

A Discourse on Teachers' Ethics as a Projection of Islamic Values

Dr Muhammad Ramzan,*

Dr Ashfaque Ahmad Shah, PhD**

Abstract

The researchers' main task in this account is to juxtapose different set of ethical principles in practice from various educational settings and compare it form the core value of Islam. This review is not intended to present a comprehensive set of ethical principles as proposed by different philosophers. Rather, it is to show light for deducing a personalised set of ethical principles uniquely suitable to the system at macro or micro level presented by non Muslim but in the light of Islamic culture. Muslims consider the last Prophet (Peace be upon him) as an ideal teacher for the humanity. Therefore, the states, institutes and/or the individuals involved in 'Education and Teacher Training' are invited to devise their own set of personalised ethical principles, deduced from the life of Prophet for better professional practices and to make a confident contribution to their clients-learner, institute or state. The content and discourse analysis technique is used as a research methodology. It can be concluded that as far as teaching is concerned, all the fundamentals are the projection of Islamic culture.

Keywords: Ethics, Values, Islam, Teacher,

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Introduction

Professions differ from occupations because they serve complex entity. Lawyers are expected to serve not only for the interests of their clients to settle various disputes, the negotiation and supervision of contracts, but also for the implementation of law and justice. Doctors are not concerned to prolong life but have profound interest with quality and sound health for communities, society and of individual patients. Social workers seek not only the good for their clients, but

* Department of Educational training, Islamia University Bahawalpur, Pakistan

** Centre for Economics of Education, Department of Education, University of Sargodha, Pakistan

that of society, which sometimes they must protect from their clients. Education likewise serves as complex goods, concerning the developments of the individuals normally termed as learners.

It is generally said that a profession should set its own moral standards, and these usually come from the culture. This will include not only devising codes of ethics, but also determining when breaches of the code imply that a professional is unfit to practice. Self-regulation in many professions has been a means of setting standards of excellence thus, has become contextualised. It has become popular recently to argue from such premises that all professions should require professional ethics and education as well. The counsel of the University of New South Wales, for example, requires all undergraduates to take subjects in which at least 56 hours are devoted to professional ethics and the social responsibilities of the professions for which they are being *educated. Likewise, the *Higher Education Commission* (HEC) of Pakistan necessitates all undergraduates in *Education and Teacher Training* to take a course (comprising at least 48 hours) on *Philosophy of Education* which remarkably stresses upon professional ethics and the social responsibilities of their profession. This also elaborates the viewpoint of western philosophers and Muslim thinkers about code of ethics necessary for teaching. Before setting off various ethical practices from all over the world, it is essential to understand the concept of ethics briefly. In order to move forward it is necessary to describe what the concept of Ethics is? It looks rather apt to investigate into the roots of ethics. It is a branch of philosophy which is the oldest discipline known in the world. Philosophy addresses the following three basic questions that kept human mind busy and restless since ages.

1. What is true?
2. What is real?
3. What is good?

Philosophy in pursuit of these questions gave birth to three children which then became major divisions of learning. In turn, each of them is further subdivided into two. These are:

1. **Methodology:** it deals with the nature of knowledge (truth).
 - i. Logic: it deals with the principles of valid inferences.
 - ii. Epistemology: it deals with the examination of human knowledge.
2. **Metaphysics:** it is the theory of the nature and structure of reality.
 - i. Ontology: it refers to the theory of nature and types of reality.

* (www.journal.naeyc.org; 24.10.2016)

- ii. Cosmology: it is the general theory of processes of reality.
- 3. **Axiology (Theory of the value):** it is the theory of values (and art).
 - i. Aesthetics: it is concerned with beauty.
 - ii. Ethics: it refers to the values or rules of conduct.

Ethics is the theory of morality. Goodness is its attribute. The word “*ethics*” is supposed to have dual origin. One is from the word “*ethos*” which means “*morals*” and the other is “*ethos*” which means “*character*”. Whatever its roots are, it is the theory of values and code of conduct. It has two aspects.

- a. Intrinsic aspect, which refers to intention, objectives, motives etc. It forms ‘*character*’. It is not observable directly.
- b. Extrinsic aspect, which refers to physiological and sociological behaviour. It forms conduct. It is observable directly.

Conduct is the overt behaviour of character (*seerat in cultural perspective*), which has its bearings on character. One devoid of ‘*character*’ is nothing but a being of low rank. A poet has well said:

Seerat na ho to a'ariz-o-rukhsaar sab ghalat

Khushboo uri to phool faquat rang reh giya

Allah has created man in the best (possible) format with respect to intrinsic (character) as well as extrinsic (conduct) aspect. Qura'an says that the Last Prophet of Allah (May Peace and Blessings of Allah upon him), undoubtedly, keeps the most sublime character and conduct. The Prophet (May Peace and Blessings of Allah upon him) says that one who keeps high moral values is much liked by him. According to Qura'an human ‘*nafs*’ possesses revealed qualification of identifying the vice and virtue. So it is natural for him to attract towards virtue (and vice versa). Nature is the touchstone in this regard. An act divorced from the natural leads towards the vice. Unnatural ways cause destruction, always e.g. enrichment of Uranium and Cloning. In order to inculcate ethical values purification of ‘*nafs*’ is recommended by Qura'an. Man is not but a reflection of his Creator. According to a Greek sage, Allah loves the one who possesses His characteristics. Allah has created man on His own nature; and His nature cannot be changed; so are the values.

The Last Prophet of Allah (May Peace and Blessings of Allah upon him) says that individuals in the field of education must acquire Islamic values among themselves. There are two types of values – negative values and positive values. The positive values are called ethical values or morals. It is required to create only the positive values in humans. Everyone in a social system is expected to have the

positive values so that the system may prosper and lead towards the 'balance' system. The professionals are required to abide by the moral code more strictly than a layman in order to be honest and sincere to their professions. Since 'Education' procreates man, it occupies sublime and elevated office among the plethora of professions. The Last Prophet (May Peace and Blessings of Allah upon him) felt pride in being sent as a teacher. Following is short list of some of the values in contrast. These positive values are the moral values of Islamic philosophy, which are listed in the table below.

Some Contrasting Values

Positive values (Projection of Islamic values)	Negative values
Life (protection of life, respectful life)	Negation of life (suicide)
Unity	Lack of Unity
Power	Lack of Power
Knowledge	Lack of Knowledge
<i>Adl</i> (Balance)	<i>Zulm</i> (Lack of Balance)
Love	Hatred
Virtue	Vice
Beauty	Lack of Beauty
Existence	Extinction

Education as an Ethical Practice

In addition to the ordinary ethical demands on professionals, teaching profession has significant features as compare to the other. The first purpose of school education is the creation of moral development, moral education among the students. Secondary teachers sometimes resist this idea, asserting that moral development should be carried out in the home. But the debate on neutrality taught us two things: that school cannot be neutral on moral issues and that they ought not to try to be. School plays a vital role in transforming some basic values to a society such as: truth, honesty, respect for others etc.

Other values it serves whether or not teachers wish it to, such as competition and a utilitarian approach to learning. Teacher's position in a classroom or playground requires authority, property and consideration of fair regulations in spending scarce resources, especially teacher's time. The demands of assessment require teachers to be conspicuously just and fair.

Teachers thus make judgements which are displayed to students, and will often have to be justified to student. And there lies distinctiveness of the teacher's moral position. Teachers not only have to make moral decisions like any professional but they have also to be able to justify them more competently. In her famous article on neutrality on schools, [†]Warnock (2000) argues that teachers must be leaders in arguments. To teach student to argue well, teachers must demonstrate excellent argument. To refuse to do so is to teach what is false – that there are no good reason for moral views, that any old view will do or that the teacher's demand are founded on sand, which the tides of critical scrutiny might wash away.

A. Ethical Standards for Elementary and Secondary School Teachers

One of the purposes of the Ethical Standards is to inspire respect between educators (students) and students. The creation of love and harmony is the fundamental principle of teaching of Islam. The ²Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession (ESTP) outline 12 key statements describing the responsibilities all members of the Ontario College of Teachers. The ethical standards combined with the standards of practice serve as the foundation for all accredited pre-service and in-service programmers of professional teacher education. The ethical standards address the question, “what professional values and ethical responsibilities are central to the profession of teaching?” The teaching profession fosters the growth of dedicated and competent educators? Members of the profession uphold the dignity and honour of the profession through their practice. The key statements are mentioned below:

1. maintain professional relationships with students
2. recognize and respect the privileged nature of the relationship that teachers maintain with students
3. demonstrate impartial and consistent respect for students as individuals with distinctive and ongoing learning needs and capacities
4. respect confidential information about students unless disclosure is required by law or personal safety is at risk
5. model respect for human dignity, spiritual values, cultural values, freedom, social justice, democracy and the environment
6. Work with individuals and college members create a professional environment that supports the social, physical, intellectual, spiritual, cultural, moral, and emotional development of students

[†] (www.oct.ca/en/CollegePublications; 22.11.2014)

7. base relationships with parents or guardians in their role as partners in the education of students, on respect, trust and communication
8. cooperate with professionals from other agencies in the interest of students and as required by law
9. act with integrity, honesty, fairness and dignity
10. respect the confidential nature of information about members of the College obtained in the course of professional practice unless disclosure is required by law or personal security is at risk
11. comply with acts and regulations
12. advise the appropriate people in a professional manner when policies or practices exist that should be reviewed or revised. The overall purpose of the ethical standards statements were to:
 1. clarify the ethics of the profession
 2. inspire the quality of behaviour that reflects the honour and dignity of the profession
 3. encourage and emphasise those positive attributes of professional conduct which characterise strong and effective teaching
 4. enable the profession to declare itself publicly accountable (Similar to the famous example of accountability by Hazrat Umar)

The ethical standards combined with the standards of practice serve as the foundation for all accredited pre-service and in-service programmes for teachers.

B. Ethical Principles for College and University Teachers

Following are nine ethical principles for college and university teachers.

1. Content Competence

A university teacher maintains a high level of subject matter knowledge and ensures that course content is current, accurate, representative and appropriate to the position of the course within the student's programme of studies.

2. Pedagogical Competence

A pedagogically competent teacher communicates the objectives of the course to students having awareness of alternative instructional ethos strategies and selection of appropriate research-based instructional methods for providing proper guidance to his/her learners.

3. Dealing with Sensitive Topics

Topics that students are likely to find sensitive or discomfoting are dealt with in an open, honest, and positive way.

4. Student Development

The overriding responsibility of the teacher is to contribute to the intellectual development of the student, at least teacher's own area of expertise and to avoid actions such as exploitation and discrimination that detract from student development.

5. Dual Relationship with Students

To avoid conflict of interest, a teacher does not enter into dual-role relationships with students that are likely to detract from student development or lead to actual or perceived favouritism on the part of the teacher.

6. Confidentiality

Student rides, attendance records and private communications are treated as confidential materials and are released only with the consent of the student for legitimate academic purpose, or if there are reasonable grounds for believing that releasing such information will be beneficial to the student or will prevent harm to others.

7. Respect for Colleagues

A university teacher respects the dignity of others and especially his colleagues and he works to foster students' development cooperatively.

8. Valid Assessment of Students

Given the importance of student assessment of student performance in university teaching and in students' lives and careers, instructors are responsible for taking adequate steps to ensure that assessment of student is valid, open, Fairland, congruent with course objectives.

9. Respect for Institution

In the interest of student development, a university teacher is aware of and respects the educational goals, policies, and standards of the institution in which he or she teaches.

C. Classroom Rules of Melissa Kelly

‡Melissa Kelly has proposed following ethical values as a set classroom rules. In fact these are the ideas which can be helpful for the teachers in developing their own rules and regulations.

1. ***Come to class on time.*** Standing outside the door and rushing in after the bell has begun to ring will constitute a tardy. You must be INSIDE the door when it begins ringing to be counted on time.
2. ***Begin the warm up activity within one minute after the tardy bell.*** Directions will be on the projection screen or the board. Please do not wait for me to remind you to begin since I need to take roll and attend to other duties for the first few minutes of the period. When I begin class, directions for the warm up may be taken down, so don't delay.
3. ***Attend to personal needs before coming to class.*** I have been instructed not to give passes to lockers and to limit passes, so please do not ask for a pass unless you have a true emergency.
4. ***Remain in your assigned seat unless you have permission to get up.*** Throw scraps away at the end of the period on your way out.
5. ***Do not eat candy or other food in class unless you have been given special permission.*** School sponsored sales will be permitted during the last 5 minutes of class **IF** we are finished with the lesson and permission is granted. Be sure to ask first.
6. ***Bring required materials every day unless you are otherwise directed.***
7. ***Talk only when permitted.*** Be aware of the situation since quiet talking is allowed in some situations and speaking to the entire group without raising your hand may be allowed in others. I will remind you once and expect compliance.
8. ***Use polite speech and body language.*** Unkind teasing and impolite behaviour is unacceptable.
9. ***Do not cheat.*** Students caught cheating will receive a zero and a phone call home. Both the student who shares his work for an independent assignment AND the person who copies it will suffer the same consequences. It is expected from students that they will do their own work and to be sure no one can copy it.
10. ***Follow the teacher's directions immediately.*** Keep me happy and I'll do a better job for you!

‡ <http://712educators.about.com/cs/backtoschool/a/classrules.htm> 06.06.2011

D. Rules for Teachers to keep Students Motivated

Lana Becker and [§]Kent N. Schneider proposed the following rules in Effective Teaching Strategies in order to keep students up and motivated towards their studies.

Rule 1: Emphasize the most critical concepts continuously. Reiterate these concepts in lectures and assignments throughout the course. Include questions relating to these critical subjects on every exam, thus rewarding students for learning, retaining, and, hopefully, applying this knowledge in a variety of contexts.

Rule 2: Provide students with a “visual aid” when possible to explain abstract concepts. A significant proportion of today's students are visual learners. For these students, a simple diagram or flowchart truly can be more valuable than a thousand words in a text or a lecture.

Rule 3: Rely on logic when applicable. Point out to students which information is merely “fact” that must be memorized and which course material is based upon “logic.” Show students how to employ logical thinking to learn and retain new information.

Rule 4: Use in-class activities to reinforce newly presented material. After a new concept or subject has been presented via text reading, lecture, or class discussion, allow the students to put the concept into action by completing an in-class assignment. These assignments can be short, but they must be developed to ensure that the students understand the critical concepts underlying the new material.

Rule 5: Help students to create a “link” when teaching something new. If the student can “link” the new material to something already learned, the odds of learning the new material are greatly increased. Examples of possible “links” include: prior material learned in this course (e.g., the critical concepts described in Rule 1), material learned in prerequisite courses, and “real-life” experiences of the students outside the classroom.

Rule 6: Recognize the importance of vocabulary in a course. Students often struggle with new vocabulary, especially introductory courses. As subjects are presented, new and/or confusing terms should be identified and introduced to the students. Present “real-world” definitions and alternative terminology, in addition to textbook definitions. One way to help students assimilate the course vocabulary

[§] <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-teaching-strategies/motivating-students-eight-simple-rules-for-teachers/>, accessed on 06.06.2011

is to create a "living" glossary on the instructor's website where new terminology is added, explained, and illustrated throughout the course.

Rule 7: Treat students with respect. Patronizing behaviour may be expected of primary school teachers, and "drill sergeant" strategies may be effective in military boot camps. However, most college students will not respond well to these techniques. Give students their dignity and they will give you their best efforts.

Rule 8: Hold students to a high standard. If students are not required to maintain a specified level of learning and performance, only the most highly motivated students will devote the time and effort necessary to learn. In contrast, maintaining high standards not only will motivate student learning, it also will be the source of student feelings of accomplishment when those standards are met.

E. Abraham Lincoln's Letter to Son's Teacher (A Pure Projection of Values)

Following is the account of dubious letter of Abraham Lincoln to his son's teacher.

He will have to learn, I know, that all men are not just, all men are not true. But teach him also that for every scoundrel there is a hero; that for every selfish Politician, there is a dedicated leader...

Teach him for every enemy there is a friend, steer him away from envy, if you can, teach him the secret of quiet laughter.

Let him learn early that the bullies are the easiest to lick... Teach him, if you can the wonder of books... But also give him quiet time to ponder the eternal mystery of birds in the sky, bees in the sun, and the flowers on a green hillside.

In the school teach him it is far honourable to fail than to cheat... Teach him to have faith in his own ideas, even if everyone tells him they are wrong... Teach him to be gentle with gentle people, and tough with the tough.

Try to give my son the strength not to follow the crowd when everyone is getting on the band wagon... Teach him to listen to all men... but teach him also to filter all he hears on a screen of truth, and take only the good that comes through.

Teach him if you can, how to laugh when he is sad...Teach him there is no shame in tears; teach him to scoff at cynics and to beware of too much sweetness... Teach him to sell his brawn and brain to the highest bidders but never to put a price-tag on his heart and soul.

Teach him to close his ears to a howling mob and to stand and fight if he thinks he's right. Treat him gently, but do not cuddle him, because only the test of fire makes fine steel.

Let him have the courage to be impatient... let him have the patience to be brave. Teach him always to have sublime faith in himself, because then he will have sublime faith in mankind.

This is a big order; but sees what you can do... He is such a fine fellow, my son!

These lines are similar to the guiding principles for students except not to have revenge for others not to react harshly in response and always be polite and forgive others.

F. Imam Ghazali's Proposal for Teachers in Islamic Perspective

From the teaching of Imam Ghazali following principles for teachers can be drawn:

1. The first duty of the teacher is to be sympathetic to students and treat them as his own children.
2. The second duty of the teacher is to follow the example of the Law-giver: he should seek no remuneration for his services on behalf of knowledge and accept neither reward nor thanks.
3. The third duty of the teacher is that he should not withhold from the student any advice, or allow him to attempt the work of any grade unless he is qualified for it, or permit him to address himself to abstruse sciences before he has mastered those which are clear.
4. The fourth duty which is one of the finer points of the profession of teaching is that the teacher, in dissuading the student from his evil ways, should do so by suggestion rather than openly, and with sympathy rather than with odious upbraiding.
5. The fifth duty is that the person who is teaching a certain science should not be little or disparage the value of other sciences before his students.
6. The sixth duty, of the teacher is that he should limit the student to what the latter is able to understand and should not require of him anything which his mind cannot grasp for fear that he would develop a feeling of dislike for the subject, and his mind would become confused.
7. The seventh duty is that the teacher should give his backward students only such things as are clear and suitable to their limited understanding and should not mention to them anything about the details that are apt to follow but which he deems fitting for the present to withhold.

8. The eighth duty is that the teacher do what he teaches and not allow his works to give the lie to his words, because knowledge is comprehended through the mind while works through the eyes.
9. To Purify students' soul: The first duty of the student is to purify his soul from impure traits and blame worthy characteristics because knowledge is the worship of man's heart as well as the prayer of his inmost self (*sirr*) and the oblation of his inward being before Allah.

Conclusion

All professionals are faced with complex ethical choices. Teacher (particularly teacher educator) as a professional has no exception at all. Society confers a very special role upon teachers in that they have to edify morality. In practice, teachers are offered with a wide variety of complex moral problems. What we believe is that:

1. ethical issues are central to the teaching profession
2. there is a good deal to be learned – both about the issues, and about how to resolve the dilemmas.
3. it is very unlikely that professional ethics can be an integral part of pre-service subjects, or caught from pre-service educators own practice and occasional remarks.

There is a vast literature on professional ethical issues revealing teachers strengths although, teachers have certain strengths, they themselves are often not well equipped to handle the issues, and/or helpless to teach their students to deal with these issues. Therefore, the states, institutes and/or the individuals are invited to devise their own set of ethical principles for better professional practices. Present account juxtaposes subsets of ethical standards from different parts of the globe being practiced at micro level.

This review is not intended to present a comprehensive set of ethical principles. We believe in diversity of systems with their intrinsic flexibility and fundamental autonomy in selection and implementation of such principles. We do propose that there should be a consensus upon a declared and agreed upon set of ethical principles which will surely add up to the beauty of natural flowers with charming fragrance and charismatic colours. Therefore, it can be said that ethical aspects discussed above, necessarily, project Islamic values in one way or the other i.e. from the respect of teacher to the hard work both by student and teacher.

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