Analysis of the Teacher’s Professional Ethical Responsibilities in Educational Institutions

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Abstract
Bullying in the American schools has caused threats for the safety and security of students, teachers, and staff. It may not be exaggerated that the influences of “streets,” Internet, and “TV programs” on immoral and unethical behavior on students is more than the schooling effectiveness. The primary objective of this article is to study the urgency of philosophical and ideological doctrines on moral education, teachers’ professional codes of ethics, and students’ codes of behavior in educational institutions. This article illuminates the introductory perspectives of the “thinking about moral thinking” and “analyzing the ethical judgments” among teachers and students. It bears in mind that teaching practices reflect the moral virtues, sociocultural ethical values, and legal beliefs within which a school exists. Should teachers and students beside their educational objectives strive for the establishment and maintenance of “an ethical culture in society?” The rational answer is yes.

The Troubling Schooling Systems
Bullying in the American schools has caused serious threats for the safety and security of students, teachers, and staff. A leading educational psychologists’ association calculated that more than 150,000 U.S. high school children a day stay away from classes for fear of being bullied. The Henry Kaiser Family Foundation showed that 56 per cent of 8 to 10 year olds and 60 per cent of 12 to 15 year-olds believed that bullying at school was a problem more severe than racism, drugs or alcohol (Parkes, 2001: 7). Table # 1, illustrates how the U.S. high school students kill each other for no reason. Through looking at that table, we may realize how the school systems have been converted into battlefields. Who is responsible for such catastrophes?

EXHIBIT # 1: RECENT SHOOTINGS AT THE U. S. SCHOOLS AND ABROAD

1997

February 19: Alaska
16-year-old shot and killed the principal and a student and injured two others.

October 1: Mississippi
16-year-old shot and killed two students and injured seven others after stabbing his mother to death.

December 1: Kentucky
14-year-old shot and killed three students and injured five others.

December 3: Indiana
14-year-old boy shot and killed three girls and wounded five other students.

1998

March 24: Arkansas
An 11-year-old and a 13-year-old shot and killed four students and a teacher and wounded 10 others.

April 24: Pennsylvania
15-year-old shot and killed a teacher.

May 19: Tennessee
18-year-old shot and killed a classmate.

May 21: Oregon
A 17-year-old shot and killed two students and injured more than 20 after killing parents.

1999

April 20: Colorado
Two students at Columbine High School shot and killed 13 and wounded 23 before killing themselves.

November 19: New Mexico
15-year-old boy shot and wounded six students.

May 20: Georgia
12-year-old shot and killed a 13-year-old girl.

December 6: Oklahoma
13-year-old student fired at least 15 rounds wounding four classmates.
February 29: Michigan
Six-year-old boy shot and killed a classmate.

February 26: Florida
13-year-old student shot and killed teacher.

January 10: California
17-year-old fired shots before taking student hostage. Gunman later shot and killed by police.

March 5: California
15-year-old fired shot killed 2 students and injured 13 students and 2 teachers.

March 22: California
18-year-old fired shots and injured 6 students.

March 30: Gary, Indiana
1 dead in Indiana school shooting.

April 26: Germany
An expelled student shot and killed seventeen people at Gultenberg Gymnasium School in eastern Germany city of Erfurt: two young girls, fourteen teachers, and a police before killing himself.

We assume, at first, the answer to troubled schooling systems is the negligence of parents. We found that such a perception is an egalitarian one. There are other utilitarian realities that indicate that students, teachers, and educational institutions are component parts of such catastrophes. In addition to families and schools, students and teachers are more likely to be schooled by “streets,” and “TV programs.” It may not be exaggerated that the effectiveness of “streets,” “Internet,” and “TV programs” on immoral and unethical behavior on students is more than the schooling systems. Students only attend limited time in educational institutions. Again, the questions is raised: “Who are the leaders of “streets,”
“Internet,” and “TV programs?” Are these leaders lay-people or component parts of popular sub-cultural systems such as “the beat culture,” “the hip hop culture,” “the Jazz culture,” “the Pop culture,” “the rap culture,” “the popular culture,” or “the national culture?” The answer is clear. The community leaders have come from all of the above cultures. If we review the school shootings in the U.S., we may find several incidents that should not be happened in the educational institutions. Nevertheless, alleged criminal actions of students can be assessed as the strong result of the “streets,” “Internet,” and “TV programs.”

**What are Ethical and Moral Responsibilities of Schools**

Note that the above ideas generate two kinds of questions that must be answered if they are to be rationally applied. First, we need to know what is the objective of separation of education from the debate of the separation of the state and the church – secular humanity. Intuitively, education is a holistic intellectual enhancement in individual student’s abilities, needs, and interests within his/her intrinsic personal characteristics. On the other hand, pragmatically, education is a fostering phenomenon to provide successful opportunities towards community progress. Therefore, if we assume that education is an effective tool for the individuals’ personality development, it is effective for all too. There is a missing point in such a process. That point indicates that we are functioning in a society through compartmentalization of our life objectives. What do we need to interrelate the state and the church, the student and teachers, the schools and families, and the nations and the world of humanity? That trajectory point is ethics. Unfortunately, in most instances of modern life, specifically in the curriculum, inspirational values of moral and ethical intentions and behaviors are forgotten.

Second, we need to know what is the objective of exclusion of ethics and morality from the curricula of schooling systems. How do we decide what kind of scientific education should be provided for people who are ethically and morally different? A prudent decision should be made to educate students to do the best behavior along with the right scientific action. Are we moving in that direction? Are teachers educating students ethically as “conscientiously rational smart people or as “smart criminals?” The answer through ethical principles is not clear.

Educational institutions maintain their professional credibility through training good labor forces to serve their communities. It is hard to deny that all teachers are directly involved in shaping moral characters of students and ethical value systems in a community. In addition, parents are looking for their children to be educated with certain standards of honesty, fairness, and probity (Carr and Landon 1998: 165). This issue raises a question whether education and teaching can be perceived as a moral enterprise or merely as an amoral. Amorality means to tell a portion of truth not the whole truth. According to amoral myth of education, people are not explicitly concerned with moral and ethical ideals. They are concerned about how to educate people in order to acquire sufficient knowledge and skills to be an effective part of the economic systems. Such a type of perception concerning education is amoral. Within the contextual boundary of such an educational philosophy, educationalists and technologists are not unethical or immoral, rather, they are legal. Some people believe that ethics and morality are matters for one’s private soul. Following this path of reasoning, they state that a teacher’s task is to make a student’s
intellectual strength productive. Some of the amoral oriented people believe that ethical values and moral behaviors are not relevant to the school world. They believe that moral and ethical responsibilities lie either on parents, the church, or both. They believe that the main objective of education is to make a student’s mind innovative and productive. Since the nature of education is concerned with exploitation of suitable and profitable resources, there is no room for ethical and moral standards in their judgments. Within this path of educational perception, teachers are not responsible for ethical and moral responsibilities. The best sign of such a shortfall is manifested through the lack of sensitivity to ethical and moral commitments. They decide which scientific curricula should be expanded and accelerated through the demand of the marketplace (Peikoff, 1999: 15). They crystallize their educational operational objectives through integration of student head counts, material resources, human discoveries, labor efforts, and marketing information systems. These activities depend on risky decisions and actions on which abundance and prosperity need to be focused on humanity.

Philosophically, educational suitability is viewed as the result of conscious deliberation either in the courses of gaining or losing. This is an assessment of financial cost-benefit analysis. Thus, educational efficacy is a kind of legitimate payment earned by moral virtues through an honest deal between educational providers and users. These are viewed as a pay off for the scientific thoughts, technological breakthroughs, and the community satisfaction. It is true that educational efficacy is the prime mover of the efficient and productive economy. In sum, educational effectiveness is viewed solely as the final result of intellect and knowledge wealth. Nevertheless, primarily education is the product of intellectual values and moral virtues. Therefore, not only teachers must be oriented towards suitability of the schools’ educational performances, but also towards ethical worldliness of humanity. Teachers, also, must have intellectual civility in their minds and have good moral character in their decisions and action.

Reliable Knowledge and Behavioral Ordinations

The growing interdependence of socially, politically, economically and legally diverse countries have caused educational systems to reexamine a variety of their existing policies. Among these revisions are strategic management philosophies, strategic academic alliances, cooperative partnership, and or services positions, total quality education (TQE), and ethical-legal conducts. These revisions mandate educational agencies to create a new mission based on both domestic and global perspectives, with ever-increasing awareness of ulticulturalization and multiethicalizaion visions.

It seems clear that the dynamic environment of education of today is the subject of much criticism in light of varying unethical decisions and immoral conducts. The result is negative and can have wide-ranging repercussions, including bad publicity, bad reputation, government intervention, and lawsuits. Although many educational institutions recognize the need to establish a sound educational philosophy, they nevertheless tend to view the real world from ethical and moral perspectives. There are several questions that address the mission of contemporary educational agencies. These questions are: What are global educations for? Are they binding countries, institutions, and people in an interdependent global economy? Are they established solely to train their future workforce?
Are they established to assess educational cost-benefit analysis? How should people from different countries have access to education through distance learning? Who should manage and control educational institutions domestically and internationally? Who should take ethical and moral decisions and actions on curriculum design and implementing them? How do we know what decision or an action is right? What we must do to make educational services right?

To inquire the right decisions and actions, we need to probe the real nature of costs and benefit analysis within the contextual boundaries of ethical, moral, and legal reasoning of ethicism, liberalism, and pragmatism. Our initial concern is to state precisely what kind of decision, action, and behavior or knowledge is ethical, moral, and legal. Do we believe that global moral education is a compromised transaction between students and teachers? Does moral education comprise ethical principles and standards that guide behavior? These and similar questions raise some doubts that educational institutions are not moving alongside of ethical and moral convictions. They are concerned about “educational amorality.”

**Professionalism and Professional Ethical Duties**

Scientific advances and technological breakthroughs, like advances in the industrial revolution era, have caused changes in values that governed utilization of professional duties among researchers, scholars, and practitioners. Moreover, as knowledge continues to become more integrated and complex, moral virtues and ethical values become more controversial.

Moral education is facing important social and ethical convictions in developed nations. These issues are related to people’s right including autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, justice, fairness, rightness, and goodness. The nature of these educational issues and their similarities and dissimilarities among developed and developing nations reflects the holistic cultural setting within which these research activities conducted.

Teaching in educational institutions has been regarded as more just an occupation through which livelihood is obtained. As modern society becomes more complex, it requires greater specialized knowledge. Most highly specialized groups in the fields of education, medical and health, and law aspire to being considered professions. When teaching is called a “profession,” it is meant that it differs from other occupations. Teaching profession considers with special qualities that confer special privileges and obligations on those who practice it. The teaching profession remains what it was thought to be for some centuries, namely an occupation of the practice of which requires a more than ordinary amount of complex knowledge, acquired by persistent and systematic study and authoritatively certified processes. This is true primarily of law, medicine, engineering, and the academic profession. The medicine, law, and engineering are engaged in the practical application of knowledge about particular kinds of situations and objects. The teaching profession covers the entire range of scientific studies, methodological gained knowledge, theoretical mechanical structuring analysis, and enhancement of human’s mind and spirit. The most important task of teaching as a profession is the acquisition, transmission, and contribution of knowledge to learners and not its application. We may recognize differences among educational, medical, legal, and mechanical engineering occupations concerning variety
of ideas and innovations. Within the contextual boundary of a broad distinction between vocation and profession, we may find a certain vacillation between these conceptions.

Genealogically, there are significant and illuminating tensions as well as interesting differences of emphases between vocational and professional conceptions. It is common for the incumbents of so-called vocational researchers in the field of biosciences, rightly or wrongly, their lives are totally given to the services of others in a way that leaves relatively little room for their personal gain. Identically, this idea of significant teaching profession continuity between personal and occupational concerns and interests has probably been one reason why traditional vocations have been less financially rewarded than the professions such as physicians and lawyers. May be one of the moral reasons for such a discrepancy is the fear that raising the salaries of teachers would attract the wrong kind of people, those of mercenary into the vocations. There can be little doubt that teaching and researching have often been regarded as a vocation, that it has also been regarded as the kind of professional occupation which people enter for love rather than money, and that it has also frequently been woefully underpaid.

Greenwood (1962: 206) stated: “There are a number of component parts to the definition of a profession: (1) Formal education and examination are required for membership in the profession. (2) Certification or licensure is required for membership, reflecting community sanction or approval. (3) The existence of regional or national scientific associations. (4) There is code of ethics. (5) There is a body of systematic scientific knowledge and technical skill required. (6) The members function with a degree of autonomy and authority, under the assumption that they alone have the expertise to make decisions in their specialized area of competence.”

Also, Carr (2000: 23) indicated that the idea of a profession should serve five commonly criteria of professionalism: (1) Professions should provide important public services. (2) They should involve a theoretically as well as practically grounded expertise. (3) They should have a distinct ethical dimension that calls for expression in code of practice. (4) They should require organization and regulation for purposes of recruitment and discipline. (5) Professional practitioners require a high degree of autonomy C independence of judgment C for effective practices. The argument in favor of allowing a profession to govern itself is based on two claims. The first is that the knowledge that members of the profession have mastered is specialized, useful to society. The second is that members of the profession set higher standards for themselves than society required of its citizens (De George, 1995: 457). Ethical codes do not exhaust the issues of ethics in the profession. Codes are general behavioral and procedural guidelines for professional decisions and actions. They specify particular prohibitions and ideals, each of which can be evaluated from a moral and ethical point of view.

From another view, a vocation refers to those who work alongside a professional. Vocational groups could be recognized through (1) Registration, (2) Certification, and (3) Licensure. Registration is the process by which qualified individuals are listed on an official roster maintained by a government or non-governmental agency. For example, a cytotechnologist registered by the Board of Registry of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists may use the designation CT (ASCP). Certification is the process by which a
non-governmental agency or association grants recognition to an individual who has not certain predetermined qualifications specified by that agency or association. Licensure is the process by which an agency of government grants permission to persons meeting predetermined qualifications to engage in a given occupation and/or use a particular title (Wilson and Neuhauser, 1976: 52).

**Moral Education**

Moral education needs to meet students and teachers alongside of their scientific and technological subject matters and practices. This has more to do with local, state, and national moral educational policies. We need to not only begin with some trust in moral education, but also to ponder on trust in moral common sense of our culture. A student’s well-behavior is the reflection of parents, teachers, and community ethical characters. As we analyze these component parts of our community, the result turns out to be a problem finding and not a problem solution. Lifetime learning and experiencing of the reality of life among student-teacher relationship is a tiny controlled part of school environments. Nevertheless, things happen that we do not expect to be happened. Educational experiences for students are only known limitations to learn structured instructional objectives. These structured educational objectives provide only known abstract knowledge how to think critically about discovered realities.

In a multicultural society like America separation of the “State and Church” provides us with a breathing environment for free flow of expression of enlightened thoughts and practicing democracy. What do we need to interconnect the diverse religious faiths and ideological beliefs in our mind and behavior is the establishment of a soundness moral character and ethical behavior in our community. This leads us to an intended question to ask: “Can moral virtues be taught in our school systems?” The answer is yes. Since the nature of teaching is a transitional dynamic phenomenon, it can be viewed through two distinctive perspectives. (1) To teach students in schools how to be worth, good, and constructive, (2) To teach students how to be filthy, nasty, and destructive. We confess that teachers teach what they legally are told to teach not what they morally and ethically ought to teach. We confess to frustration that no final wisdom on the subject matter can be taught neutrally, because always there is a direction in application of learning processes toward goodness and badness. What do we need? We need an invitation to get along with the moral and ethical adventures.

Moral education is a component part of a qualitative educational system. If we, as teachers, believe that to teach to student the truth, the best place that can be taught the truth is the classroom. Teachers in their classrooms can teach students how to think critically and behave orderly. Teachers need to realize that moral education is associated with utility of pragmatic intellectual reasoning. It is in doing, and in doing is upon intrusion of self-discipline. In a pragmatic assessment, moral education is an added value system into human intellect. Professional ethics is about human moral conviction, and professional commitments to the ultimate level of excellence. Teachers need not only to learn how to seek imitation but rather creation and recreation of moral values and ethical principles.

**Is Moral Education Just a Fad?**

Why some people label fad to moral education? Perhaps some prefer to label it because they believe that the ethical issue will go away through time. We truly wish...
ethical problems would simply disappear like hula-hoop, a bona fide fad that came and went with the 1960s (Trevino and Nelson, 1995: 7). Is there any single common standard for teachers’ ethics in an increasingly interdependent traditional school system or in the contemporary global E-education?

In responding to the above question, global moral education needs to be concerned with the right answers. The right way to serve students through E-education is not necessarily a matter of aligning our actions with either the home or the host socio-cultural and econopolitical value systems. Yet teachers struggle to carve out some form of consensus on moral virtues and ethical principles.

Morality is a dynamic behavioral deliberation of intellect and wisdom. Distinct from both the real (natural) order of existing things and the logical (artificial) order, formed by people, is the moral order. Both natural and artificial orders are caused by reason. Ethics is a speculative and/or practical collective cultural value system. Ethics is concerned with psychosocial actions and deals with good deeds in a society. Philosophers have formulated ethics to be speculative and demonstrative of good thoughts and behavior (deontologicalism) and some have tended to identify ethics with completely the practical good end-results (utilitarianism).

Legality is not a static phenomenon. It is dynamic. The law sets rules for behavior, rules that change on the basis of time and circumstances. When rules are broken, the consequence is punishable. The law sets behavioral standards and initiates an expected system for compliance. The question of what legally should be done in profit-making processes, we might want to say that certain shoulds are universally compelling. However, ethics provides options, often disconnected from official sanctions. In a general term, law concerns “what we must do,” ethics concerns “what we should do” (Halbert and Ingulli, 2000: 1) and morality concerns “what we actually need to do.” The problem in the educational systems around the world is sometimes related to some issues in which there are similarities between home and host countries’ laws and ethics, and in other cases there are differences.

Ethics in education becomes somewhat like political politics. Do you think there is any moral obligation and ethical commitment either in humanity? Much has not been written and said about the ethical and moral problems and issues for human rights commitments and responsibilities. Every nation seems to be concerned with these issues. This may be in part because educational authorities in different countries are proportionately powerful and influential in mapping their educational systems on the basis of their political ideology. In a general term, they are admired, envied, hated, feared, and frequently despaired of by both admirers and critics (Farmer and Hogue, 1973: vii). Therefore, moral education cannot be a fad. It is a fact.

Cultivation of a Sense of Moral Commitment

Getting us out of the state of nature, it is simply a matter of good sense and reason. For Hobbes (1588-1679) to say that the state of nature is the beginning point of our development. There are three major behavioral “ordinations” of reason for people who strive to achieve a common good: 1) Constructive ideas, 2) Valuable contents, 3) Decisive commitments. Ordination of reason signifies the establishment of cognitive and behavioral orders to search for proper ends through good means. Not all ordinations
establish practical patterns of expected excellent behavior. One kind of ordination gives you “constructive ideas,” another kind offers you “valuable contents,” and the other one binds you with “decisive commitments.” These are rooted in variation of the generalization, understanding, and defining fundamental principles and distinctive outcomes of our natural life.

The ability to define and to set priorities concerning the ethical and moral commitments in the field of education requires cultivation of a sense of commitment. Teachers and educational administrators need to establish commitments in their behavior during the decision-making processes and actions and quickly to analyze the outcomes rationally rather than just sensation ally and emotionally. Commitment to ethical, moral, and legal behavior in the scientific communities is old as human civilization (e.g. Socratic Oath in Medicine). However, including ethics in the classroom curricula is new. Nash (1996: 11) indicated: “In the early 1980, I found two articles that shed light on what I should call the analytic/normative dichotomy in my teaching.” Peter Drucker (1981: 30) and Mark T. Lilla (1981) raised the controversial issue whether the study of ethics should ever be included in the business curriculum. Drucker, a moral prescriptivist, argued for an “axiomatic ethics of interdependence,” based on a Confucian moral model. He advocated measuring each ethical transgression against a universal ethics of “sincerity.” Actions which are appropriate to the spirit of interdependence and, hence, promote harmony in specific relationships are “right behavior” and, therefore, ethical. Drucker (1980: 191), also, indicated: “Around 1920, social power in economy began to drift away from the traditional capitalists, the ‘owners’ of the nineteenth century, into the hands of professional managers, who owed their position and power to function and performance.” This indicates that human civilization is evolving from traditional moral model to the cosmocratic ethical one. In the modern cosmocratic societies, power would follow function rather than property or the consent of the governed. In supporting this proposition, Lilla (1980: 5) urged that pragmatic ethics should be taught to professional students in order to do the right thing through duties and virtues of “democratic moral behavior.” For Lilla, the correct behavioral virtues are “rather obvious”: courage, tenacity, and prudence. Lilla would have ethics instructors be, first of all, good human beings who preach, witness, and exemplify what is moral. It should be noteworthiness to indicate that some writers believe that ethics and morality are the same.

By reviewing the philosophies of education, we may find crossroads through the realm of educational highways of choices and forces. Educational highways point in two directions: namely scientific deliberated instruction and virtuous alternative solutions to be free from forced decisions or manipulative actions. In ethical and moral crossroads students and teachers are capable of free choice and action whether or not they accorded the right to such action. Nevertheless, when educational administrators, teachers, and students are caught in between the choice and the force in crossroads, they are more exposed to possibilities of getting lost.

In order to discover our identity in schooling systems, we need to ask ourselves: What is the educational philosophy of our schools? Consequentialist ethicists believe that students should be treated equally. That is what justice demands. This philosophy is based on standardization of education regardless of differences among students -- mass
education. Teachers and administrators must make equity as one of their fair alternative objectives. They believe that equal treatment simply means to provide the same facilities for all children regardless of relevant differences. Consequentialists view educational achievement is based on competition. Students receive A’s because they have proven that they have reached a higher level of achievement than D students. Equity, justness, and fairness in competitive achievement demands rewarding those differences that make a difference (Strike and Soltis, 1992: 57).

On the other hand, deontological ethicists believe that students should be treated differently according to their differences. At this level “individuality” is the matter of meritocracy. Individuality is viewed as the notion of purposive being. No matter how much students are alike, they are “individuals” because they are different by physical and mental traits, and social positions. They deserve to be treated differently. This does not mean that students are essentially different and naturally they should be treated unequally. We must presume that students should be treated equally unless some relevant differences exist. This does not mean to take away educational resources from those capable students to give to those groups that have more deficiencies. We need to identify the needs of students and provide appropriate resources for their improvements. It is observed that in our schooling systems there is an inequity that has caused serious problems.

**Is Teachers’ Ethics Just a Myth or a Real Logic?**

In the pre-modern world culture, people had two separated ways of perceiving, speaking, and acquiring knowledge. Greek scholars have called these views mythos and logos. Mythos or myths are specific types of descriptive stories that are involved in the realm of supernatural beings and are designed to explain some of the big issues of human existence, such as where we came from, why we are here, and how we account for the things in our world. They are, in other words, stories of our search for significance, meaning, and truth (Ferraro, 1995: 321). Myths deal with timeless truths and meanings of an ancient form of psychology, (Gates, 2000).

The educational philosophy of America primarily, is concerned with suitability of the curriculum designs and structures. Suitability is fitness to the social contract between schools and industries. On the one hand, it is a contract between schools and parents.

**Conclusion**

It seems clear that educational operations of today are no longer limited by their national socio-cultural and econo-political ideological boundaries. Every year many traditional teachers walk into their classrooms, face with newly diverse culturally oriented students, revise their curriculum designs and syllabi, and start to teach their courses. Teachers with their instructional manuals and lesson plans teach their subject matter. Should we assume that a classroom is a holistic cooperative joint venturing partnership program between teachers and students or it is a place to exchange ideas and motivate students to learn how to critically think about their own cultural lives and future?

In modern days, one area in which many educators and teachers feel particularly awkward is unethical and immoral aspect of the free world of super-highway distance teaching-learning systems through the Internet. Within just a few years, the Internet has been transformed from a “toy” used by a few computer nerds to broad communication
and distance teaching-learning centers where more than 90 million people exchange information or close deals around the world (Hof, McWilliams, and Saveri, 1998:122). The Internet is representing the multicultural composition of human reality where everybody can access to knowledge, science, and information and apply them for constructive and destructive purposes. Most teachers and educators know that the Internet could, over the next few years, change almost every aspect of educational systems in all communities. However, teachers and educators may not realize that how to transform their professional ethics and moral reasoning in every aspect of student lives in order to fit themselves within this new cyberspace educational systems.
References