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Attitude of Secondary School Head Teachers towards their Teachers: Professional Ethics Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and analyze the attitude of secondary school head teachers towards their teachers' professional ethics perspective. To achieve the objectives, six head teachers (3 males and 3 females) and twenty teachers (10 males and 10 females) were conveniently selected as participants of the study from Multan city. The data were collected through a semi structured interview protocol carrying nine questions and seven focused group discussion questions after taking appointments from the participants. The tape-recorded interviews and discussions were transcribed and thereafter the researchers made thorough examination of data in order to gauge trends of respondents' views. Furthermore, key ideas were identified, categorized and then condensed. The identified key ideas were codified and organized into themes. All the interviews were conducted in national language Urdu. Each interview lasted about 30-40 minutes. The researchers used the audio-tape for discussions but also took the written notes of the heads and their teachers. It was found that all teachers had positive attitude towards professional ethics. The study concluded that teachers who act more professionally and also aware of their duties, relatively observe teachers' professional code of ethics both in and outside the class. It was recommended that, in order to enhance teachers' knowledge of the professional code of ethics, there should be regular refresher courses programs in the form of seminars and workshops.

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1. Introduction

In determining the quality of education, teachers play significant role. Thus, the professionalization of researchers and teachers is of much concern (Ngwanka, 1992). Its importance is

not only confined to repute, but in a sociological sense as a form of social control that makes a difference with other professions. In order to excel an educational institute, it must concentrate on knowledge, proficiency; quality, attitude, discipline and commitment of the teachers regarding parents, students and community which are embedded in the code of professional ethics (Nabukenya, 2010). Professional ethics have gain importance over the years. Professional bodies have indulged in revising, developing and refining professional codes of ethics. Professional ethics help a professional what to do, when encounter with a problem at work that raises a moral issue (Strahelandrof, 2005). Like other professions, teaching profession also has its code of ethics to ensure its dignity and integrity which are consider essential for the performance of the teachers. The code of ethics are evolved and adapted by the teaching community. The professional ethics lay the foundation concerning the practice for the teachers and principals of behavior.

These set principles are used to inform community and parents and to guide the teachers' practice judgments. The standard expected of the teachers is also made clear to the community through it. For all the school teachers, either in public or private sectors, at all levels, the code of ethics is used and it provides a set of rules to guide the teaching community's obligations regarding parents, colleagues, students and society. In order to improve the awareness of the ethical principles, it is essential to boost up the professionalism among the teachers. A narrow definition of "professional" is a self-regulating occupational group capable of legally prohibiting others from practicing (Strahelandrof, 2005). In the view of Bolleno (2012) ethics strive to raise the status of teaching by promoting and maintaining the highest standards of professional conduct and practice in the interests of learners/students, teachers, parents and the community. It seeks to analyze and keep under review, training and education standards of teachers. It also has the power to monitor the fitness of each person in practicing the teaching profession. Ethics can be defined as, 'Moral principles adopted by a group of people and an individual to provide rules and guidance for right conduct' (Corley et al., 1993).

In Pakistan, professional ethics mainly focus on the teachers' commitment with their students, profession and community in order to ensure the integrity and dignity of the educational system. The teachers' knowledge, discipline, honesty, proficiency, qualification skills and conduct etc. are the basic elements of professional ethics. The concept of professional ethics in western society is somewhat similar to Pakistani code of professional ethics for teachers. According to the teaching council of Ireland (2012) the role of teachers is to educate: care, respect, trust and integrity. Professional relationships and values, professional integrity, professional conduct and practices are the essential elements of professional ethics of the teachers.

There are six key principles of professional ethics, according to the Council of Teaching Profession of Malta (2012) to maintain professional relationships with students, to maintain trust in profession, respect the diversity and uniqueness of the students, work in collaborative manner with parents, colleagues, guardians and careers, act with integrity and honesty and keep their professional knowledge and practice up-to-date.

According to Ardlle and Mckee (2007) professionalism goes side by side with performance and they mentioned that commitment of members to a code of ethics of any profession sets out professional values and responsibilities. Ssekamwa (2000) makes it clear that code is essential for teachers and those teachers who follow their code of conduct by owing a sensedecency, respect, trust, integrity, equality, service, responsibility and component of professionalism. Genza's (2008) study clearly revealed that teachers are considered to be role models in order to convey moral values by maintaining

and living up to the code of conduct.

According to Goldhaber (2002) as education is a human process thus in school, teacher plays significant role because teacher has a great influence on learners. Teacher is an authority figure in providing direction to the behavior of students. Gupta (2002) identified that task of teachers is central to education. Teacher is an important source of transmitting knowledge, skills, customs, cultural heritage of society and attitudes to the new generation. They also guide learners about adjusting in a rapidly changing world. The researcher also used the international dictionary meaning of a teacher and then perception. A teacher was one who teaches or instructs learners to acquire knowledge or skills usually with the imparting of necessary incidental information and the giving of incidental help and encouragement. Whereas, perception was a mental image or sensory impression derived from past experience (Namugwanya,2006). Concerning that study, Perception referred to the positive and negative attitude of teachers, towards the core values of the code of conduct for teachers. On the other hand, performance referred to how well or badly an individual, group, organization, or institution did something or some task (Nampa,2006).

Otemo(2004) defined performance as the consistent ability to produce results over prolonged periods of time and in a variety of assignments. Hence, this research treats job performance of teachers as planning, teaching and assessment which were evident in setting objectives, evaluating lessons, organization, extra duties, and time management. Mutchler (2005) pointed out that findings revealed that factors which influenced teachers professional commitment, based on their ideologically or culturally dedication in order to made a difference for students and on their willingness to developed energy and personal time outside the classroom to take action on that commitment.

Aiftinca (2004) concluded that appreciation of values on the basis of sensitivity, judgment, gained knowledge, transformation of some and experience of values into ideals and objectives both on the social and individual level is representing the practical side of code of conduct and guiding education. According to Muwagga (2006) the extensive domain of teacher's professionalism is the code of teacher's conduct which was also related to ethics (the nature of evil and good, man's ultimate objective or "end" and the problem of human conduct).

Nyberg (1990) perceives the code of conduct for teachers as a tool that constitutes the values that every teacher should uphold. He believes that for a person to be morally upright and stand out to represent the teaching profession for teachers, such a person must have the proper following of the code of conduct for teachers as well as moral training and education. This also upheld by Plato and Aristotle who hold the same belief that conduct for teachers and a person to be moral as an adult, he must had the proper moral training and education as a child. Nyberg's (1990) study revelations were good but did not focus on the teachers' perception of the code of conduct for teachers in Busiro County secondary schools, Wakiso district (Nabukenya, 2010, p.26). This was the reason; the researcher wants to focus on the attitudes of secondary schools head teachers towards their teacher in order to for professional development with reference to code of ethics.

2. Purpose and Significance of the Study

Overall the professional ethics for the teachers are adapted according to their needs. In Pakistan teachers enter into the profession under some pressure or by choice and lead their professional life under any code of professional ethics. The spirit and philosophy behind any profession is reflected in 'Professional Ethics'. Keeping this in view, the researcher has selected the topic for this study in order

to examine the situation in public schools regarding Head Teacher's attitude towards their teachers: professional Ethics Perspective.

In improving performance and in comprehending professional ethics effectively, this research will prove beneficial for the teachers. A passion is provided for teaching and this passion motivates teachers' to continuous professional development. A highest possible standard is provided in order to place the profession at its highest possible esteem. The researchers interested in investigating the professional code of ethics will get guide line this study. The study aimed at achieving the following particular objectives:

- To explore the perceptions of teachers and their head teachers regarding the professional code of ethics being applied in Secondary schools.
- To find out the perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding the attitude of head teachers in professional code of ethics perspective.
- To suggest measures for the educational guidance of Teachers, head teachers and Policy makers.

3. Method and Procedure

The main purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and analyze the attitude of Public Secondary School head teachers towards their teachers from professional ethics perspective.

3.1 Population and Sample

All the male and female head teachers and teachers teaching to class 9th and 10th in 53 Public Secondary schools of Multan city constituted the population of this study. To make the sample representative, 10% schools from the whole population were taken as a sample by using the convenient sampling. As a result, six schools were selected from Multan city. Six school head teachers (3 males and 3 females), and 20 teachers (10 males and 10 females) were selected as a sample of the study.

3.2 Instrumentation

The researchers reviewed the literature extensively for identifying the attitude of teachers towards professional ethics perspective. As a result, researcher developed the tool and modified it according to the requirements of study in Pakistani context and ensured its validity and reliability through experts' opinion. The study employed the following two instruments for data collection, namely the semi-structured interview of Head Teachers which comprised nine questions and focus group discussion with 10 teachers which comprised seven questions.

4. Data Collection and Analysis

Regarding the qualitative design, the researchers used the tape-recorded interviews and discussions were transcribed and thereafter the researcher made thorough examination of data in order to gauge trends of respondents' views. Furthermore, the researchers identified key ideas, categorized them and then condensed them. The identified key ideas were codified and organized into themes (Amin, 2005). The principal researcher personally visited the schools for collection of data. All the interviews were conducted in national language Urdu and as well English. Each interview lasted about 30-40 minutes. Along with audio, notes were also taken while conducting interviews. These responses reflect the view point of the head teachers regarding the professional code of ethics. The teachers' focus group discussions on each of the seven questions were also transcribed into English language. The analysis of data was done collectively without referring to participant's sect and gender (due to gender-based and sect -based sensitivity). According to emerging themes, classification of data was done into

these categories.

5. Findings

5.1 Knowledge about Ethics

From the interview and focus group discussions with the school head teachers and teachers, the following were revealed. As regards teacher commitment in the interview guide for the head teachers, to establish whether the professional code of ethics accessible to all teachers, the researcher posed question to the head teachers. Is teachers' professional code of ethics accessible to all teachers? (If yes, do they possess adequate knowledge about the professional code of ethics?) Here all the head teachers gave a strong response 'yes'. But they said that very few teachers know about the knowledge of code of ethics and they do not perform well their duty.

While posing question to the head teachers, Are you aware of the professional ethics of other countries? (If yes, do you think that the existing teachers' professional code of ethics include all aspects which are included in other countries?). Here majority 98% of the head teachers gave a strong response 'No'. They said that they did not have any knowledge about the ethics in other countries. One of the head M1-1 stated that; there were some professional codes of ethics for other countries, which were common as in our country. Some of these were known to me." In fact one of the respondents F1-2 stated that; "The teachers who had potential to make their teaching effective they know about the ethics of their own country as well as other countries but this was rare".

5.2 Collaboration with Seniors

When researcher posed question to the head teachers, How far your secondary school teachers observe the professional codes of ethics? Here all respondents gave the response that their SST had newly appointed teachers but they were almost following these ethics. They also collaborate with their seniors about different issues. So, mostly respondents believe that almost 85% professional ethics can be observed in their work.

5.3 Motivation

Next question to the head teachers was that, In what way you motivate your teachers to enforce professional ethics? Here the entire respondent gave the opinion that there were different ways for the motivation. Means during lectures they make surprise visits in the classrooms and appreciate their teaching. They also asked different questions from the students. In monthly meeting, they appreciate the teachers' performance which motivates them. They also discuss in general the short falls in their performance. Different competitions among classes were also main source of motivation for the teachers to follow professional ethics. So that the more times teachers were motivated the more they got committed and the more they performed.

Another question to the head teachers was that, What kind of appreciation or reward you award to your teachers who mostly take care of observing professional codes of ethics? Here the respondents gave the opinion that respectfully they motivated their teachers to respect them, involve them in decision making, and help them in the development of their carrier. Giving them good remarks in evaluation reports were the best rewards. Besides this, the best teacher prizes at annual results with certificates and cash were the source of appreciation.

5.4 Strict Supervision

When the researcher posed the question to the respondent that, what punishment do you generally suggest to your teachers who didn't observe professional code of conduct? Here mostly

respondents gave the opinion that the strict supervision or low grading was given them as a punishment and assignment of more work should be given. The one of the respondent M1-1 stated that; “Personal hearings and warnings were given. In some cases their report was forwarded to higher authorities or they punished through their Annual reports/ACRs.”

5.5 Measures Used to Reinforce Teachers

A question was put to head teachers, what measures do you suggest to reinforce professional codes of ethics which could not be able to implement so far in your school? Here all the respondents gave attendance of assessment meetings by the teachers as they commonly used measure for ensuring teachers’ dedication, cooperation and willingness to their duties: it was followed by giving of extra duties to teachers and attendance of extra-curricular activities. The other measure used was that of checking on the exercises that teachers give to students and check on teachers’ voluntary aspect on work. Through these measures, teachers’ dedication, cooperation and willingness to accomplish their duties were ensured and hence this leads to better performance. One of the respondent F1-2 stated that; “It depends on the situation so I cannot suggest any thing.”

5.6 Environment

When asked gave, any other thing you would like to comment upon regarding the teachers’ professional code of ethics? Here the 98% respondents answered that the refresher courses should be conducted after 6 month and team work was given. Some of them said that religious functions of their persuasion and respect other recognized religious within the school where they were teaching. They also said that conducive environment will carry out their duties well. The One of the respondent M1-1 said that; “NO.”

The head teachers were asked. Do you have any queries about their records of work, content, methods of teaching and assessment in regard to professional code of ethics? They answered as follows. One head teacher M1-2 said; “At the beginning of the first thing I do in my schools to ensure that the director of studies collects all the schemes of work for teachers for checkup and then I make sure that together we sign them.”

Some of them said, teachers’ plan of their lessons was a bit hard, but we do ensure that they teach and assess students; they usually monitor them during class hours and as for the assessment. To make more emphasis on teachers’ assessment and teaching they hold meetings at the end of the month. They said that because of the strict supervision and monitoring, student exercise books and evaluation meeting held, it is hard for teachers not to record the work they give to the students, and also hard not to record examination marks. One of the head teachers M1-1 said; “I did not have.”

5.7 Honesty and Regularity

When the researcher posed the question, what do you mean by the professional code of conduct in teaching profession? So different answers are given by respondents F1-6 one of them stated that, “I meant by professional code of ethics regularity, honesty and hardworking. “And one teacher F1-2 stated that, “A teacher should be punctual, honest, with full command on syllabus and sincere with their profession.” So, most of the respondents gave the opinion that they were well aware about professional ethics. They follow them in their profession. Mostly teachers revealed that the code was good but needs refining and upgrading to cover new challenges such as homosexuality and corruption. On the other hand, teachers take the code for granted and not consciously think about it but after long service, certain pertinent issues just follow.

The researcher posed the question in focus group discussion, Are you being oriented and provided documents by your department about professional code of ethics? Some of the respondents gave the answer that “No” we were not oriented with document related to professional code of conduct and majority of them said that Education department provided the document related to the code of conduct which we follow in our teaching. The one teacher F1-5 in a focus group said; “During training we were provided with the material which helped us to learn ethics also. “The one teacher F1-7 in a focus group said; “Yes, Education Department had provided documents related to professional code of ethics.”

5.8 Core Values

When researcher posed the question, In view of the professional code of ethics, what three core values do you consider to be followed by the secondary school teachers? The responses on the core values of the teachers that were perceived to be important and lived. According to the teachers, the core values for which they had a high positive attitude was service with 18 teachers and next core value lived by teachers and hence the more positive value towards the teachers code of conduct is respect. The same teachers indicated that truthfulness was the least exercised core value then honesty and then tolerance. The one of the teacher M1-7 in a focus group said, “The three core values were Discipline, Punctuality and Honesty.” The one of the teacher F1-5 in a focus group said; “The three core values which Secondary schools teachers should follow were Honesty, Punctual and Mastery over subject. The one of the teacher F1-8 in a focus group said; “Full command of subject for proper delivering of lesson, regularity and updated with new teaching methodologies, and terms.”

5.9 Follow Rules

The study further sought to understand, how do you feel when your fellow teacher does not follow the professional code of conduct? And do you play any role that he/she should follow these? An overwhelming big number of teachers responded that they feel ashamed and very sorry of their fellow teacher, and did not simply keep quiet about it but endeavor to warn, counsel and talk to the concerned person. Respondents gave the answer that they were trying to followed all the ethics and trying to motivate them that try to follow these code of conduct which was beneficial for their job. The one teacher F1-8 in a focus group said; “If the school management and students showed me that I was of use then my attitude towards them was positive and if they were rude and did not pay me, I also become rude and act not like a professional person. Actually my perception changes completely. The one teacher F1-3 in a focus group said, “I feel very bad to saw this situation and I suggest that they should be honest and loyal to their profession.”

5.10 Teachers' Commitment

When researcher posed the question in focused group discussion, were there moments when you feel excited and proud of your school? Majority of the teachers said that when their heads motivated them and appreciate them for their work they feel pleasure. When their head believes that supervision do enhance teachers' commitment. And mostly teachers answered that they feel high when their students gave them good result and head teachers appreciate their performance and achievement and that time they feel pride and excited. The one teacher F1-6 in a focus group said, “Yes off course, there were many moments when I feel proud especially when my students showed good result and head teacher appreciate my new ideas and achievements.”

When researcher posed the question, do you think the setting of objectives, delivering and

evaluating your lessons, organizing your work, and participating in other such professional activities had an impact on your school's performance? The one of the F1-4 respondent in the focus group discussion answered that, "School performance will enhance by setting of objectives, delivering and evaluating lesson, organization planning, participating in different activities which have effect on school performance".

The one of the respondent in a focus group discussion said that, "As you know that students always attract with activities. In this sense I admit planning was better for adjustment and managing objectives. It also organized my work and participation in other activities. In focus group discussion when researcher posed question, what ways and strategies your head teacher uses for you to follow teachers' mentoring in regard to professional code of ethics? All the teachers responded that in the regard of professional ethics their heads monitor them and surprise visit in the class, motivate them and appreciate them for their good performance. Head teachers mostly focus on the regularity and punctuality and enforce them to follow time table by noting the time of arrival and departure.

The study revealed that almost all the teachers had the knowledge about the code of conduct. In sample study, all the teachers in the schools were very positive in adhering to the core values of the code of conduct as they were agreed. Majority of the teachers made it clear that the code of ethic was very vital in their lives as teachers. However there were few teachers whose opinions disagree with having the knowledge not living in line with the core values of the teachers' code of ethics.

The findings showed that the code of ethics have a positive effect on teacher performance. The findings also indicate that as their knowledge of the code of conduct was concerned, all respondents respect and value what the code of conduct holds, that was, the core values in it, like trust, respect, integrity, service among others and they were comfortable with it. According to the respondents, in the conduct of teachers the code of ethics was very significant and they ought to fully hold the knowledge about it.

The findings presented a clear picture of the impact of commitment on performance when it revealed that majority of the teachers had high sense of commitment which was exhibited in their being cooperative, dedicated, undertaking voluntary work, and participating in religious functions as this enable them to perform highly their required duties. The study also showed constant supervision and monitoring as other reasons gave by head teachers for motivating teachers' commitment in secondary schools, Multan.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concludes that the teachers who are having professional behavior and are aware of their obligations and duty to the teachers' code of professional ethics do perform well both in curricular and co-curricular activities. Moreover, the study also concluded that teachers' performance is greatly associated with adherence to the teacher's code of ethics. So it would be beneficial for the quality education to achieve the desired goals. Thus it is clear from the conclusion of the study that most of the respondents have a positive attitude towards the code of conduct for teachers.

Overall, the study indicates the positive attitude of teachers towards professional ethics. However, following general recommendations were given on the basis of the findings of the study. The study recommended that different authorities like the schools of education, ministry of education and sports, schools and denominational education secretariats should avail to 'personal copies of teachers'

code of conduct and that if possible, professional ethics and moral education should be taught as independent disciplines to pre-service teachers to be examinable both in theory and practice.

Further, the study revealed that a few teachers know the teachers ethical code of conduct but they did not possess a copy of the conduct. The study further exhibits that all the respondents don't know professional code of ethics of other countries. The study suggests that;

- A document of code of ethics should be developed by educational planners and policy makers and disseminate it to all head teachers and teachers to enable them to be aware of its importance and implementation.
- In public schools, workshops should be organized for better awareness of the professional ethics and its importance.
- Basic points of code of ethics should be displayed at appropriate places in the schools so that the teachers might come across these points frequently.

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