ETHICS & PROFESSIONALISM IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

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"Peace is the singular fundamental right of every global citizen, and is the first priority for every government & administrator."

Kofi Annan
Former Chairman, United Nations Organization

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a noble profession. It has great potential to impact the future generations. It is responsible in moulding the society. That is why it needs to be valued and appreciated by all elements of the society, be it the teacher, student, parents or even the government. Majority of the teachers carry this noble tradition with their heads held high and go on to innovate and teach beyond just the regular classroom settings. Sometimes teachers seek material or even sexual favors from students and parents in exchange for a higher academic rating. Other teachers tend to resort to corporal punishment, others have lost the fervor to impart knowledge and simply go through the entire motions of teaching, for the sake of fulfilling and obligation.

In the past few years alone there have been many incidents in India, across various states, that have shown how we are lacking ethics and professionalism at every level in our system of education. These issues are related to teachers but students and the society-at-large are not far behind in this immorality. There have been innumerable cases of ragging as well as malpractices such as copying in the examinations, in college and in schools. Instances of such incidences, are on the rise in recent times. On one hand, the government is declaring and demanding, 'Education for all' and on the other hand, the rural population is neglected. Corrupt and controversial persons are occupying the seats of eminence in our set-up that totally lacks ethics and professionalism.

The Oxford dictionary defines ethics as science of morals, morals principles or code. Professionalism is a quality or typical features that are unique to one's occupation. Ethics refers to moral principles that control or influence a person's behaviour. Moral principles are the guiding forces that help a person think and act in manners that are acceptable by the common mass and generally good for the individual as well as others. Morality emerges from moral principles and these principles eventually become the guiding gospel of all forms of human living.

It should be the teacher's primary duty to understand students, to be just, courteous, to promote a spirit of enquiry, fellowship and joy in them and not to do or say anything that would undermine their personality, not to exploit them for personal interests. Teachers are respected by society because they know about different subjects. Proper education is the need of the day if we want our country to progress. This is because every child must be given the best level of education. So teachers should not only act as facilitators of education but also guide students and become a good role model for them.

Besides school education, the years spent in college also play a big role in shaping the future of individuals. Here again, lecturers and professors have the power to truly inspire these young
individuals to develop their thought processes and choose the right path in their pursuit for quality education. It has been rightly said that ‘children are the future of any country’ and teachers play an important role in shaping their bright future. It's education, not economics, that can take the country ahead and so ethics and professionalism are of extreme importance in education.

For analyzing the same, authors conducted a workshop & a questionnaire based survey to assess the views & perspectives towards the practice of ethics & professionalism for teachers in a primary school system in India, attached as Annexure I & its results & analysis, attached as Annexure II.

THE ISSUE
In the last one year alone there have been many incidents in India, across various states, that have shown how we are lacking ethics and professionalism at every level in our system of education. In April 2009, 11 year old Shano Khan, who had slipped into a coma after she was punished by her school teacher, died. In May 2009, the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) terminated the services of a male teacher for immoral behaviour towards girl students and for inflicting corporal punishment on his pupils. In another incident in Ichalkaranji, Maharashtra, Imran Maula Kalawant, an English teacher from Alphonso School was beaten up by locals and later arrested by the police, for behaving indecently with girl students and recording the same on his mobile phone for sending picture SMS.

These issues are related to teachers but students and the society-at-large are not far behind in this immorality. There have been innumerable cases of ragging as well as malpractices such as copying in the examinations, in college and in schools. Instances of such incidences, are on the rise in recent times. In the 21st century as the world moves into the future, our Indian society still holds back its girl child population. In spite of so many schemes and endeavors of the government, to promote education for the girl child our Indian society restricts the progress of this very women force. On one hand, the government is declaring and demanding, ‘Education for all’ and on the other hand, the rural population is neglected. Teachers too prefer to take up jobs only in high excellent schools and colleges. Education is a two-legged stool- ethics and environment constituting it. In our case both legs are broken. Education involves training of 3Hs - head, heart and hands. Here, the stress is laid on the first H only. We have an examination system, but no education system. The phenomenon of paid seats is a matter of shame for the institutions and the country. Corrupt and controversial persons are occupying the seats of eminence in our set-up that totally lacks ethics and professionalism.

What, then, is ethics and professionalism? The Oxford dictionary defines ethics as science of morals, morals principles or code. Professionalism is a quality or typical features that are unique to one's occupation. Ethics refers to moral principles that control or influence a person's behaviour. Moral principles are the guiding forces that help a person think and act in manners that are acceptable by the common mass and generally good for the individual as well as others. Morality emerges from moral principles and these principles eventually become the guiding gospel of all forms of human living.

It should be the teacher's primary duty to understand students, to be just, courteous, to promote a spirit of enquiry, fellowship and joy in them and not to do or say anything that would undermine their personality, not to exploit them for personal interests. Teachers are respected by society because they know about different subjects. Moreover, teachers have the qualities to be or
become role models for students. As they love, care, instruct and guide their student to become a successful person, the student views teacher as being wise. Therefore, he looks up to them. A teacher has an enormous responsibility. They too make mistakes. It is okay to make mistakes because it is a human nature. However it is important to remember that, students look up to their teacher and imitate them, literally in words and deeds. Proper education is the need of the day if we want our country to progress. This is because every child must be given the best level of education. So teachers should not only act as facilitators of education but also guide students and become a good role model for them.

Besides school education, the years spent in college also play a big role in shaping the future of individuals. Here again, lecturers and professors have the power to truly inspire these young individuals to develop their thought processes and choose the right path in their pursuit for quality education.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE
The questionnaire framed was meant to completely analyze and understand a teacher’s psyche, perspectives and understanding towards the ethics & culture of the educational workplace.
Majority of teachers find ethical malpractices in the workplace a serious and very serious on almost 87% of questions, while they feel a need of have a better access to remedies, be it the code of conduct or a way to rectify mistakes, they are keen to make the wrongs, right.

CONCLUSION
Without even realising it, teachers have the ability to create a strong like or dislike for the subject they teach their students. The most monotonous and serious subjects can be made interesting by an inspired and dedicated teacher. Often text books and curriculums become outdated. However, an inspired teacher can overcome these issues by keeping themselves updated with new concepts, teaching methodologies and technological breakthroughs. The society, also, needs to respect this morality and professionalism and behave responsibly. It has been rightly said that 'children are the future of any country' and teachers play an important role in shaping their bright future. It’s education, not economics, that can take the country ahead and so ethics and professionalism are of extreme importance in education.

REFERENCES
- Centre for Environment Education (2010). Ethical Framework for a Sustainable World