



Ethics : An Essential Parameter for Excellence in Teaching

KEYWORDS

Ethics; Excellence; Teaching; Teacher.

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ABSTRACT *No doubt times have changed. With this change some things in teaching profession have also changed. But teachers are still held to a higher standard of ethical behavior than nearly any other profession. Teaching profession is considered a noble and respectful profession in our country. The future and development of the nation depends on the teacher; what and how he/she teaches to the students who are going to be the nation builders. Ethics is a collection of moral standards by which each person is guided in his professional or private life. In this paper we have discussed the ethics that - an effective teaching should have; a teacher should have. The methodology used in this study is based on secondary data – journals, case studies, books, magazines, research papers etc. Some primary data has also been discussed that has been obtained from some teachers of engineering colleges of Amritsar (Punjab) with personal interaction. In this paper we have concluded that ethics is an essential parameter for teaching excellence.*

Introduction: A few years ago, sociologist Raymond Baumhart asked business people, "What does ethics mean to you?" "Ethics has to do with what my feelings tell me is right or wrong." The replies were: "Ethics has to do with my religious beliefs."; "Being ethical is doing what the law requires."; "Ethics consists of the standards of behavior our society accepts."; "I don't know what the word means.". These replies might be typical of our own. The meaning of "ethics" is hard to pin down, and the views many people have about ethics are shaky. Ethics are moral guidelines which govern good behavior. So behaving ethically is doing what is morally right. Ethics are about what is right and what is wrong. Law is about what is lawful and what is unlawful. Ethics is very much concerned with the teaching profession; may it be elementary teaching/ high school teaching/college teaching/university teaching/professional teaching. Ethics matters every where. Ethics plays a very important role in bringing excellence in teaching profession. Ethical practice is core of teaching profession. The future of the student lies in the hands of the teacher and that of nation in the hands of the student who are going to hold various responsibilities of the nation/country. This becomes a moral duty of a teacher to be ethical and teach in a very fruitful manner. Teaching is considered a very noble profession. The student relies more on his/her teacher than his/her parents. Teacher is a true guide for a student.

Meaning of Ethics: Ethics is the branch of study dealing with what is the proper course of action for man. Ethics is composed of two things. First, ethics refers to well based standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. Ethics, for example, refers to those standards that impose the reasonable obligations to refrain from rape, stealing, murder, assault, slander, and fraud. Ethical standards also include those that enjoin 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 refers to the study and development of one's ethical standards. As mentioned 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.

Definition of Ethics: Murray and colleagues defined ethics as "general guidelines, ideals, or expectations that need to be taken into account, along with other relevant conditions, and circumstances, in the design and analysis of teaching". (New Directions in Teaching and Learning, 1997, Vol. 66). According to Marilla Svinicki at U.T. Austin, being ethical in the classroom means considering the responsibilities we have to students and colleagues. In other words, we can think ethics in the term of responsibilities we have and how we fulfill other obligations.

Meaning of Teaching: Teaching is the only major occupation of man for which we have not yet developed tools that make an average person capable of competence and performance. In teaching we rely on the "naturals," the ones who somehow know how to teach.....(Peter Drucker) The word teach has a long history and its uses have varied from one period to another. Teaching is that which results in learning. Teaching is undertaking certain tasks or activities the intention of which is to induce learning. A teacher can anticipate that certain activities will result in learning, but not guarantee it. In short, successful teaching cannot be reduced to a set of general rules, or a prescribed pattern of behavior. Teaching is a normative activity. Normative teaching requires that the activities of teaching conform to certain ethical conditions: conditioning (stimulus-obeying behavior); indoctrinating (uniformed belief); brainwashing (conditioned behavior/uninformed belief); informing (information with explanations or evidence, no experience provided); training (rule-obeying behavior); instructing (training and informing); teaching (processes of verification, concern for what student thinks, preparing them for independent action). Scientific definition is: "teaching is the process of carrying out those activities that experience has shown to be effective in getting students to learn". Working definition is: "teaching is undertaking certain ethical tasks or activities the intention of which is to induce learning"

Why is Ethics important? Ethics is a requirement for human life. It is our means of deciding a course of action. Without it, our actions would be random and aimless. There would be no way to work towards a goal because there would be no way to pick between a limitless number of goals. Even with an ethical standard, we may be unable to pursue our goals with the possibility of success. To the degree which a rational ethical standard is taken, we are able to correctly organize our goals and actions to accomplish our most important values. Any flaw in our ethics will reduce our ability to be

successful in our endeavors. So ethics is also mandatory for excellence in teaching.

Four Norms to Govern Teaching

1. Honesty: Honesty is the very first norm for excellence in teaching. Honest teacher means who always teaches what is true/factual and never cheats the students by telling lie/skipping.

2. Promise-Keeping: Promise-keeping requires the teacher to fulfill the "promises" made at the beginning of the semester. Syllabi, assignments, grading principles, and class and office hour schedules involve promises made to students. This also helps in bringing excellence in teaching profession.

3. Respect for Persons: Teachers ought to encourage mutual respect among students. Additionally, teacher ought to show respect and common courtesy for students both during interpersonal interactions and in responding promptly to students' need for guidance and feedback. Respect again plays a vital role in bringing excellence in teaching profession.

4. Fairness: Recognizing the inherent subjectivity involved in grading, teachers ought to ensure that their grading practices are as objective as possible by creating and adhering to unambiguous criteria, which is also very much essential for excellence in teaching.

The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession:

1. Care: The ethical standard of **Care** includes compassion, acceptance, interest and insight for developing students' potential. Members express their commitment to students' well-being and learning through positive influence, professional judgment and empathy in practice.

2. Respect: Intrinsic to the ethical standard of **Respect** are trust and fair-mindedness. Members honor human dignity, emotional wellness and cognitive development. In their professional practice, they should respect for spiritual and cultural values, social justice, confidentiality, freedom, democracy and the environment.

3. Trust: The ethical standard of **Trust** embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members' professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust.

4. Integrity: Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of **Integrity**. Continual reflection assists members in exercising integrity in their professional commitments and responsibilities.

Principles of Ethical College and University Teaching:

1. Content Competence - A university teacher maintains a high level of subject matter knowledge and ensures that course content is current, accurate, representative, and appropriate to the position of the course within the student's program of study.

2. Pedagogical Competence - A pedagogically competent teacher communicates the objectives of the course to students, is aware of alternative instructional methods or strategies, and selects methods of instruction that are effective in helping students to achieve the course objectives.

3. Dealing with Sensitive Topics - Topics that student are likely to find sensitive or discomfoting are dealt with in an open, honest, and positive way.

4. Student Development - The overriding responsibility of the teacher is to contribute to the intellect development of the student, at least in the context of the teacher's own area of expertise, and to avoid actions such as exploitation and discrimination that detract from student development.

5. Dual Relationships with Students - To avoid conflict of interest, a teacher does not enter into dual-role relationships with students that are likely to detract from student development or lead to actual or perceived favoritism on the part of the teacher.

6. Confidentiality - Student grades, attendance records, and private communications are treated as confidential materials and are released only with student consent, for legitimate academic purposes, or if there are reasonable grounds for believing that releasing such information will be beneficial to the student or will prevent harm to others.

7. Respect for Colleagues - A university teacher respects the dignity of her or his colleagues and works cooperatively with colleagues in the interest of fostering student development.

8. Valid Assessment of Students - Given the importance of assessment of student performance in university teaching and in students' lives and careers, instructors are responsible for taking adequate steps to ensure that assessment of students is valid, open, fair, and congruent with course objectives.

9. Respect for Institution - In the interest of student development, a university teacher is aware of and respects the educational goals, policies, and standards of the institution in which he/she teaches.

AAUP Statement of Ethics in Teaching: In 1987, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) published a Statement on Professional Ethics. From this statement, ethics in teaching are based on the following principles:

1. Developing and improving scholarly competence.
2. Encourage the free pursuit of learning, demonstrate respect for individuals, and adhere to their proper roles, as intellectual guides and counselors.
3. Avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students/colleagues.

Conclusion: Teaching is honorable and influential position in our society. Associated with this honor and influence comes an immense responsibility. In this paper we have discussed the ethics that bring excellence in teaching. Ethics in a teacher are must to build strong nations.

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