

## Professional Ethics Grow with Teaching Experience: A Study of Women Teachers in Higher Education Institutions of Punjab

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### Abstract:

*Corroborating with a truth recently debunked by a group of psychologists (being published by American Psychological Association-2014) that “personality traits get changed with age”; authors of the present article renewed their findings being documented in Lovely Professional University, Punjab. The study reported that professional ethics establish positive kinship with teaching experience of woman teachers in Higher Education Institutions in India. Ethical values in teachers grow with experience of teachers and an inference could be drawn from APA’s study through the present Indian research that “teachers with more teaching experience exhibit moderate level of professional ethics which is resultant of age that get tuned with personality traits. A total of 200 woman teachers was drawn from two universities (self-financed and government) of Punjab. The Professional Ethics Scale for Teachers (PEST-2007) of Jasmeen Kaur was used to record professional ethics while teaching experience was recorded on an ordinal scale. With the support of Pearson’s Correlation, the study reported a negligible positive correlation coefficient between professional ethics and teaching experience among woman teachers; thus indicating a trend well directing towards “ethics are learned across ages and age promotes experiences.” In other words*

*it may also be interpreted that “ethics come with experiences”. Moreover, how and when teachers in general in Higher Education Institutions employ unethical means—have always been a mystery.*

**Key words:** Professional Ethics, Women Teachers, Higher Education Institutions

## **Introduction**

Across globe, academe who keep keen interest in innovations and have sufficient passion for research do agree that they have two prime purposes for designing/conducting/disseminating a piece of research—(1) extension of existing knowledge, and (2) searching for solutions to problem(s) that is/are concurrently seizing progress. Towards beginning of the new millennium, educationists have prioritized the impact factor of research and innovations cutting across all disciplines (minor, major). Though impact factor is attributed to a large number of factors, multidisciplinary approach is one of the single most factor that accounts for the highest (drawn from the analysis of researches being reported by Indian Scholars in the First Volume of Multidisciplinary Research Journal of EAR). Studying problems with conventional forms of methodologies (strictly confined to one or two disciplines) could yield no better impact because of its kinship with a wide range of disciplines being ignored.

Keeping the significance of multidisciplinary approach in backdrop, authors of the present article tried to examine an issue that disintegrates academe world over and has become cancerous for the entire human race. Reported (in leading national Newspapers of India) atrocities on girl students by male staff( including academic and administrative) in higher education institutions(colleges/universities) in the last 20<sup>th</sup> Century is sufficient to conclude that “male supremacy is prevailing in society irrespective of locale and educational status— patriarchal psyche is critical to both genders and

cardinal to inter-relationship between male and female in family form which is the primary to any community, society, and nation at large. ” And “since more male teachers are involved in teaching and research in higher education institutions, girl students feel less confident and fail to draw adequate academic support and often become victims of atrocities”, “young male faculty are frequently inclined to be less ethical because of inadequate knowledge on gender sensitivity”, “often senior most (>40 years) male faculty get married to their own girl students.” However, academe had ever tried to understand professional ethics of either male or female teachers (of Higher Education Institutions) might be having significant relationship with teaching experience. Since age brings experiences and experiences promote professional growth through ethics—a precision being articulated by both authors was recently verified through American Psychological Association (APA) in 2014 that “personality traits get changed with age”. Both authors have tried to extend above cited thesis (of APA, 2014) by explaining that “age may be chronological or mental, while chronological age is autonomous and biological in nature, mental age is the resultant of life based learning and practice related experiences”. Therefore, initial proposal for studying professional ethics among male teachers was rejected because second author (being a lady) found it little difficult to collect evidences from male teachers. Eventually, the study comes out as final was targeted towards examining professional ethics growth pattern in relation to professional growth and teaching experience of woman teachers in Higher Education Institutions. The present article is a part and parcel of the study being documented by the Lovely Professional University (Punjab), India.

## **Why professional ethics matter most in Higher Education Institutions?**

The highest apex level organization on higher education in our country—University Grants Commission(UGC) mentions that “higher education has to produce leaders of society and economy in all areas of manifold activities with a commitment to the ideals of patriotism, democracy, secularism, socialism and peace, and the principles enunciated in the preamble of our Constitution” ( UGC,1989).

Ethics are primarily laws related to morality, code of conduct and behavior, sets of defined norms in maintaining healthy and congenial environment to ensure at par productivity in higher education sector. Higher education, by and large, is managed by administrative, academic, technical and supporting staff. Though professional ethics are quite similar to all human resources, yet they vary in terms practice from institutions to institutions. Such heterogeneity trend continues across borders of nations and societies. It is only because ethics in general and professional ethics in particular are framed by societal and individual norms. Though societal and individual norms are constant and absolute, in practice a wide disparity is noticed; and it is somewhere individual norms dominate societal norms and vice versa. Why such disparity is prevailing—has neither been studied nor explained in at least post modern era, and a little amount of literature available on it could hardly enable researchers to draw any scientific conclusions. Since education is a sub-system of societal system, educational institutions from pre-primary to tertiary level are set to be guided by social and individual ethics.

Professional ethics promote professional growth and growth always rewarded with academic and financial incentives. It is well experimented that people after certain age of their life reach at proximal zone in terms of professional ethics and are crowned with coveted portfolio in higher

education institutions on the basis of their knowledge, competencies, and value pattern. At the middle or bottom level, human resources in higher education institutions are promoted to higher posts on exemplary ethical consideration, and often rewarded with prizes, medals etc.

Professional ethics help in creating cohesion among faculty and staff, and healthy interactions make each one to draw individual benefits and collectively fuel institutional growth.

Professional ethics often go hand in hand with value pattern and as such there a number of value patterns that each higher educator some way or the other need to inculcate within a span of time. These are theoretical, moral, economical, political, religious, and aesthetic. Therefore, professional ethics nurture personality to manifest positively to significant extent that they eventually ensure optimum individual and institutional development.

### **What does the UGC prescribe on Professional Ethics?**

The University Grants Commission under the leadership of Ex-Chairperson of Professor Yash Pal and in consultation with members of All India Federation of University and College Teachers Organisation prescribed Code of Professional Ethics of University and College Teachers in 1988 (published in 1989). The effort is significant and monumental since history of Indian Education had to record a prescribed framework on professional ethics in Higher (Tertiary level) Education Institutions. As rightly stated by Galym Zhussipbeck (2011) “unfortunately we may witness the neglect of ethics or even the erosion of ethics in higher education in the global scale. Ethical considerations do not play a significant role in university life, and universities are not always run ethically.”

The code of professional ethics as prescribed by the UGC under teachers and their responsibilities include followings:-

- 1) Since higher education teachers are constantly under the scrutiny of his students and society at large, it is mandatory for each of them to have conduct in accordance with the ideals of the profession.
- 2) Teachers should exhibit a responsible pattern of conduct and demeanor expected of them by the community.
- 3) Teachers of HEIs should manage their private affairs in accordance with dignity of profession.
- 4) Teachers should ensure professional growth of certain standards persistently through study and research.
- 5) Teachers should strive towards contribution of knowledge by expressing free and frank opinion by participation at professional meetings, seminars and conferences, workshops and professional training programmes.
- 6) Teacher should maintain active membership of professional organizations and strive to improve standards of education and profession through professional bodies, councils and associations.
- 7) Teachers perform their duties in the form of teaching, tutorials, practical and seminar work conscientiously and with dedication.
- 8) Teachers should be extremely cooperative in carrying out functions relating to educational responsibilities of college and university, such as, assisting in appraising application for admission, advising and counseling students as well as assisting in the conduct of university and college examinations, including supervision, invigilation and evaluation.
- 9) Teachers should participate in extension, co-curricular and extracurricular activities including community service.

With respect to managing students, the UGC further prescribes that teachers of HEIs should—

- 1) respect rights and dignity of students in expressing his/her opinion;
- 2) deal justly and impartially with students regardless of their religion, caste, political, economic, social and physical characteristics;
- 3) recognize the difference in aptitude and capabilities among students and strive to meet their individual needs;
- 4) motivate and encourage students to improve their attainments, develop their personalities and at the same time contribute to community welfare;
- 5) inculcate among students scientific outlook and respect for physical labor and ideals of democracy, patriotism and peace;
- 6) demonstrate affectionate attitude and behavior to students and not behave in a vindictive manner towards any of them for any reason;
- 7) be judiciously and rationally involved in assessing and evaluating merits of students;
- 8) make themselves available to students beyond their class hours and help and guide students without any remuneration or reward; and
- 9) be able to refrain from inciting students against other students, colleagues or administration.

Teachers are those resources who believe in maintaining a cordial and balanced relationship with their colleagues. Irrespective of their age, experience and expertise, interpersonal linkage among teachers of HEIs continue to be a critical input that boosts up productivity. University Grants Commission guides teachers of HEIs to follow ethics as mentioned below—

- 1) Teachers should treat and behave other members of profession in the same manner as they themselves wish to be treated;

- 2) Teachers should speak respectfully and render assistance for professional betterment;
- 3) Teachers should refrain from lodging unsubstantiated allegations against colleagues of higher authorities; and
- 4) Teachers should refrain from allowing considerations of caste, creed, religion, race or sex in their professional endeavour.

Relationship of teachers in Higher Education Institutions with their authorities is one of the critical aspects that fuels good governance and effective management of institutions. Taking code of professional ethics of the UGC into cognizance, teacher should –

- 1) discharge their professional duties and responsibilities in adherence to institutional rules and regulations;
- 2) adhere to procedures and methods consistent with their profession in initiating steps through their own institutional bodies and/or professional organizations for change of any such rule detrimental to the professional interest;
- 3) refrain from undertaking any other employment and commitment including private tuitions and coaching classes which are likely to interfere with their professional responsibilities;
- 4) be cooperative in formulation of policies of the institution by accepting various offices and discharge responsibilities which such offices may demand;
- 5) cooperate their organizations in formulation of policies of their institutions and accept offices;
- 6) cooperate authorities for betterment of institutions in accordance with dignity of the profession;
- 7) adhere to conditions of contract;
- 8) able to give and expect due notice before a change of position is made; and
- 9) refrain from availing themselves of leave except on unavoidable grounds as far as practicable with prior

intimation, keeping in view their particular responsibility for completion of academic schedule.

Non-teaching and supporting staff are those human resources who facilitate academic functioning of HEIs, and therefore it is essential for teachers to maintain a balanced relationship with such staff. Teachers (as guided by the UGC) should

- 1) treat non-teaching staff as colleagues and equal partners in a cooperative manner; and
- 2) help in function of joint staff councils covering both teachers and non-teaching staff.

Higher Education Institutions cater educational and professional needs of students from diploma through post doctoral research, students often get accompanied by parents/guardians. Teachers should follow certain ethics in dealing with parents/guardians and should have proper respect to them irrespective of their educational and SES status.

Keeping code of professional ethics advocated by the UGC, it is worth submitting that maximum numbers of students in higher education institutions are either young adults or adults and therefore certain ethics are to be followed by the students at tertiary level. Though the UGC has covered all aspects of professional ethics for teachers of HEIs, yet it has hardly spelt out any norms for students because of which students take undue advantages out of scholarly teachers and pitting them into trouble in their entire career.

Currently, a trend is emerging (drawn from experiences of admitted students of various colleges/universities) among students who aspire for higher education prefer to get admitted in colleges/universities other than their parent state or locality. This trend demands understanding the needs( from higher perspectives) of heterogeneous student groups who are drawn from wide range of schooling pattern, quantum of knowledge and competencies, family back ground, socio-economic status, culture and motivation/desire for learning. Presence of abroad students in India and their participation in our educational

programmes are also increasing over these days. Therefore teachers of higher education institutions should understand multiculturalism and must brush up their knowledge and competencies to deal with such students of diversified culture. In order to manage and govern such students, certain ethics are to be framed which are as of now not in practice. Students of foreign origin and students who have migrated from one state to another do suffer in many ways which is a threat to higher education system and the nation at large.

Especially in this knowledge economy era, ethics not only in teaching has become absolute rather these are to be concurrent with research and dissemination. Violation of intellectual property rights has become one of the most prominent issues in academics. Ethical standards on research publications and patent rights are to be prescribed by the institutions or councils or commission in order to protect rights of intellectuals and talents.

### **How do theories purport the context?**

Smith (2013) depicted the theoretical constructs that support this inquiry. Primarily these “theoretical constructs are rooted in the traditions of phenomenology (Buber, 1970; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Ricoeur, 1992), narrative (Bruner, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002; McEwan & Egan, 1995; Witherell & Noddings 1991), case work (Jenlink & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2001; Shulman, 1992; Shulman & Colbert, 1988; Shulman, Whittaker, & Lew, 2002), ethics (Haynes, 1998; Starratt, 2004; Strike & Soltis, 1998), self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004; Hoban, 2004; Loughran & Northfield, 1998), and self-regulation (Karoly, 1993). Teacher knowledge is both personal and professional (Cole & Knowles, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Phenomenologists (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; van Manen, 2000) analyze and seek to understand the essence of an experience by acknowledging that wisdom and knowledge are

founded in the lived experience of people. Lived experience is the source of narrative data used in a phenomenological inquiry. Narratives make theory observable in the work of the practitioners that they describe. Teachers' stories are examples of lived experience that reveal the essence of ethical practice.” Osquthorpe (2013) viewed that “there are some strong theoretical and practical approaches presented in recent scholarship (Dottin, 2009; Murrell, Diez, Feiman-Nemser, & Schussler, 2010; Sockett, 2012). However, these accounts are the exception in teacher education programs, and the rule is that the field is in need of continued theory development (Feiman-Nemser & Schussler, 2010). Further, based on there being a wide range of often-conflicting approaches to developing and assessing dispositions (Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007; Damon, 2007; Diez, 2007; Misco & Shiveley, 2010; Murray, 2007), operationalization of the construct of dispositions is needed (Masunaga & Lewis, 2011). In short, despite the inclusion of dispositions in accreditation standards and performance assessment systems, the field of teacher education does not have a consistent approach to developing and assessing dispositions.”

### **What do research evidences reveal on professional ethics in relation to teaching experiences?**

Ethics continues to be a major concern for organizations and a frequent topic in academic discussions as well as publications. Educational institutions are conscious of presenting positive image and standards of professional ethics among HEIs teachers directly determines educational standards of institutions (Aurin and Maurer, 1993; Saat et al., 2004; Zheng and Hui, 2005). Teachers vary in degree with regard to professional ethics (Scales, 2002; Clark, 2005; Itai et al., 2006; Li, 2007; Ozbek, 2007). Teachers demonstrate unethical behavior like using resources of institutions and taking

advantage of students for personal benefits (Scales, 2002; Saat et al, 2004). Female teachers are significantly high on social values than their male counterparts, while male teachers are significantly high on social and political values (Verma and Tyagi, 1998; Gupta, 1998, Sandya, 1999). Male and female teachers differ in their moral perspective and moral reasoning. Gilligan (1982) carried out a research on psychological theory and women's development and found that men and women differ in their moral perspectives and moral reasoning and women are more prone to ethical behavior than men. This gender based ethical differences change with age and year of experience (Dwason, 2004). However, ethics in teachers help them in their professional growth (Husu, 2004).

Studies on professional ethics in relation to teaching experience reveal that years of teaching experience and teaching values are not significantly related (Joshi, 1978; Gulati, 1988; Sandya, 1999). But professional growth increases with teaching experience (Singh, 2002).

It is evident from the literature that male and female teachers demonstrate differently on value pattern which is more or less related to professional ethics. But, studies that have direct bearing on present research are too less. Therefore, both researchers were interested in designing a study to understand the nature/extent of relationship between growth in professional ethics and teaching experience of woman teachers in HEIs. In this context, researchers' precision was designed to be verified through the present study.

### **What was the precision?**

“Professional ethics are learned across ages and age promotes experiences.”

### **Objectives:**

In order to verify the above cited objectives, following objectives were formulated.

1. How professionally ethical are woman teachers in HEIs?
2. Do professional ethics grow with teaching experience of university woman teachers?

### **Hypotheses:**

In the light of above cited objectives, following research hypotheses were formulated.

1. Woman teachers in HEIs moderate level of professional ethics.
2. Professional ethics grow with teaching experience of university woman teachers.

### **Method and Procedure:**

The present study was delimited to two universities of the state of Punjab. One being government and one being self-financed, both universities well represent each category of HEIs (government and self-financed) and thus selection of institutions were made on the basis of certain inclusive and exclusive criteria. Employing survey type descriptive research, the present research included 200 woman teachers as sample selected randomly from a total of 600+ woman teachers. The Professional Ethics Scale for Teachers (PEST-2007) of Jasmeen Kaur was used to record professional ethics while teaching experience was recorded on an ordinal scale. The reliability coefficient of the PEST-2007 was found to be 0.65. As per the PEST-2007 manual, minimum score is "0" and maximum score is 40. Based on the obtained scores, teachers were categorized into three categories— teachers with low professional ethics (<24 scores), teachers with average professional ethics (score

bracket of 24-30), and teachers with high level of professional ethics (those who secure 30+ scores). Teaching experience was categorized into six groups, 0-5 yrs; 6-10yrs; 11-15yrs; 16-20yrs; 21-25yrs; and 26-30yrs. Karl Pearson's correlation was used to examine the extent of relationship between professional ethics and teaching experience.

## **Results and Conclusions**

In order to examine the level of professional ethics in university woman teachers, 200 teachers were categorized into three levels (as cited above). It was found that only 9% of teachers exhibit high level of professional ethics and 60.5% of them demonstrate average/middle/moderate level of professional ethics, while 30.5% teachers exhibit low level of professional ethics. It may be concluded that there is no uniformity among woman teachers in the university so far as professional ethics are concerned.

With regard to the kinship between Professional ethics and teaching experience of university woman teachers, correlation coefficient of 0.27 was obtained. It indicates that there is positive but negligible correlation between teaching experience and professional ethics of university woman teachers. It may be concluded that professional ethics grow positively with teaching experience to a negligible extent.

In the light of above results and conclusions, the precision "Professional ethics are learned across ages and age promotes experiences" was verified and found to be true. The precision was further corroborated with a truth recently debunked by a group of psychologists (being published by American Psychological Association-2014 in its website) that "personality traits get changed with age."

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