

Importance of 'Understanding the Self' for 'Ethics of Teaching Profession'

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Abstract

As citizens of tomorrow are made in today's classrooms, the progress of any country is dependent on the quality of its teachers. If teachers are expected to bring about a revolution in their approaches, the same revolution must find a place in colleges of teacher education. We want a better teacher education system to face the challenges of future. Emphasizing on the duration of teacher education programs, better use of ICT, enriching content knowledge or better lesson planning is not going to work until the teachers are dedicated to their responsibilities. There are challenges in teaching teachers about values and professional ethics. NCTE gives a draft about 'Code of Professional Ethics for School Teachers' in 2010, but it nowhere talks about the guiding content to develop ethics in future teachers. In 2015 when the two year B.Ed. was introduced by NCTE, it introduces a new paper 'Understanding the self'. The guidelines to teach this paper are also mentioned. Thus this paper if given proper attention can help solve the purpose of making future teachers aware of themselves and thus the ethics of profession. The present paper deals with idea of importance of developing a concrete program of action for developing professional ethics among teachers in which the paper 'Understanding the Self' can help.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Professional Ethics, Understanding the Self.

Introduction

Education is one of the basic processes through which society sustains, transmits and enhances values to posterity. The education contributes to social and national progress, basically a human effort, by providing trained manpower and most importantly by promoting desirable attitudes and values among pupils conducive to and in support of social aspirations and national development goals. Education is an instrument for social change and social control and it is the only means for bringing about desirable changes in the society.

At the same time since education is a powerful agency of change, it must absorb continually new ideas and changes on one hand while rejecting or replacing irrelevant and out-dated values on the other hand. Education Imparts intellectual culture. Quality education cannot be neutral, value free, that is to say, providing just techno-informative education. The curriculum should be designed to promote qualities that make a man socially effective and happy. Education has degenerated and has become only a process of information transmission with the sole objective of passing examinations. Education that focuses on transmission of knowledge, examinations, academic achievement is producing automated human beings devoid of basic values of love, care and concern for others. We are passing through a phase of social and political life which poses special danger in the wearing down of our long accepted values. Crime, violence and indifference to human suffering have spread in all walks of life. At the Individual level there is lack of clarity on life goals, contradiction and stress, at the level of human relationship there are problems like, increasing communal conflict, exploitation and strife, terrorism and violence, increasing corruption and unethical practices in almost every profession and at the level of nature there is increasing problem of environmental degradation and resource depletion threatening the survival of human race.

All these problems are the outcomes of human activities carried out in the name of progress. So we have to think about the missing link in the process of education, which we are providing today. The overall



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purpose behind providing education is to enable a human being to live a satisfying life, in harmony with oneself and with family, society and nature. Hence it becomes the accountability of educators to enable the resolution of these issues, so that human society can achieve the treasured goal. It activates the dormant capacities of the individual and enables him to know 'truth', 'duty' and 'goodness'. It transforms man from animal consciousness to human consciousness who is conscious of his role play in the universe. It seeks to protect for him the things and activities, which are good instead of bad, right instead of wrong and pleasing instead of annoying. Education trains the mind and soul and gives the young intellectual wisdom and sensible power, develops courage of mind, strength of scruples and integrity of purpose.

The need for value education or value oriented education is emergent especially under the present situation in the country and that it should receive highest emphasis at all levels. While learner is always at the centre of educational processes, teachers play significant roles as guides. At a time when the world is under dangers of aggression and terrorism, teachers can no longer afford to declare education to be 'value-free'; educators should no longer avoid the moral duty for teaching universally shared human values encouraging a culture of peace as well as an all-round human development. The challenge is to design diversified educational materials and approaches suitable to the diverse needs of students in respect of their physical and psychological development characteristics.

Teachers as role models should be aware of their own values because values are often caught not taught. Teachers' values and attributes will show through, because teaching does not take place in value-free vacuum. The role-modeling approach occurs in both explicit and implicit ways here and has the potential to be either a positive or negative influence on the value- development processes of students. Bergen (2006) found great differences among teachers regarding their role as models for students to look up to them and identifying with. Thus teachers are required to examine critically their own values and to reflect upon the values they portray through their teaching methods, methods of assessment and evaluation, selection of content matter; their relationship with students and colleagues. Only when a critical examination and reflection process occurs at a personal level is a teacher likely to be effective in actively constructing a critical approach to value education within the classroom. One must have a just right attitude to be able to exact an ideal approach from the students. In the past, the process of value acquisition was natural, given the climate in the classroom and the school was conducive. Today we need to make conscious effort.

Aim of the Study

In this article the author has tried to find out the practical way to inculcate professional ethics among future teachers and to bridge the gap between telling do's and don'ts and expecting them to become ideal teachers. How the present teacher education syllabus can be helpful in realizing them about

themselves and the aims of teaching profession is being focused in this article.

When we review the literature of the studies done in the field of value education and professional ethics for teachers it helps us to give a purposeful direction in this study. The reviewed related literature has updated the researcher about the work already done in the field; few helpful findings are as follows-

1. Teachers are the role models of the society so there are expectations from them to behave ethically.
2. Teachers should themselves assume the challenge of making them self accountable, self regarding conception of professional development is required.
3. There are challenges in teaching teachers about teaching professional ethics.
4. The guiding content of the professional ethics should be to draw attention to moral virtues and not telling do's and don'ts.
5. Institutes developing teachers must develop methods to impart professional ethics also.
6. Professional ethics is currently a neglected topic in the teacher education programs.
7. The philosophy under the professional ethics program should also be told to the students.
8. Adherence to the code of ethics can improve the quality of teaching.
9. Professional ethics should be a part of teacher education curriculum and teacher educators should raise the ethical consciousness of future teachers.
10. Programs of modest duration can influence ethical development of teachers.
11. Values are not subjective or relative.
12. Teachers can be morally good only when their act does not conflict with the institutional norms and does not interfere with a colleague's privacy.
13. As teachers are those who teach values to all children so value should be taught to them first, their training should be adequate for moral development of teachers.
14. Indian studies say that value education of teacher education need a transformation of its entire content and processes.
15. A comprehensive approach to ethics training is dependent upon an open workplace culture of enquiry and professional learning.
16. Conscious efforts are needed to develop values in teachers as their lack of awareness is possible reason of inadequate value education in schools.

Thus we see that there is need of developing a program of professional ethics for teachers in our country as ethical codes for teachers do exist in our country but there is no way to make teachers aware about them. If teachers are to become ethically aware then the most important place for inclusion would certainly be pre service teacher education program (Sawhney, 2015). This program should not be of telling do's and don'ts of teaching profession. It should be based on the value clarification approaches so that teachers can develop a value system of their own and are not influenced by any other things. This program should be able to make the teachers realize their roles

and responsibilities as a teacher. Gluchmanova (2014) concluded that the main goal of teacher's work is to help in removal of those issues which are purely ethical in nature. Swamy and Harish (2016) advocated a strong need of professional ethics for teachers to help them improving their personality and self satisfaction. It should be included in the teacher training curriculum.

The teacher is considered as professional because he is trained to teach and has acquired the teaching skills. Sherpa (2018) mentioned in his article about lack of professional ethics among teachers in spite of the fact that they possessed many degrees and medals. As a professional, the teacher is required to maintain certain code of conduct or norms of manners. It means that a teacher's behavior pattern must be governed by ethical considerations, widely known as professional ethics. While ethics codes are defined international values (truthfulness, fairness, faithfulness, respect) are given importance. These are common for all professions. Thus developing professional ethics will require a value clarification system which can make them understand the importance of the profession and their obligations as a teacher.

It was universally felt that like all other professions, the teaching profession also needs to have its own Code of Professional Ethics which certainly is a pre requisite to ensure its poise and integrity. National Council for Teacher Education in India has prepared a Draft for Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers of school in 2010. The Constituent Committee of the draft reviewed the codes in Context of RTE 2009 and also examined the Codes of Professional Ethics currently in use in some other countries. The draft Code prepared by the NCTE Committee was shared with the various experts, representatives of State Education Departments, Teachers organizations and UNESCO, senior officials of the Ministry of HRD and experts of education in a National Seminar. It was also put online on the website of NCTE for comments and suggestions from the stakeholders in school education. Valuable suggestions received online and in the seminar were incorporated while finalizing this document.

The Code of Professional Ethics for teachers gives a framework of ethics to direct them in discharging their obligations towards students, parents, colleagues and community. Increased awareness of the ethical principles governing the teaching profession is essential to make sure 'professionalism' among teachers. The document comprised of three chapters. The Code of Professional Ethics was given in Chapter 1, a mechanism for its execution was suggested in Chapter 2 clarifying notes on different articles of the Code were given in Chapter 3. The Explanatory Notes have been included to facilitate better understanding by the teachers of the provisions contained in the Code.

This document was an effort like all other professions to move the teaching profession towards self regulation, which implied that every teacher

should have the inner urge to stick to the ethical principles listed in the Code of Professional Ethics meant for teachers. However, in spite of the hope of the voluntary observation of the Code, some cases of violation of the Code or of incomplete observance to it were likely to occur in the huge system of school education. Therefore, a suitable mechanism was needed to be evolved to ensure that all members of the profession follow the ethical principles enshrined in the Code of Conduct. The violation of the Code of Conduct invited disciplinary action for which detailed rules were prescribed in the document. However, it was suggested in the case of disobedience of Code of Professional Ethics by teachers, the accountability to discipline them should rest with the official representatives of the profession. The extent or seriousness of the disobedience may not be the same in all the cases. The cases of violation or non-observance shall have to be dealt with at various levels and in various ways in agreement with the nature of the violation.

In other professions, as for example, medicine and law, etc. after completion of the professional course, the pass-out is registered as a bona fide practitioner of the profession and is bound by a Code of conduct known as Professional Ethics applicable to his profession. In case of any reported violation of the code, the authorized professional body initiates disciplinary action which may even lead to cancellation of the license to practice the profession. No such provision exists in the case of the teaching profession. It was suggested in the document that, to begin with, All India Federations of Primary and Secondary Teachers organizations should formally adopt the 'Code' and resolve to take all possible measures to ensure its observance in letter and spirit. At the time of initial appointment, a teacher should be provided a copy of the 'Code of Professional Ethics' for inspection and should be further required to furnish an 'Oath', before joining the profession that he/she would always make every effort to observe the 'Code' in every manner. The prescribed format of the oath to be taken by the teachers was also suggested in the draft.

NCTE in 2015 also introduces a new paper named as 'Understanding the Self' in the field of teacher education. The content of the paper consists of -What is self? Is self the experience of internal talk? What characterizes —self-ness? Can identities change? Will the individuality of a first generational learner who belongs to a family of migrant labourer change when she is recognized as a gifted child? What are the effects of parents and peers on the individuality of a learner? Many such similar questions prompt the investigation and need to understand the self. This course provides chance to the students and teachers to develop an understanding about their own self both as a person and as a student-teacher. Developing an understanding of the Self was felt essential for an individual to utilise her/his optimal potential for the benefit of one's own self as well for the society. As persons in the society student teachers are essential part of it. As a member of the society a person has various identities – gender,

linguistic, cultural, relational, etc. and it is necessary to understand and address one's unspoken beliefs and prejudices causing from these identities. The student-teachers need to become conscious of their own selves and their identities as well as the political, historical, socio-cultural and various other factors that shape them. The course thus provides an interdisciplinary approach for the development of the understanding of one's own self. This exploration and understanding enables the student-teachers to develop sensibilities and skills that will help in their personal and professional development and make possible the personal growth of their students.

The objectives the course were to enable the student teachers -

1. Gain an understanding of the essential concepts of own identity and self.
2. Reflect significantly on factors that shape the understanding of self.
3. Build an understanding about themselves, i.e. the development of self as an individual and as a teacher.
4. Reflect on one's experiences, aspirations and efforts towards becoming a humane individual and teacher.
5. Develop effective communication skills including the ability to pay attention, examine etc.
6. Build resilience within them to deal with conflicts at different levels and learn.
7. To draw upon collective strengths to live in harmony with one's surroundings.
8. Appreciate the critical role of teachers in promoting self and student's well-being.

The content of the course comprises of understanding of Self Reflections and critical analysis of one's own self and identity, Identifying factors in the development of Self and in shaping identity, Building an understanding about philosophical and cultural perspectives of Self and developing an understanding of one's own philosophical and cultural perspectives as a teacher.

Other than this it includes studying development of Professional Self and Ethics, understanding and sharing one's identity and socio-cultural, historical and political influences in shaping the professional identity. Exploring, reflecting and sharing one's own aspirations, dreams, concerns and struggles in becoming a teacher. This paper requires reflecting on experiences, pains, aspirations, ideas etc. of oneself and peers. This paper gives importance to building an understanding about values and professional ethics as a teacher to live in harmony with one's self and surroundings. It reflects on understanding the role of teacher as facilitator and partner in well-being among learners. It helps pupil teacher understands the role of Teacher in Developing Understanding of Self among Learners Reflecting on one's own childhood and adolescent years of growing-up. It helps facilitating development of awareness about identity among learners and developing skills of effective listening, accepting, positive regard etc.

The course is planned to be transacted in workshop mode through individual and group

experiential activities such as narratives and storytelling, life stories, group interactions, film reviews etc to help explore one's self and identity. Student-teachers have to engage in varied forms of self-expression such as poetry, painting and creative movements, humour, aesthetic representations, etc. Sharing of case studies by student-teachers, critical analysis of biographies and presentations, group readings and sessions on stories of different children who are raised in different circumstances and how this affects self and their personal and social identity formation. Reflective discussions on films/documentaries where the protagonist undergoes trials and finally discovers her/his potential, development of reflective journals/diaries by the student teachers are also in the syllabus. It also includes introduction of Yoga, meditation as one of the important component to enhance student-teachers understanding of body and mind.

Conclusion

When we analyse the above mentioned both documents we find that there is a missing link between both of them. If we want our teachers to be professionally aware and stick to their duties, there should be a detailed program for the content to develop thinking and internal motivation in them. Only giving ethical code of conduct is not going to help. We need to change the B.Ed. course and provide among other things, a detailed study of values, through the methods of exploration and experimentation. We should provide each trainee not only a theoretical study of values but also a practical program of physical culture, aesthetic appreciation and internalization of appreciation of values in personal life. These values are the basis of professional ethics. This new introduced paper named as 'Understanding the self' and the recommendations of its implications can be very helpful in directing the future teachers towards self realization of their duties and thus to ethics of teaching profession. There should be ample time allocation for these activities in the teacher education course. As the days of internship are fixed, in a similar way the hours of these types of activities should be fixed. The teacher educators need training on how to conduct these types of workshops. The absence of any practical program for inculcation of values in the teacher education program is a crucial gap in preparing teachers of the new Millennium. To new the upcoming challenges in the era of digitalization and artificial intelligence we need self reflective teachers and for this the teacher education program needs some changes urgently.

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