

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

This study reviews the literature on the ethics and responsibilities within the teaching profession. Since the beginning of humanity, the teaching profession has used ethical principles, including interpersonal relationships and moral responsibilities. Ethics for the teaching profession consists of rules, principles and responsibilities for all members of a teaching society, including students. Teachers are seen as role models for their students and for society, and must live in accordance to these ethical standards.

Keywords: Teaching profession, ethics, ethical principles in teaching profession

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning, family members and prominent elders in tribes held responsibility for teaching. Later teaching the younger generation became centralized in individuals whose sole purpose was to teach in institutions, i.e., teachers. Although it is not known for certainty the origin of the teaching profession, it can be inferred that teaching is one of the oldest professions considering that the beginning of human history resulted because of learning and teaching processes (Oktaç, 1991). Currently, the teaching profession plays a vital role in providing the members of the society with the necessary information, skills and attitudes so that they can better understand the world around them and to find their place in the world (Haynes, 1998). Education is defined as the process in which intentional and desired changes are made in agents' behaviors by means of their own experiences (Demirel, 2012). No matter how great the educational programs are, the behavior of teachers will be very important in curriculum success. Teachers are the architects of the future generations as they carry the responsibility of raising citizens who are aware of their duties to their countries. In short,

The teaching profession can be defined as the art of raising individuals to be attentive and useful to the family, environment, nation, country and homeland, and to experience self-fulfillment. Teachers are always role models for both their students and societies they live in. The

expectations of society and students determine the ethical principles and responsibilities of teachers.

ETHICS FOR TEACHING PROFESSION

The concept of ethics was derived from *ethos*, which means “character” in Greek. Emphasizing the ideal and the abstract, ethics came about from a survey of moral rules and values (Aydn, 2002). Aristotle defined ethics as the discovery of the human behaviors which can be beneficial in the daily life (Daly & Mattilla, 2000). In broader terms, ethics is the system of moral principles, values and standards that question specific notions such as good, bad, right and wrong, within the relationships of both individual and group behaviors (Hatcher, 2004). A teacher is not just a person who teaches.

The teacher is also a role model for society and the world through conveying values and principles, contributing to social peace and tranquility, and raising individuals with physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and emotionally healthy character and personality and who are able to think scientifically and independently within a global perspective. The teaching profession cannot be examined without considering moral principles.

Teachers are basically the people who transfer the universal and moral principles to individuals. To Pieper (1999), an ideal teacher is a role model not only for perfect teaching skills, but also for exemplifying a worthy lifestyle. In this sense, a teacher is an ideal person who represents what he or she teaches.

Professional ethics is the set of professional principles which are constituted by the members of a specific profession, which protect its members, which demand the obedience of certain rules and behaviors, which limit personal inclinations, which exclude inadequate and unprincipled members, which organize the rivalry within the profession and lastly, which aim to maintain the service ideals of the profession. Considering the global practices in the teaching profession, the adoption of ethical principle into the profession starts with the pre-service educational procedures. “Teacher oaths” are generally prepared so as to inform and remind teachers of their duties and ethical responsibilities (Aydn, 2002, 2012). There are international ethical codes designed for the teaching profession in addition to other professions. Especially considering the practices in the world, the training process of teachers into being the organizers of educational life requires pre-service procedures. In this sense, teachers take the “teacher oath” before they start their profession, which indicates that they accept the ethical responsibilities and principles they must adopt when they start teaching.

The first ethical principles for teachers were developed in Canada in 1915. However, the first *professional* ethical principles were claimed by the National American Women Managers

Association, the USA School Workers Association and the American Staff Managers Association (Aydın, 1998). According to the Education Professional Ethics declared by the National Education Association in 1975, educators are able to understand the importance of responsibilities inherent to the educational process. Similarly, they try to perform optimal ethical behaviors so as to gain the respect and reliance of students, the students' parents, their colleagues and other members of society. In 1998, Terhart listed the educational professionals' ethical principles as below:

The Principles of Commitment to Students:

Teachers strive to help students to become respectful and effective members of society and to understand and realize their potentials.

- 1- Teachers do not prevent students' independent educational actions because of unreasonable excuses.
- 2- They do not reject the meeting requests of students with different perspectives.
- 3- They do not intentionally hide or distort any materials related to students' development.
- 4- They are expected to protect students against any conditions that might give harm to their health or security.
- 5- They do not expose students to behaviors that might embarrass or humiliate them.
- 6- They cannot discriminate against students in terms of ethnicity, religion, skin color, marital status, political or religious beliefs, social identity, cultural identity or gender. Also, they cannot hinder a student from attending to a program. They do not sabotage students' advantages or show favoritism.
- 7- They cannot take advantage of their relationships with students for their personal interests.
- 8- They cannot reveal any private information about students unless compelled to do so for legal or professional reasons (Terhart, 1998).

The Principles of Commitment to Profession:

The teaching profession includes the reliance and responsibility of society, and requires high ideals. So as to perform the mentioned duties with these faiths:

1. Educators cannot express misleading statements while applying for any positions, and they do not forge any documents about their competencies or qualifications.
2. They cannot announce faultily about their professional qualifications.
3. They cannot help others join the teaching profession who are unqualified to be teachers with regards to personal and educational terms.

4. They cannot express misleading explanations for a person's professional competency who apply for a position.
5. They cannot help an unqualified person to teach incompetently.
6. Except for legal or professional obligations, they cannot reveal the private material about their colleagues.
7. They cannot assert wrong or vicious statements about their colleagues.
8. They cannot reveal private information about students to others except for legal and professional obligations (Terhart, 1998).

The Council for the Teaching Profession in Malta listed the essential six ethical codes of the teaching profession (Teachers' Code of Ethics) as follows: maintaining trust in the profession; maintaining professional relationships with students; respecting the uniqueness and diversity of students; working in a collaborative manner with colleagues, parents, guardians and caregivers; acting with honesty and integrity; and keeping their professional knowledge and practice up to date.

CONCLUSION

Since the aim of education is to create a permanent behavioral change in individuals, teachers play a critical role in raising individuals who adopt universal ethical principles at schools. In educational settings, it is a goal for students to not only have academic knowledge and skills, but also experience moral development. Thus, teachers are expected to be role models positively affecting students' personality developments. Teachers should not see their profession as simply engaging in teaching activities; they should instead view it as a lifestyle that guides their students and society for the rest of their lives through keeping their national and sentimental values alive, raising generations of people with fair and solid character, enlightening the society he or she lives in and being a leader to develop his people. The teaching profession delivers ideals to students and society such as integrity, honesty, respect, kindness, and reliance through teaching by experience, all in relation to ethical principles. Thus, teachers act in accordance with professional ethical principles, which are the set of rules and attitudes determining what is right, wrong, true or false in their professional behaviors. This is necessary for the teaching profession.

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