



PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Ramarcha Prasad Pandey, Ph. D.

*Assistant professor School of Education Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University
Wardha (MH)*

Abstract

A profession is not simply a collection of individuals who get a living for themselves by the same kind of work. Nor it is merely a group which is organized exclusively for the economic protection. A profession is characterized by a sufficiently long period of academic training; an organized body of knowledge on which the undertaking is based; an appropriate duration of formal and rigorous professional training with practical experience in the field and a code of professional ethics which bind its members into a fraternity and Ethics means 'science of morals; moral principles or code' 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, as many others, has its own code of ethics, which describes the process of grading students and teacher's behavior in the classroom as well as outside the premises of the institution. It is one of few professions which evaluate the totality of behavior of an individual and its potential influence on others. The teacher's code of ethics comprises his/her duties, responsibilities, attitude, honesty, and most of all - fairness. One can become a better teacher by becoming a better human being. National Education Association, USA formulates certain principles which deserve reflection and careful consideration.

Principle I: The primary obligation of the teaching profession is to guide children, youth and adults in the pursuit of knowledge and skills, to prepare them in the ways of democracy and to help them to become happy, useful, self-supporting citizens. The ultimate strength of the nation lies in the social responsibility, economic competence and moral strength of the individual.

Principle II: The members of the teaching profession share with parents the task of shaping each student purposes and acts towards socially acceptable ends.

Principle III: The teaching profession occupies a position of public trust involving not only the individual teachers' personal conduct, but also the interaction of the school and the community.

Principle IV: The members of the teaching profession have inescapable obligations with respect to the employment.

Principle V: The teaching profession is distinguished from many occupations by the uniqueness and the quality of the professional relationships among all teachers Attitude towards teaching and other teachers.

But here some of the common types of ethics violations by teachers and NEA Committee opinion of the meaning of the code regarding such situations. Ways in which teachers may violate the professional code of ethics by Breaking Contracts, wrong way of Resignations, gossiping about pupils and parents, appealing to higher authority without proper channel, unfair outside employment and personal conduct.

Some would argue that these professional ethics mandate specific behaviors in particular situations but do not promote individual adherence to ethical principles. The delivery of training related to professional ethics may be possible. Training individual to adhere to particular ethical principles when making decision may not be possible.

The conclusion of this article is that we should agree to uphold certain ethical principles to retain the status of profession. Bring no disgrace to the profession. No teacher shall speak or act in a way which will bring discredit to the profession, ask or seek the students' support to further his personal and professional interests. No one shall incite communal or linguistic passion in the students for any reason whatsoever and none of us shall talk in public or write, defaming his colleagues and superiors. We shall maintain professional integrity; to be worthy of the great faith reposed in him by culture; try to serve the people to the utmost of his capacity. With the discipline and determination we can march ahead and serve the Nation better than any other profession.

Full Paper

These two words profession and ethics contain a powerful seeds in it. A profession is not simply a collection of individuals who get a living for themselves by the same kind of work. Nor it is merely a group which is organized exclusively for the economic protection. A profession is characterized by a sufficiently long period of academic training; an organized body of knowledge on which the undertaking is based; an appropriate duration of formal and rigorous professional training with practical experience in the field and a code of professional ethics which bind its members into a fraternity and Ethics means 'science of morals; moral principles or code' 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. Hence, the concept of Professional Ethics is partly comprised of what a professional should or should not do in the work place. It also encompasses a much greater part of the professional's life. If a professional is to have ethics then that person needs to

adopt that conduct in all of his dealings. The formulation and enforcement of a code of ethics by a profession, then, has a twofold purpose. Firstly to drive a set of rules under which its members will be unable to provide better services to society and under which the profession can provide better protection for its members; and secondly; to assume responsibility for assuring the competence of its members and prohibit the type of conduct which will bring the profession into disrepute.

The teaching profession, as many others, has its own code of ethics, which describes the process of grading students and teacher's behavior in the classroom as well as outside the premises of the institution. It is one of few professions which evaluate the totality of behavior of an individual and its potential influence on others. Ultimately, it is young people, with their personality and knowledge of the world still in the formative process, whose individual tendencies and characteristics are the most susceptible to and affected by any kind of negative influences. When discussing teacher's ethics, one must consider it on two separate plateaus. Firstly, the legal one, or so to say, administrative, where all aspects of teacher's behavior, teaching procedures, and assessment of students are framed into a set of regulations drawn up by the Board of Education and by individual schools. And secondly, at the personal level, which includes a teacher's own attitude and conduct that is not otherwise prescribed by law or whose breach might never be detected or pursued in a grievance process.

The teacher's code of ethics comprises his/her duties, responsibilities, attitude, honesty, and most of all - fairness. One can become a better teacher by becoming a better human being. Teacher is the fountain-head of all that is good and fair. So, it's very important to look upon teaching profession ethics. But because of lack of one central association to which all members of the teaching profession belong, many codes of ethics for teachers have been developed. The first ethical codes for teachers were developed by state education associations. The first of these was the one adopted by the Georgia Education Association. The California Teachers Association adopted a code and the Alabama Education Association. Currently all state education associations have developed codes of ethics or have adopted the National Education Association code, USA.

National Education Association, USA: In the National Education Association appointed a committee, consisting of 56 members, to develop a code of ethics for teachers. It formulates certain principles which deserve reflection and careful consideration. Some portions of the original code had been obsolete and the ethics committee requested the NEA Research Division to conduct a survey among the NEA membership regarding the need for a new code. As a result of this sampling survey the draft of a new code was submitted to the NEA

Representative Assembly by the ethics committee and adopted. Since all teachers should be members of a united profession, the basic principles herein enumerated apply to all persons engaged in the professional aspects of the education-elementary, secondary and collegiate. The revised NEA code reads as follow:

Principle I: The primary obligation of the teaching profession is to guide children, youth and adults in the pursuit of knowledge and skills, to prepare them in the ways of democracy and to help them to become happy, useful, self-supporting citizens. The ultimate strength of the nation lies in the social responsibility, economic competence and moral strength of the individual.

In fulfilling the obligations of this first principle of teacher will-

- Deal justly and impartially with students regardless of their physical, mental emotional, political, economic, social, racial or religious characteristics.
- Recognize the differences among students and seek to meet their individual needs.
- Encourage student to formulate and work for high individual goals in the development of their physical, intellectual, creative and spiritual endowments.
- Aid students to develop understanding and appreciation not only of the opportunities and benefits of democracy but also of their obligations to it.
- Respect the right of every student to have confidential information about himself withheld expect when its release is to authorized agencies or is required by law.
- Accept no remuneration for tutoring except in accordance with approved policies of the governing board.

Principle II: The members of the teaching profession share with parents the task of shaping each student purposes and acts towards socially acceptable ends. The effectiveness of many methods of teaching is dependent upon cooperative relationships with homes.

In fulfilling the obligations of this second principle of teacher will-

- Respect the basic responsibility of the parents for their children.
- Seek to establish friendly and cooperative relationships with the home.
- Help to increase the student's confidence in his own home and avoid disparaging remarks which might undermine that confidence.
- Provide parents the information that will serve the best interests of their and to be discrete with information received from parents.
- Keep parents informed about the progress of their children as interpreted in terms of the purposes of the school.

Principle III: The teaching profession occupies a position of public trust involving not only the individual teachers' personal conduct, but also the interaction of the school and the

community. Education is most effective when these many these relationships operates in a friendly, cooperative and constructive manners.

In fulfilling the obligations of this third principle of teacher will-

- Adhere to any reasonable pattern of behavior accepted by the community for professional persons.
- Perform the duties of citizenship and participate in community activities with due consideration for his obligations to his students his family and himself.
- Discuss controversial issues from an objective point of view, thereby keeping his class free from partisan opinions.
- Respect the community in which he is employed and be loyal to system, community, state and nation.
- Work to improve education in the community and strengthen the community's moral, spiritual and intellectual life.
- Recognize that the academic places belong to the people of the community, encourage lay participation in shaping the purpose of the education and strive to keep the public informed of the educational program which is being provided.

Principle IV: The members of the teaching profession have inescapable obligations with respect to the employment. These obligations are nearly always shared employer-employee responsibilities based upon mutual respect and good faith.

In fulfilling the obligations of this fourth principle of teacher will-

- Conduct professional business thru the proper channel.
- Refrain from discussing confidential and official information with unauthorized persons.
- Apply for employment on the basis of competence only and avoid asking for a specific position known to be filled by another teacher.
- Seek employment in the professional manner, avoiding such practices as the indiscriminate distribution of applications.
- Refuse to accept a position when the vacancy has been created thru unprofessional activities or pending controversy over professional policy the application of unjust personnel practices and procedure.
- Adhere to the condition of the contract until service there under has been performed, the contract has been terminated by mutual consent or the contract has otherwise been legally terminated.
- Give an expect due notice before a change of position is to be made.
- Be fair in all recommendations that are given concerning the work of other teachers.
- Accept no compensation from producers of instructional supplies when one's recommendations affect the local purchase or use of such teaching aids.

- Engage in no gainful employment, outside of his contract, where the employment affects adversely his professional status or impairs his standing with students, associates and the community.
- Cooperate in the development of academic policies and assume ones professional obligations thereby incurred.
- Accept ones' obligations to the employing board for maintaining a professional level of service.

Principle V: The teaching profession is distinguished from many occupations by the uniqueness and the quality of the professional relationships among all teachers. Community support and respect are influenced by the standards of teachers and their attitude towards teaching and other teachers.

In fulfilling the obligations of this second principle of teacher will-

- Deal with others members of the profession in the same manner as he himself wishes to be treated.
- Stand by other teachers who have acted on his behalf at his request.
- Speak constructively of other teachers, but report honestly to the responsible persons in manners involving the welfare of students, system and the profession.
- Maintain active membership in professional organizations and thru participation, strive to attain the objectives that justify such organized groups.
- Seek to make professional growth continuous by such procedure as study, research, travel, conferences and attendance at professional meetings.
- Make the teaching profession so attractive in ideals and practices that sincere and able young people will want to enter it.

The NEA code is an excellent statement of the ethical concepts should motivate the work of teachers. If all teachers adhered to its spirit, that observance could not help but earn great public respect.

Enforcement of Teachers' Codes of Ethics: Machinery for disciplining teachers who violate their ethical codes is maintained by some local associations, practically all states associations, and by the National Education Association. The NEA Committee on Professional Ethics commonly called the **Ethics Committee** is the body charged with development, enforcement and interpretation of its code of ethics. It has only recommendatory or referral powers of enforcement. Enforcement is perhaps too strong a word to use, although that step is sometimes taken in securing observance of the codes of ethics for teachers. It seems apparent that most of the violations among teachers result fro, lack of knowledge of the code or of the interpretation of specific provision which have been

made by the profession. The Committee on professional ethics is composed of five members. Its functions, as defined by the NEA Representative Assembly, are: First to study the code of ethics and make recommendations for improving it, second to publicize and promote its use by the profession, third to render opinions interpreting its provisions and fourth to hold hearing on cases involving alleged violations and to make recommendations for disciplinary action to the NEA Executive Committee. The Committee emphasizes its informative function by printing the code and distributing it widely amount the profession. It assists affiliated associations in developing programs of ethics. It advises informally on the interpretation of the code with regard to specific questions. And it publishes in the NEA journal formal opinion of the committee in answer to specific questions from members. White to date the emphasis in enforcement of the NEA Code of Ethics has been upon publicizing the code and developing a body of opinion based on interpretations of the code regarding specific cases, doubtless machinery will be perfected whereby flagrant violations will result in prompt disciplinary action. Here we describe some of the common types of code violations by teachers and NEA Committee opinion of the meaning of the code regarding such situations. Ways in which teachers may violate the professional code of ethics.

- **Breaking Contracts:** Once a contract for his service is signed, a teacher should expect to fulfill it, unless he is released willingly by his employer. The truly ethical person takes great pride in strict observance of a written agreement or oral pledges. Most teachers live up to the contracts that they have signed and join another institution. It is the exception the one in a thousand who brings disrepute upon the profession.

Ethical committee opinion is that if teacher has entered into a contract with one institution, it is improper for him to initiated or continue negotiations for a contract with another institution without the consent of the first institution to which he is obliged. It is contrary to principle IV, section 6 and 7 of the code which requires that a teacher will adhere to the conditions of a contract until service there under has been performed, the contract has been terminated by mutual consent, or the contract has otherwise been legally terminated. And give an expect due notice before a change of position is to be made.

- **The Ethics of Resignations:** Teacher should exercise extreme care and observe strict ethics in resignation from a position after having signed a contract. There are instances of the teachers who have left one position only a few days before the beginning of the academic year to accept another one which paid more without informing it before.

Ethics committee opinion is that a teacher may properly resign from his position after an administrator has imposed material modifications in a contract. All the details of a teacher's duties cannot be incorporated in a contract and reasonable adjustments in teaching assignments are often necessary and desirable. The teacher again under provision of section 6 and 7 Principle IV could resign without violation of the code.

- **Gossiping about pupils and parents:** In the matter of passing out professional information that should not be revealed and make jokes in discussing characteristics of a given child personal problem or incident of family backgrounds at institution, teachers have obligations of a delicate nature, as is the case with physicians. It is improper for a teacher to make remarks in public reflecting on a child's abilities and family background. However, a teacher has the right and often the duty to confer in confidence with colleagues or authorized agencies regarding a child's problem in conduct and adjustment.

Ethics committee opinion is that such kind conduct of the teacher contrary to Principle I of section 2 and Principle II of section 3 of the code that is recognize the differences among students and seek to meet their individual needs. And help to increase the students' confidence in his own home and avoid disparaging remarks which might undermine that confidence.

- **Appealing to higher Authority:** It is unethical to go over a superior to high authority unless other means of redress have failed. Teachers should be able to appeal to the highest authorities if necessary, but immediate superiors should have the first opportunity to act. It is improper for teachers to consult members of the board or universities regarding the dismissal of a professional associate without first presenting their views to the appropriate administrative authorities.

Ethical Committee opinion is that the teacher who consulted the school board or universities acted contrary to Principle IV, section 1 of the code which provides that a teacher will conduct professional business through the proper channels.

- **Outside Employment:** It is seen that teachers in order to remain in the profession have found it necessary to supplement their teaching salaries by outside employment with unfair means.

Ethical Committee opinion that outside employment is permissible if it does not fall within the provisions of Principle IV section 9 or 10.

Section 9: Accept no compensation from producers of instructional supplies when one's recommendations affect the local purchase or use of such teaching aids.

Section 10: Engage in no gainful employment, outside of his contract, where the employment affects adversely his professional status or impairs his standing with students, associates and the community.

- **Personal Conduct:** Discussions of professional ethics are likely to become confused with the matter of standards of personal conduct. Teachers have been expected to live exemplary lives as they are supposed to serve as models of conduct for young people. Following this concept, teachers have often been expected to refrain from drinking a cocktail, smoking, playing cards and associating with persons of bad reputation.

Ethical committee opinion is that important reason teachers should study Principle III of the code, which defines the relationship between ethics and conduct.

Some would argue that these professional ethics mandate specific behaviors in particular situations but do not promote individual adherence to ethical principles. The grey areas in decision making that confront most teachers on a regular basis arise in the face of competing interests and values. These ethics may assist, but not give clear definition to teachers' decision making. In other words the organization or system can mandate what not to do in particular situations but it is impossible to list all possible situations that arise. This becomes the territory of ethical decision making. The delivery of training related to professional ethics may be possible. Training individual to adhere to particular ethical principles when making decision may not be possible.

The conclusion of this article is that we should agree to uphold certain ethical principles to retain the status of profession. Bring no disgrace to the profession. No teacher shall speak or act in a way which will bring discredit to the profession, ask or seek the students' support to further his personal and professional interests. No one shall incite communal or linguistic passion in the students for any reason whatsoever and none of us shall talk in public or write, defaming his colleagues and superiors. We shall maintain professional integrity; to be worthy of the great faith reposed in him by culture; try to serve the people to the utmost of his capacity. With the discipline and determination we can march ahead and serve the Nation better than any other profession.