

TEACHERS' ETHICAL ATTITUDES

(A Case Study Based on Postgraduate Education)

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1. A TEACHER'S A PERSONALITY AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENTS:

No one denies that a teacher whether teaching children in elementary schools, or the adults in high schools and colleges leaves at least some impact on their outlook of life. His attitudes could be good enough to win their appreciation. His behaviour may arouse in them anger, depression, or even cause in them some kind of abnormality. The longer a teacher's association is with them, the more likely is this effect to be tangible. Specially, children are easily influenced by his behavioral characteristics during this association. Ideally, his professional objective is to teach and promote in his students a number of desirable qualities that are helpful to them in acquiring knowledge, using it in a proper manner, and functioning as civilized members of a society.

A teacher's scholastic proficiency is an important step in the direction of these objectives. Rather, we can say it is a key factor, necessary for effective teaching because unless one has knowledge to impart, his other qualities remain irrelevant. Even if a teacher has the required professional knowledge, it is not a sufficient virtue. Teaching skills are also critical for successful teaching. Experience shows an effective teacher has many other qualities. For instance, a teacher's expressiveness, wittiness, buoyancy, personal magnetism, resourcefulness, emotional stability, and others.

And yet, more important though, it is his ethical behaviour. His attitudes towards his students bear a strong link with the objectives of his profession. When a teacher misbehaves, it may hinder the educational

process to achieve its aims and objects. It may even generate unpleasant emotions in them - demoralization, frustration, anger, moral degradation, and some unfavourable reactions. Students have no praise for a teacher who is insincere to his essential duties and who adopts a way of life that is not consistent with the spirit of education, that is, he

- * Provides them inadequate knowledge and skills (that is normally required under the system).
- * Is not serious in developing in them initial qualities and abilities to cope with the challenges of life.
- * Is not considerate in helping, guiding and encouraging his students. He is reluctant to entertain questions in the class or discuss their difficulties.
- * Does not make effort to stimulate students' interest by introducing new ideas or discoveries in his subject.
- * Is careless or dishonest in grading their tests.
- * Is more concerned about his personal interests rather than devotion to teaching.
- * Uses them for his personal goals.
- * Is not decent in his behaviour with students.
- * Advocates or forces on them his own religious / political views.
- * In the case of advanced teaching, he has no interest in keeping himself aware of new ideas that emerge in his field.
- * And that he makes no effort to contribute new ideas to his profession. Or if he does, he plagiarises.

One may add some more to his obligations, culturally or religiously based. But that may be debatable. For example one may believe that a teacher should show a personal interest in the lives of students. Another may suggest that one should be detached but objective in his relations with students. But a teacher's negative role in the form as indicated above creates many problems both for the students and society. The environment gets worse, becoming non-congenial for the educational process to function smoothly. The talents, aptitudes and capabilities of his students who have the potential to give a lot to the society, mostly go waste or

filtered away through undesirable means. There are some students who may find it convenient to follow his footsteps later in their life. Discontent, violence in youth, distrust and social decline also have roots in unethical behaviour of their teachers.

It has become a fashion in the country to blame policies, systems and management. There is no shortage of documented material on education policies. But still education in Pakistan is known to continually suffer. Educational standards are falling. A number of private schools are cropping up, some making positive contributions to the country. And yet there are other institutions where quality of education has no priority. However, as we often hear one of the reasons of general deterioration of educational standards is essentially to do with the teachers' lack of interest in fulfilling their obligations. It may be right or wrong. We learn from our elders about the good old days. We are told a teacher was regarded by his students no less than a king father. The society also had tremendous respect for him. He was honoured for his knowledge, competence, and saintly behaviour.

The question is what has gone wrong with a teacher now. Leaving aside his competence, it is generally said that his professional sincerity, integrity, considerateness, reliability and moral behaviour have declined over last few decades. Students talk of it, and so do their parents and the people. But is it a significant number? How alarming is the problem?

2. STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS' ETHICALNESS:

It is not possible to answer the above question on a national basis. Our purpose here is not to investigate the causes of teachers' unethical attitudes. In this paper, we have attempted to evaluate the current levels of teachers' ethicalness though a statistical survey, restricting it to four postgraduate institutions of Lahore. Since it is the students who remain in contact with their teacher, we have based this inquiry only on their perceptions.

3. SURVEY CHARACTERISTICS

3.1 It is a common feeling that students who do not perform well in their studies, take more liberty to talk ill about their teachers. To overcome this problem, we have selected the institutions (known as among THE BEST in the city). We hardly hear unethical about them, specially about their teachers*.

3.2 For ethical reasons we withhold their names. Four institutions were selected. Each of them takes pride in its own performance. Two of them are government institutions; and the others are privately run. We compare these two sets of institutions with respect to ethical measures as stated below.

3.3 Immature students have a tendency not to answer the questions seriously. To avoid it, we have restricted our sampling to only postgraduate students in the selected institutions.

3.4 Samples of 100 postgraduate students were randomly approached to fill in the questionnaires in each institution.

3.5 We are using only the following those simple measures in assessing a teacher's ethical behaviour.

1. Teachers are regular and punctual in taking their classes.
2. Teachers' grading is fair.
3. Teachers are well prepared for their lectures.
4. Teachers provide guidance / assistance willingly.
5. Teachers welcome students' questions and encourage discussions.
6. The course coverage is consistent with the course outlines.
7. Teachers avoid discussions of religious / political nature.
8. Teachers' behaviour is always decent with their students.
9. Teachers arouse interest in their students for their subjects by introducing new ideas and discoveries.

Each statement was assigned a quantitative scale -2, -1 0, 1, 2 the score -2 presenting the worst picture, 0 indicating an average performance, and 2

being the best score. The information provided by students is useful in measuring teachers' sense of professional duty, honesty, devotion, behaviour, considerateness and exploitation.

4. SURVEY RESULTS :

	<u>Government</u>	<u>Private</u>
1. Regularity / Punctuality	1.57	1.43
2. Fairness in grading	0.89	0.72
3. Lecture preparation	1.15	1.10
4. Willingness to assist	0.65	0.62
5. Welcoming questions	1.05	1.03
6. Extent of course coverage	1.33	1.33
7. Advocacy of religious/political views	-0.95	-0.43
8. Decent relation with students	0.93	1.06
9. Introducing new ideas	0.49	0.50

5. REMARKS ON COMPARISONS OF ETHICAL LEVELS :

Violation of teachers' ethics is not expected to be a significant issues in institutions selected for the survey. The above results show some deviations from what should have been expected.

Ethical performance of teachers in two types of institutions display similarity in students responses. The above information shows some comparisons definitely in favour of government institutions. And a few of them elevate private institutions. But the differences are not alarming. If we ignore absolute differences in average scores up to 0.05, the statistical tests of significance of not reject most of the null hypotheses.

6. GENERAL REMARKS ON TEACHERS' ETHICS :

Since both public and private institutions do not differ much on most of ethical parameters, we pool data for the four institutions to make general remarks about teachers' ethics in these institutions.

Known as among the best schools of Lahore, one would not expect poor ethics there. To investigate this hypothesis, let us do the grouping as follows.

Score		Percentage of Students Indicating a score below zero
1-2	Regularity,	0.0 %
	lecture preparedness,	4.5
	welcoming questions,	6.5
	course coverage,	1.5
	decent behaviour	5.5
0-1	Fairness, arousing interest in learning process	8.5
<0	Advocacy of religious/political views	48.0

Based on the above information, we reject the hypothesis of poor ethics on the part of teachers in the selected institutions. On the contrary, the results are quite encouraging except in the case of last parameter. Probably this question might have been misunderstood by the students.

7. CONCLUSION

The institutions selected in our survey, have good reputation : ethically nothing alarming in the market. The statistical analysis has actually supported this hypothesis for both government and private institutions.

- But there are many institutions with bad reputation. Unethical behaviour of teachers is also said to be one contributory factor. Most likely these rumours are not baseless.