Significance of Ethics:

A Case Study of Teachers Working in Engineering Institutes in Palwal District of Haryana

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Abstract:

Regional background can impact the ethical values of teachers to a great extent. Teachers belonging to underdeveloped areas might develop a wrong mindset and an unprofessional attitude at the workplace due to lack of ethical values. Therefore there is a dire need to inculcate professional values among them so that they can teach the future builders of our nation how to develop mutual trust, honesty and respect. The inputs for our paper have been taken from 200 teachers working in various engineering colleges across Palwal district through a structured interview using a questionnaire. We observed that one group of teachers expressed a high desire for inculcation of professional ethics in them as well as in their colleagues and a necessity to pass it on to the students whereas the other group simply wanted to foster the idea of ethics on others.

Our work involves a limited number of teachers working in engineering institutes which cannot account for the entire teaching community of this region. Therefore this case study is open for further discussion. The paper attempts to refuel the dormant desire of teachers to be ethically sound. The work is first of its kind to be carried out in the Palwal district.

Keywords – Ethical values, Teachers, Unprofessional attitude, Professional ethics, Mutual trust

1. Concept of Ethics:

The meaning of "ethics" is hard to conceptualise because people have different views about ethics. Many people link ethics with their feelings. But being ethical is clearly not a matter of following one's feelings. A person following his or her feelings may move away from doing what is right. Some people identify ethics with religion. Most religions, of course, advocate high ethical standards. Yet if ethics were confined to religion, then ethics would apply only to religious people. But ethics applies as much to the behaviour of the atheist as to that of the saint. Religion can set high ethical standards and can provide intense motivations for ethical behaviour. Ethics, however, cannot be confined to religion nor is it the same as religion. Being ethical is also not the same as following the law. The law often incorporates ethical standards to which most citizens subscribe. But laws, like feelings, can deviate from what is ethical. Finally, being ethical is not the same as doing "whatever society accepts." In any society, most people accept standards that are, in fact, ethical. But standards of behaviour in society can diverge from what is ethical. An entire society can become ethically corrupt. Moreover, if being ethical were doing "whatever society accepts," then to find out what is ethical, one would have to find out what society accepts. The lack of social consensus on many issues makes it impossible to equate ethics with whatever society accepts. For example, some people accept abortion but many others do not. If being ethical were doing whatever society accepts, then there would have been no question of any social reformation.

The question here arises about the notion of ethics. Ethics can be better understood if we consider two things. First, ethics refers to well-founded standards of right and wrong that suggest what human beings should do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. For example, ethics can refer to the standards that impose the reasonable obligations to refrain from rape, stealing, murder, assault, slander, and fraud. Ethical standards also include those that enjoy virtues of honesty, compassion, and loyalty. And, ethical standards include standards relating to rights, such as the right to life, the right to freedom from injury, and the right to
privacy. Such standards are adequate standards of ethics because they are supported by consistent and well-founded reasons. Secondly, ethics can also refer to the study and development of one’s ethical standards. As discussed above, feelings, laws, and social norms can deviate from what is ethical. So it is necessary to constantly examine one's standards to ensure that they are reasonable and well-founded. Ethics also means, then, the continuous effort of studying our own moral beliefs and our moral conduct, and striving to ensure that we, and the institutions we help to shape, live up to standards that are reasonable and solidly-based.

2. Ethics in the Teaching Profession:

Teaching, they say, is a noble profession that is service-oriented by nature. It has the potential to have a great impact in the moulding of the next generation. That is why education is valued by government, family and society. While a great majority of teachers carry this noble tradition with their heads held high and even innovate and teach beyond the classroom setting, a teaching profession can also be riddled with corruption. There are teachers who do not even hesitate to seek material or sexual favour(s) from students and parents in exchange for a higher academic rating. Similarly, many teachers have lost the fervour to impart knowledge and are simply going through the motions of teaching just for the sake of fulfilling an obligation. Thus, ethics in the teaching profession seems to be in a compromising state today. Although ethics is an integral part of any teaching institution, the irony is that a great majority of teachers are still unaware of ethical issues.

3. Code of Ethics for Educators:

The Code of Ethics for Educators that was developed by the Association of American Educators (AAE) Advisory Board and by the Executive Committee of AAE has been used by us to form our questionnaire. Most of the questions that we have used in our questionnaire are based on these ethical codes. This Code of Ethics has been simplified by us so as to make it feasible to our fellow presenters in understanding the codes. We have used the general term teacher instead of the original term professional educator. The Code of Ethics contains four basic principles relating to the rights of students and educators.

3.1 Ethical Conduct toward Students

3.1.1 The teacher should accept responsibility for teaching students how to build character that will help them evaluate the consequences of and accept the responsibility for their actions and choices.

3.1.2 The teacher should measure his students’ success not only by the progress of each student toward realization of his or her personal potential, but also as a citizen of the greater community of the republic.

3.1.3 The teacher should deal with each student in a considerate manner and seek to resolve his academic as well as personal problems.

3.1.4 The teacher should not criticise his students intentionally.

3.1.5 The teacher should not reveal confidential information related to students, unless required by law.

3.1.6 The teacher should make a constructive effort to protect the student from conditions detrimental to learning, health, or safety.

3.1.7 The teacher should endeavour to present facts without distortion, bias, or personal prejudice.

3.2 Ethical Conduct toward Practices and Performance

3.2.1 The teacher should assume responsibility and accountability for his or her performance and continually strive to demonstrate competence.

3.2.2 The teacher should endeavour to maintain the dignity of the profession by respecting and obeying the law, and by demonstrating personal integrity.

3.2.3 The teacher should apply for, accept, or assign a position or a responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications, and should adhere to the terms of a contract or appointment.
3.2.4  The teacher should maintain sound mental health, physical stamina, and social prudence necessary to perform the duties of any professional assignment.

3.2.5  The teacher should not intentionally misrepresent official policies of the educational organization.

3.2.6  The teacher should honestly account for all funds committed to his or her charge.

3.2.7  The teacher should not use institutional or professional privileges for personal reasons.

3.3  Ethical Conduct toward Professional Colleagues

3.3.1  The teacher, while exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues, should behave in the same manner with all members of the profession.

3.3.2  The teacher should not reveal any confidential information related to colleagues unless required by law.

3.3.3  The teacher should not make false statements about a colleague or the institution where he works.

3.3.4  The teacher should not interfere with a colleague's freedom of choice of teaching methodology.

3.4  Ethical Conduct toward Parents and Community

3.4.1  The teacher should pledge to protect public sovereignty over public education and private control of private education.

3.4.2  The teacher should recognize that quality education is the common goal of the public, boards of education, and educators, and that a cooperative effort is essential among these groups to attain that goal.

3.4.3  The teacher should make effort to communicate to parents all information that should be revealed in the interest of the student.

3.4.4  The teacher should endeavor to understand and respect the values and traditions of the diverse cultures represented in the community and in his classroom.

3.4.5  The teacher should manifest a positive and active role in college/community relations.

4.  Our Case Study: Ethical Quotient among Teachers working in Engineering Institutes in Palwal District in Haryana

4.1  What is a Case Study?

A case study is an intensive analysis of a person, project, policy, institution or event that is studied holistically by one or more methods. Rather than using samples and following a rigid set of rules to examine limited number of variables, case study involves an in depth longitudinal examination of a single instance or a case. It provides a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analyzing information, and reporting the results. Case studies lend themselves to both generating and testing hypotheses. When selecting a subject for a case study, researchers use information-oriented sampling, as opposed to random sampling. A case may be selected as a key case because of the inherent interest of the case or the circumstances surrounding it or it may be chosen because of researchers' in-depth local knowledge. One of the areas in which case studies have been gaining popularity is education and in particular educational evaluation.

4.2  Reason for our Case Study:

We firmly believe that the regional background of a teacher has a lot to do with his ethical values. Teachers belonging to under developed or rural areas may have wrong mindset and an unprofessional attitude towards their colleagues, students and workplace due to lack of ethical values. Ethical quotient in them may be lesser in degree as compared to their counterparts who belong to the urban area because of very little or no exposure to an ethical
culture. The technical institution, MVN Education City, located at Aurangabad Village, Palwal District in Haryana has around 178 teaching and non-teaching staff members. The college runs engineering courses at under-graduate level and management courses at both under-graduate and post-graduate levels. A bulk of the teaching fraternity (around 100) hails from Palwal and Hodal areas (interiors of Haryana) and Kosi Kalan (adjacent to Uttar Pradesh Border). Most of these teachers, who are otherwise proficient in their subject, somehow lack ethical values. We have observed similar unethical culture in other teachers too, who teach in different engineering colleges in Palwal district, in course of our interactions with them on various occasions. Teachers in these colleges seem to be unaware of the ethical codes that are so vital to any teaching organization. Ideally speaking, teachers are considered to be role models by their students. Therefore, it seems strange when a teacher behaves in an unethical way while carrying out his role of a responsible nation builder. We carried out this case study to find out if regional factor was the only reason that acted as a barrier to make them ethically sound people.

4.3 Methodology Adopted:

A good methodology (methods and techniques for eliciting data or information from the informants in a research work) goes a long way in ensuring the transparency of a research work. In our case we adopted the methodology of using a questionnaire (a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from informants) that comprises 20 questions in total based on ethical issues in the field of teaching. The questionnaires were distributed to around 200 teachers working in various engineering colleges in Palwal district but we received around 70 filled in questionnaires that also hinted at their lack of ethical knowledge. While distributing the questionnaires, we intentionally made it a point to include teachers, who resided in Faridabad area, Delhi NCR but worked in Palwal, as our informants. The reason behind it was to find out if rural working atmosphere could affect the ethical values of these teachers who belonged to an urban and a socially active zone. The sample questionnaire that we used for our case study purpose is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Let’s be Ethically Active!</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have you ever come across the term ‘ethics’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/ No)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What, according to you, is being ethical?</td>
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<tr>
<td>(A matter of following one's feelings, following the religion, following the law, doing whatever society accepts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you agree that “ethics” refers to the sense of right and wrong that suggests what we should do usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues?</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Strongly agree/ Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. What are your views about teaching profession?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A noble profession, a source of earning money, a passion, less time consuming job)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Do you feel ethics is an integral part of any teaching institution?</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Yes, No)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Do you agree to the statement that there are teachers who do not even hesitate to seek material or sexual favour(s) from students and parents in exchange for a higher academic rating?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Strongly agree/ Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Do you agree that teacher should deal with his every student in a considerate manner and seek to resolve his/her academic as well as personal problems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Strongly agree/ Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Do you agree that teacher should not be biased while dealing with his students?  
   (Strongly agree/ Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree)

9. Do you agree that teacher should not intentionally mock any student in the classroom?  
   (Strongly agree/ Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree)

10. Do you agree that teacher should not reveal academic related confidential information to students?  
    (Strongly agree/ Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree).

11. Do you agree that teacher should not reveal confidential information related to their colleagues to others?  
    (Strongly agree/ Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree).

12. Do you agree that teacher should be mentally and physically sound to perform his duties?  
    (Strongly agree/ Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree).

13. Do you agree that teacher should not use institutional or professional privileges for personal advantage?  
    (Strongly agree/ Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree).

14. Do you agree that teacher should not make false statements about a colleague or the institution?  
    (Strongly agree/ Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree).

15. Do you agree that teacher should not interfere with a colleague's freedom of choice of teaching methodology?  
    (Strongly agree/ Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree).

16. Do you agree that teacher must make strong efforts to communicate to parents all information that should be revealed in the interest of the student?  
    (Strongly agree/ Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree).

17. Do you agree that teacher should endeavour to understand and respect the values and traditions of the diverse cultures represented in the community and in his or her classroom.  
    (Strongly agree/ Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree).

18. Do you complain to your other colleagues about the work culture in your college?  
    (Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never).

19. Do you use abusive words/ language to your students who are unruly and very casual towards their study?  
    (Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never)

20. Do you escape ethical challenges, that is, do you avoid sharing your views regarding what is right or wrong?  
    (Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never)

4.4 Analyses of Data:

After the qualitative analyses of the responses given by the informants, we found that most of the teachers were not familiar with the true meaning of ethics. Some teachers did not seem to have a high regard for their own profession. They considered it to be just another source of earning money to spend their livelihood. We also found that many teachers felt that ethics was the need of the society; it did not have anything to do with a technical institution. Several others believed in ‘an eye for an eye’ policy where they would not even hesitate to
use abusive language towards their colleague in case of any scuffle. Another interesting observation that we made was that one group of teachers expressed a high desire to inculcate professional ethics in their colleagues and an urgent need to pass this on to their students as well. The analysis of the responses given by the informants revealed that these teachers were from Faridabad area which is a part of Delhi NCR. The other group of teachers simply wanted to foster the idea of ethics on others instead of adopting it themselves.

5. **Conclusion Drawn:**

The conclusion of our paper is based on the findings made by us. The findings revealed that regional background influences a person’s ethical value. Our work involved a limited number of teachers working in engineering institutes which cannot account for the entire teaching community of this region. Therefore this case study is open for further discussion.

6. **References:**

- Pinky Castelo Cupino, *Ethics and Responsibilities in the Teaching Profession*