference of familial matter of others by searching his/her personal details deliberately.
- iv) Without commitment to service (perform unethically) and encroaching other's life within or outside campus.

### II. Remedies:

- i) To find out the causal agent of destruction of the formal system within campus.
- ii) The measures taken for creating deterioration of other's professional career (t-l, research, academic activity).
- iii) The person or situation responsible for physical and mental trauma of others – appropriate measures to be taken against the individual.

