

MORAL CODES FOR TEACHERS: INDIAN SCENARIO

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Abstract

People are nowadays victims of materialistic attitudes and desires; as a result of globalization and modernization. It causes the erosion of fundamental values. Teachers have experienced similar changes, too. The sudden increase in the number of teacher education institutes causes a dilution in quality, infrastructure and human resources. In addition, there is a full decline in moral standards, which are essential pillars of society. Moral codes are sets of beliefs and are considered necessary for teachers. They are an essential part of teaching. These are reflected in what is taught to the students and how teachers teach and interact with the students. This paper discusses how moral codes for teachers are important.

Key Words: Globalization, Modernization, Teachers, Moral Codes, Infrastructure.

Your ethics and morals are a part of your authenticity, as are your likes and dislikes.

-L.K. Elliott, Confessions of an Ex Hot Mess (n.d.)

Introduction

Globalization and modernization have made people victims of materialistic desires and attitudes. It leads to the loss of basic values. Similar changes have been observed in the case of teachers. A sudden rise in the number of teacher education institutions leads to dilution of quality, infrastructure and human resources along with that there is a complete deterioration of the moral codes; that are necessary pillars of society.

Morals are like a guiding light that helps an individual to decide his or her course in life. A person having morals will not upset another person for his/her own benefit. Morals help individuals strive for their lives, but not at the cost of other individuals. Morals are the most fundamental tools that help in the better functioning of society. It helps us to make a place for all human beings to excel in the global world and live with equality.

Morals direct us doing the right things. Morals are the customary values of behavior that enable individuals to live cooperatively in groups. It refers to what societies approve as right and acceptable. Furthermore, people are liable to act morally and follow the guidelines of the group.

Moral codes are sets of beliefs and are considered necessary for teachers. Moral codes are an essential part of teaching. These are reflected in what is taught to the students and how teachers teach, and interact with the students.

Meaning

The term "moral" was first used by Cicero to translate the Ancient Greek word "ethikós," which meant "moral." The term "moral" comes from the Middle English, Old French, and Latin word "mrlis." All of these words are related to morals or etiquette.

The word moral is related to thoughts, behaviour, actions, traits, and characteristics that are right and good. A code is related to a set of rules. So, moral code is a set of rules that a person follows to live a good and happy life. Moral codes tend to be specific and situational. They tell us about how to behave or how not to behave in a defined set of situations (Keniston, 1965).

Definitions

The definitions are as follows:

According to Keniston (1965), morals are socially learned, largely unconscious, relatively specific and apparently self-evident rules of right conduct in any community.

According to Smith (1989), a moral code consists of principles that assign moral status to individual actions – principles that evaluate acts as right or wrong, prohibited or obligatory, permissible or supererogatory.

According to Kelly (1995), the provision of education is both a moral and a practical imperative in a democratic society.' The very purpose of schools is to make a difference in the lives of pupils and so the moral and ethical dimensions of teaching provide the core value context in which teachers are located.

A moral code includes situations related to good and evil, individual conscience and normative regulation of behavior, so it is considered the main element in strengthening discernment at an early age. Often, in discourses about the moral aspects of some actions, concepts such as social control are used, the expectations that society has from a person or value orientations because in specialized terminology the moral concept is identified with that one of value (Beuchamp & Childress, 2001).

So from the above definitions, it can be concluded that moral codes are important for living a better life. These are rules that give moral status to the actions of the person.

Need and importance of moral codes

Moral values are internal. Morality is related to what is in-depth and most intimate in human nature. Without moral norms, human society would perish. The moral code controls the person so that he/she does what the entire group believes he/she should.

The moral code for teachers is especially considered to protect the rights of the students. It is important that teachers understand that when they get a teaching position they are agreeing to follow the moral codes. Teachers are expected to be fair to all their students. They should not take advantage of their position. Teachers need to have a professional relationship with all students. There is quite a bit of abuse that is happening in the schools. Teachers need to protect their students' safety and not believe that this is someone else's job.

Society can require publicly recognized professions to hold its members to high ethical standards but the profession itself must establish the ethical norms that govern their work and form the basis of the relationship of trust with society (Legault, 2006).

Research Questions

- ❖ Are teachers aware of their responsibility?
- ❖ Do teacher behaviour and conduct win him/her social acceptance and approval?
- ❖ Will the teachers serve as an example for students by ethically conducting themselves towards everyone?

Moral codes: Why a necessity for teachers?

Professional Ethics is a branch of Ethics and it brings about stability and agreement between the two material and immaterial aspects of humanity. Each collection has its moral codes appropriate for its professional structure which are named professional ethics. The main purpose of these moral codes is self-criticism and the nurturance that it entails. Professional ethics are behavioral principles set by individuals in a particular profession. Professional ethics deals with issues, principles and moral values governing a professional system as well as the politeness of an individual and the actions s/he takes when doing professional work (Gholampour, Farasatkah, & Ayati, 2020).

Be it in teaching or any other profession, codes of ethics exist for at least two interrelated reasons: to reinforce public trust in the profession and guide professional conduct (Abbott, 1988; Sockett, 1990; Banks, 2003).

Quality teachers are considered to be those individuals whose pedagogy is grounded in values and beliefs that lead to caring, positive teacher-student relationships, embedded in trust and high standards of professional ethics (Boon, 2011).

Principles of moral/ethical practice required for the teacher/professional educator (NASDTEC, 2021)

There are five principles, which broadly define the dimensions of ethical practice expected of the professional educator:

- **Principle I (Responsibility to the profession):** The professional teacher is aware that trust in the work depends upon a level of professional conduct and responsibility that should be higher than required by law. So every teacher must have to follow the same ethical standards.
- **Principle II (Responsibility for professional competence):** The professional teacher is dedicated to the highest levels of professional, ethical or moral practice. It includes the demonstration of the knowledge, skills and dispositions required for professional competence.
- **Principle III (Responsibility to students):** The professional teacher has a primary duty to treat students with dignity and respect. The professional teacher promotes the health, safety and well-being of students by establishing and maintaining appropriate verbal, physical, emotional and social boundaries.
- **Principle IV (Responsibility to the school community):** The professional teacher promotes positive relationships and effective interactions with members of the school community as well as maintains professional boundaries.
- **Principle V (Responsible and ethical use of technology):** The professional teacher considers the impact of using, creating, distributing and communicating information through all technologies. The appropriate boundaries of time, place and role are maintained when using electronic communication.

Review of related literature

Snook (2003) pointed out, because education aims to change people in particular ways, and uses methods that involve close, personal, hierarchical relationships, teaching is an occupation where ethical issues are central therefore the provision of ethical education to support the code of professional conduct of teachers is crucial.

It was reported in the Times of India (2018, July 19) entitled “Woman teacher gets bail in minor’s sexual abuse case” stated that a teacher was booked under Section 6 (Punishment for aggravated penetrative sexual assault) of the Pocso Act. A 15-year-old boy, who studied in Class X, took tuition from the teacher. The matter came into the limelight when the boy’s parents went to the teacher to discontinue his tuition due to his poor academic performance. Then the tuition teacher became aggressive and locked the boy in a room of her house. She also allegedly claimed that she could not live without the boy. The boy revealed to counsellors how he was sexually assaulted for the past few months. It was also found the teacher used to chat with the boy daily and had given a SIM card to the boy for that purpose.

Koshy (2019, June 2) in his report said that a madrasa teacher in Kerala's Kottayam district has been arrested for the alleged sexual assault of two children. He targeted minor children, luring them with sweets. The attacks took place in the institution where Quranic lessons are taught. The police said the accused man has claimed that he had undergone sexual abuse when he was a minor and later, turned into a habitual offender.

As stated in the Times of India (2021, November 4) news report titled “Woman teacher gets 10 years in jail for abusing 14-year-old” Chandigarh district court has awarded 10 years imprisonment to a woman teacher for sexually abusing a 14-year-old boy. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on the convict. The teacher was arrested after registering a case under Section 6 (aggravated penetrative sexual assault) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act.

It had been mentioned in Times of India (2021, December 4) under the heading “Teacher arrested on charge of child abuse in Pune” that a 23-year-old teacher has been arrested in Pune under sections 377 (unnatural offence), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) of the Indian Penal Code and relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act. The father of an eight-year-old boy lodged a complaint accusing the teacher of sodomizing his son.

In The Indian Express (2022, April 2) article titled “Teacher gets five years in jail for sexually assaulting minor boy” it was reported that a 52-year-old athletics teacher was convicted and sentenced to five years in jail for sexually assaulting a 13-year-old boy on the pretext of giving him a medal and a certificate for participating in a competition. Although accused of sexual assault on two boys, a POCSO court in Mumbai convicted him for his act only on one of them as the age of the other boy could not be proven. The boy’s mother had received a call from the accused, who organized a marathon competition. He asked for the boy and told her to send the boy to receive a medal and certificate. The teacher then met the two boys on the ground and took them to his home. The minor in his statement told the court that the teacher pretended to show them a magic trick and then touched one of them inappropriately. They fled from there and later informed their parents about the incident. As per The New Indian Express, (2022, June 30) it was highlighted “Teacher held for sexually assaulting students for four months” a 45-year-old chemistry teacher at a government school was held for sexually assaulting students for four months. He was arrested following a complaint from a member of the District Child Welfare Committee. The teacher had indulged in sexual assault by way of inappropriate touches. He also sent obscene messages to the girls, along with double-entendre messages on WhatsApp to a few girls. He had threatened the girls not to disclose the matter to anyone. The girls reported the matter to a woman teacher at the school. Furthermore, she informed the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) members. Then, a complaint was forwarded, along with an audio file and WhatsApp chats, to the police. Based on the complaint, he was booked under Pocso Act sections 10 (Punishment for aggravated sexual assault) read with 9 (Aggravated sexual assault), 21 (Punishment for failure to report or record a case) and Section 506 (Punishment for Criminal Intimidation) of the IPC.

In The Hindu (2022, August 14) titled “Dalit boy dies after being assaulted by teacher in Rajasthan school” it was reported that a nine-year-old Dalit boy died after being beaten by teacher in a private school, Saraswati Vidya Mandir, a school in Surana village of Jalore district of Rajasthan. He had drunk water from an earthen pot supposedly reserved for teachers from higher castes. The student touched the pot by mistake and drank water from it when he was thirsty. The teacher noticed it and beat the boy. He also threw casteism slurs at him. A case was registered under Section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code and the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Verma (2022) in her article under the heading “ A teacher beats 4th class student in Chandigarh | her one month salary to be given to student” highlighted that Adarsh Public School Sector 20, Chandigarh was in the limelight when a 4th class student lodged a complaint, alleging his teacher for beating him. According to this report, nothing much has changed after corporal punishment was banned in schools across the country by the Govt. of India. As a disciplinary action, a child rights panel has directed school authorities to give the victim student one month’s salary of the teacher against whom the complaint was filed. The decision was taken by the Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CCPCR) under the Right to Education (RTE) Act only to teach a lesson to the school teacher for not adhering to the RTE Act.

So, it can be said that when teachers come into the limelight they indulge in immoral activities then it sets wrong examples for society. As per different reports, it has been reported that teachers booked under Pocso Act section 10 (Punishment for aggravated sexual assault) read with 9 (Aggravated sexual assault), 21 (Punishment for failure to report or record a case) and Section 506 (Punishment for Criminal Intimidation) of the IPC, Section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code and the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Conclusion

So, we can say that though we have entered the 21st century, we cannot deny the fact that there is still a dire need to consider moral codes along with other professional development programs. The teacher has a key role in educating the students not only in the subject matter but also instilling moral values

also. So teachers of the modern world are not aware of their responsibilities. We need to rethink moral codes and set them for the betterment of teaching professionals.

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