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Professional Ethics in Teacher Education

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Quality Teaching has become a matter of great importance as the scenario opines that the education system has been facing developmental changes due to increasing national and international competition and also due to a rapid increase in dominance of information technology in almost every sector. The role of a teacher is very vital in this context. It is important to design and well-equip the policies and procedures that are involved in preparing an efficient teacher. The quality of education depends upon the quality of teacher and the quality of teacher depends upon the quality of teacher education institutes. Teacher education plays an important role in reforming and strengthening the education system of any country. Training of teachers has helped in emerging global trends in education and the overall needs and aspirations of the people in India. It cannot be negated that NCTE and AITEA have taken mandatory steps to improve the quality of teacher education. It is true that as society changes, the skills that a teacher needs to be adept in professional life also change gradually. Now-a-days basic literary skills such as Reading, Writing and Speaking are no longer sufficient. It has become a challenge for teacher training institutions to make vast the area of teacher education. And in this very context of quality teaching, it is relevant for a teacher to understand the basic professional ethics that are involved in preparation and development of his/her skills. This paper focuses on the ethics that are the very basis of a professional teacher and the signs of maturity and professional pride.

Michael Davis in his work *Profession, Code and Ethics* describes a profession as “a number of individuals in the same occupation voluntarily organized to earn a living by openly serving a moral ideal in a morally-permissible way...”. No profession can run smoothly without the specified code of ethics required for it. It is important here to understand the term ‘*Ethics*’, which is a branch of philosophy that deals with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the correctness and wrongness of certain actions. They are concerned with the basic ideas of duties/obligations, rights/responsibilities, right/ wrong. Professional ethics concerns “those norms, values and principles that should govern the professional conduct of

an individual.” It deals with the idea of knowing what is considered to be an acceptable behaviour in one’s professional life. There is a wide and narrow sense of professional ethics. In wide sense the professions are governed by general ethical rules and values but in narrow sense we have some specified tasks and values.

Generally all the professions have internally specified codes of professional ethics which must be followed to prevent exploitation of the stakeholders and thus to preserve the integrity and dignity of the profession. Talking about the profession of teaching we must understand that it is a profession of authority and responsibility. Like doctors and lawyers teachers are considered experts and are expected to act in the best interests of their constituents. The concept of professional/ethical teacher concerns itself with the context a teacher is in. A teacher does not operate in a vacuum but in the larger structures of the society and schools which have rules, regulations and a certain culture of their own. The professional ethics in teacher education concern with the moral behavior of the teacher. Ethics actually define a teacher’s standard of conduct, i.e. being the representative of knowledge, how he/she should behave with his/her students, colleagues and other stakeholders. A teacher may get involved in unethical activities like:

- Gossiping about other teachers
- Exaggerating the qualification
- Getting over friendly with board members for selfish motives
- Slurring the profession
- Getting involved in issues concerning class, gender, religion or caste
- Failure to support institutional policies
- Misusing their political support
- Instigating students for strikes

These forms of behavior are considered unethical as the teacher runs away from his/her duties and gets too much interested in personal interests and ignores his/her basic responsibilities towards the students. Here arises a dire need to understand the ethics or rules which give a moral basis to the profession of a prospective and efficient teacher. Teacher education plays an important role in reforming and strengthening the education system of any country. Training of teachers has helped in emerging global trends in education and the overall needs and aspirations of the people in India. It cannot be negated that educational institutions have taken necessary steps to improve the quality of

teacher education. It is true that as society changes, the skills that a teacher needs to be adept in professional life also change gradually. The professional ethics is an attempt to provide direction and guidance to the teachers in maintaining and enhancing the dignity of their profession. It is important for a teacher training institute to organize the teaching as a profession for which expert knowledge, specialized skills and dedication towards the profession are the pre requisites. The principles of ethical conduct lie at the core of the teaching profession. A teacher training institution should be active in providing framework of the principles to guide the pupil teachers in being responsible towards the students, parents, colleagues and community. The awareness about the ethical principles helps them in ensuring professionalism among the teachers. The role of various teaching council is to regulate the teaching profession and the professional conduct of teachers, to establish and promote professional standards, to support the continuing professional development of teachers and to promote teaching as a profession.

A teacher, delivering the most important service, makes a commitment to serve his/her country. He /she has the supreme power of motivating the students, providing unlimited amount of knowledge and also helping them in searching their hidden talents and polish their personalities. A teacher must be creative enough to develop new improved innovative methods of teaching and utilize them in a modern way to share his knowledge with the students. It is expected from a responsible teacher to maintain an impartial behaviour and attitude towards his/her students and look into the variations among the learners. He/she is actually more than a teacher as it is expected from a teacher to impart education to the students as well as help them grow in all spheres. A teacher must be not only skilful in promoting learning but also represent himself/ herself as a perfect model of ethical/moral behaviour. The National Education Association of United States, regarding the role of ethics for a teacher, in its preamble, highlights:

The educator, believing in the worth and dignity of each human being, recognizes the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, and the nurture of the democratic principles. The educator accepts the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards.

The educator recognizes the magnitude of the responsibility inherent in the teaching process. The desire for the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, of students, of parents, and of the members of the community

provides the incentive to attain and maintain the highest possible degree of ethical conduct. The Code of Ethics of the Education Profession indicates the aspiration of all educators and provides standards by which to judge conduct.

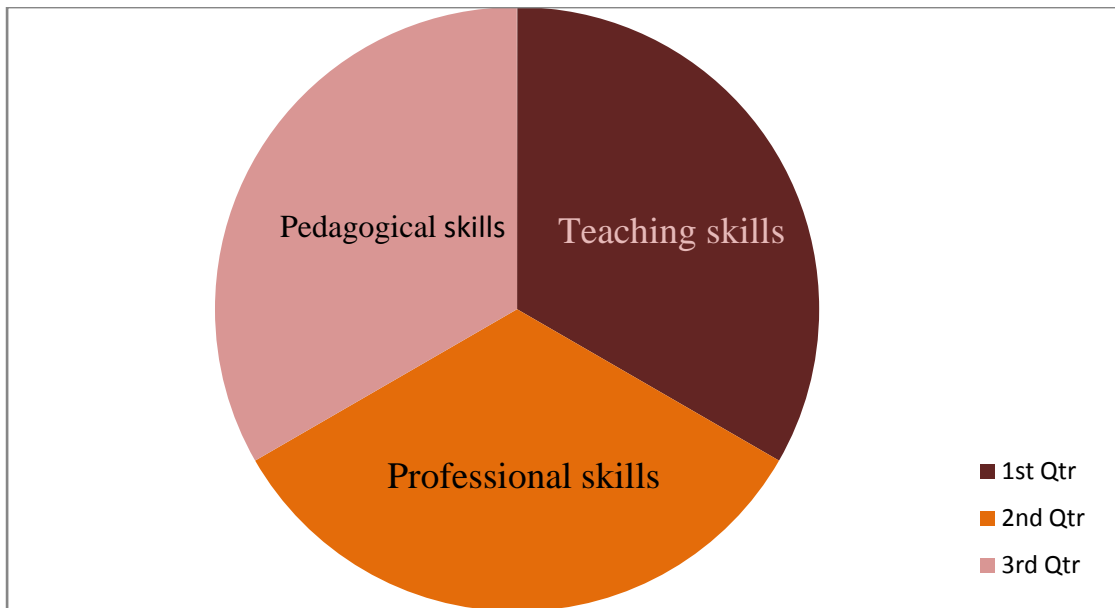
The professional educator strives to create a learning environment that nurtures to the overall development of students. The professional ethics enable the educators, students and administrators to maintain and promote quality education. A teacher quality and the strength of educator's leadership are recognized as the greatest determinants of educational success. Quality teaching has a measurable impact on student's outcome. In order to improve the quality of teachers, they must be trained through pre-service education and by developing teachers' skills and knowledge through in-service learning programmes. It is important for us to keep a close check on the ethical behaviour of the teachers as it directly hampers the quality of the education system.

Teacher education is the process of providing teachers with the skills and knowledge essential for an effective teaching. According to Goods Dictionary of Education, Teacher education means, all the formal and informal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume responsibilities of a member of the educational profession or to discharge his responsibilities more effectively. At present, in Colleges of Teacher Education, the pupil teachers are asked to prepare the lesson plans without being able to use them properly due to time factor. The lesson plans are checked superficially. The supervising team of two or more teachers supervises the teaching of the would be teachers within a short period of time and the supervisors fail to supervise all the lessons taught by the trainees. This results into the deterioration of the quality of education system in the country. Here the teacher training institutions ignore all the essential aspects of the training as well as the professional ethical values.

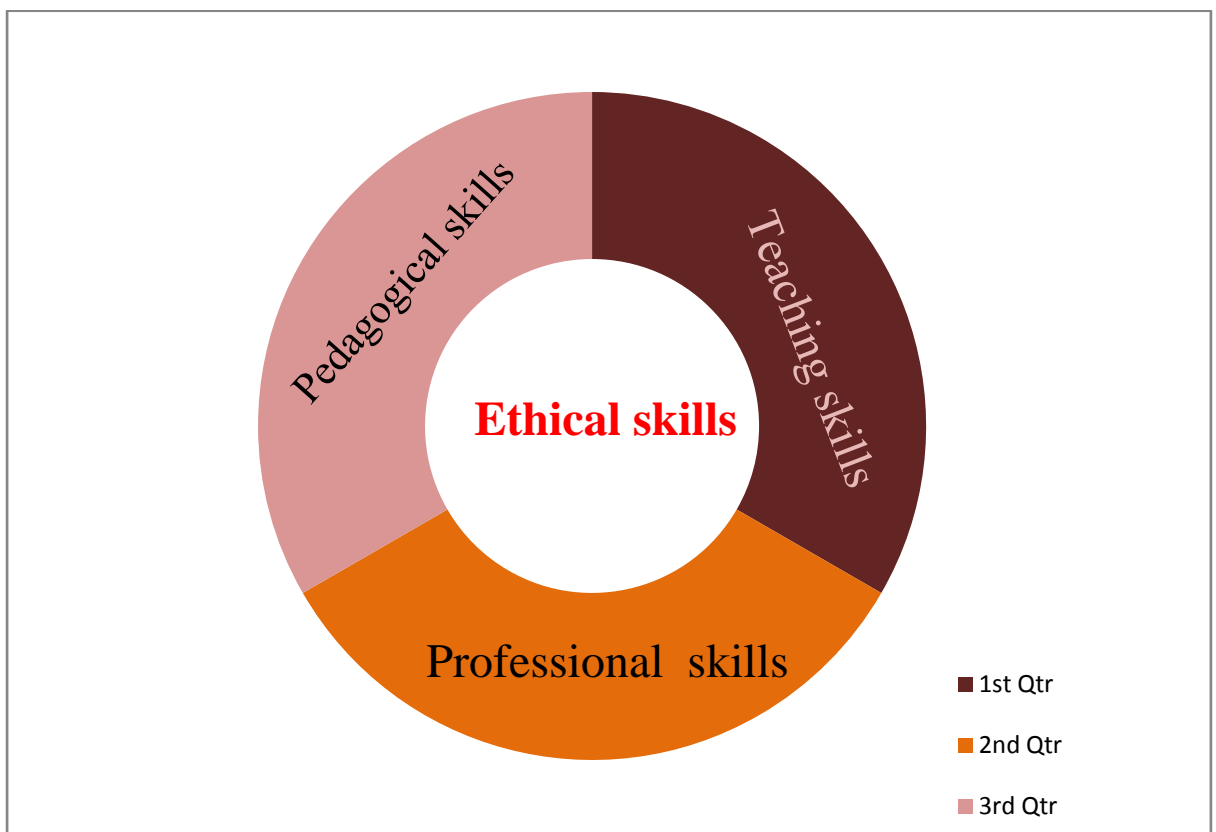
It is generally assumed that:

Teacher Education= Teaching skills+ Pedagogical Theory+ Professional Skills

We can represent these above constituents of teacher education in a pie chart



Here, the three quarters in the circle represent the main constituents of teacher education and we frequently neglect the moral ethical values that are equally important for a successful professional teaching life.



The blank area within this pie chart represents the Ethical values which are the centre of the teaching profession and all the teaching programmes and skills surround them and make a profession successful in the best possible way. These ethical values include:

- Honesty towards the profession
- Cooperation with the colleagues
- Exhibit a strong sense of fairness and social justice
- Unprejudiced attitude towards the board members of the work place
- Democratic and secular approach towards the stakeholders

The profession of teaching comprises an ethical behaviour which varies from one stakeholder to another as a teacher is supposed to have different moral conduct with his/her students, with the colleagues, and with the parents of the students. Let us focus on the ethical variations while dealing with different people:

I. Ethical Behaviour towards students

- The educator strives to help each student realize his or her potential as a worthy and effective member of society. The educator therefore works to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals.
- An educator should help the student to foster civic virtues such as honesty, integrity, diligence, transparency, responsibility, obedience to law, for human beings, for others and for self.
- Students should not be criticized by the teachers.
- A teacher should not deliberately suppress the students' access to varying points of view.
- The professional educator should never be ruled by the attitude of biasness and prejudice on the basis of race, colour, religion, gender, family or social background etc.
- He/she should neither unfairly exclude any student from participation in any programme nor grant advantage to any student.
- A teacher should not get into a friendly relationship with the students to get private advantage.

II. Ethical behaviour towards professional Colleagues

The professional teacher should keep the following view points while exemplifying ethical relations with the colleagues:

- Confidential information regarding the colleagues should never be revealed
- Aversion from criticism of the colleagues
- A teacher should not make false statements about the colleagues.
- He/ she should not try to instigate one colleague against the other

III. Ethical behaviour towards profession

- A teacher should never misrepresent his/her professional qualifications
- Should not make false statements concerning the qualifications of a candidate for professional position
- Should not get involved in the unauthorized practice of teaching
- Should not accept any gift or favour that appears to influence professional decisions or actions

IV. Ethical behaviour towards parents and community

- It is the duty of a professional educator to protect public sovereignty
- He should make essential efforts to communicate all information to the parents that should be revealed in the interest of the students
- He should respect the values of diverse cultures of different communities
- He should manifest a positive role in school and community relations

It is important to impart knowledge about the ethical values to the pupil teachers at their training level only as it will help in moulding them into better teachers in future.

Suggestions & Conclusion:-

- i.** Not only theoretical but practical knowledge of the moral ethical values should be given enough space in the curriculum of the pupil teachers.
- ii.** If possible, then like other subjects- for example Philosophy, Educational technology etc. a subject on Ethical Values should be added into the syllabi of the courses in teacher education.
- iii.** Workshops, Orientation Courses, Seminars on professional ethical values should be organized regularly during their pre-service and in-service tenure.

- iv. Special Extension lectures of the expert and experienced teachers should be organized so that pupil teachers get lessons from them and learn from their varied experiences.
- v. The teachers should motivate pupil teachers to conduct Field Work honestly.
- vi. Lesson plans of the pupil teachers should be reviewed thoroughly and should not be considered as a mere part of syllabi.
- vii. The teachers in the teacher training institutions should share personal reflections and thoughts with an ethical message for the pupil teachers.
- viii. The pupil teachers should be encouraged to participate in the activities in which they perform and work as a team, forgetting their differences.
- ix. The institutions should actively organize visits to old age homes, orphanages and other such places in order to sensitize the students towards elders and children.
- x. The students should be taught to respect the teaching profession and maintain its sanctity by being honest and committed.

The quality of the services of the education profession directly influences the nation and its citizens. So a teacher should understand that quality education is the common goal of the public, boards of education and other teachers and also that a cooperative effort is necessary among these stakeholders in order to generate and sustain quality education. The educator should exert every effort to raise professional standards and promote a climate that encourages trust and respect of the public. In his Call for Action for American Education in the 21st century in 1996, Clinton indicated, “*Every community should have a talented and dedicated teacher in every classroom. We have enormous opportunity for ensuring teacher quality well into the 21st century if we recruit promising people into teaching and give them the highest quality preparation and training*”.

Thus in a nutshell we can say that an institution for teacher education should focus on preparing creative, skilled and efficient teachers as well as put in efforts to inculcate basic moral / ethical values among them in order to prepare teachers who will act as path bearers for the society and nation at large.

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