

Professionalism as a Moral Code of Secondary School Teachers

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Abstract

Key Words

Professionalism, Moral
Code, Teachers' Insight,
Teachers' Practices,
Secondary School
Teachers

Teachers are given a moral code and expected to follow the ethics while working in institutions. Monitoring authorities are responsible for observing the school teachers' enactment of the professional code and take action against delinquents. The present study investigates professionalism as a moral code of secondary school teachers by a survey of their perceptions. A questionnaire and observation sheet were used as data collection tools. The sample of the study was forty schools and 120 teachers from Bahawalpur District in Pakistan chosen through multistage sampling. Results through mean comparison using a paired t- test indicated that the majority of teachers had insight about professionalism but did not practice it. It is therefore recommended that education departments should utilize this aspect in their teachers and deploy special mechanisms for the practice of professionalism.

Introduction

Moral behavior of teachers has a profound effect on teachers' professionalism and standard of education. Teachers' behaviors with their colleagues and students are related to their moral values. Managements try to frame a special moral code for school teachers so that their professionalism should be improved. In Pakistan, the teachers are working as transmitters but social interaction between the students and teacher is very limited (Yasmin, Sarkar & Sohail, 2016). Teachers are able to structure multifaceted social issues of students in ways to improve the positive ability of students and make them able to act upon the moral and social ethics of the society (Pandey, 2016).

Our society is dynamic and is struggling to establish goals of socialism and democracy after the revolutionary changes of independence (Davies, 2017). Many studies revealed that the teacher is a great agent of change in the lives of students and thus teachers should create a setup which enables the students to spend a better life in the society. The teacher can bring this change by awareness of society and methodology of teaching. A constant awareness of the social reality and method to teach are important tools for teachers to prepare students as the society demands (Schön, 2017). The character formation of students basically depends on the teachers' professionalism and character. Winch, Oancea, and Orchard (2015) concluded that a teacher's success reflects his own philosophy of life and professionalism.

Stronge (2018) found that teachers are focusing on developing positive relationships with pupils, fellow teachers, parents and administrators. They also need to understand and accept their own strengths and shortcomings. They are true in their profession and try to get competency in subject area and teaching methods.

Neill (2017) stated that teacher behavior and attitude toward pupil become a permanent trait for student. The students in primary grades spend several hours a day with their teachers. They have much authority than mother for the school students because the thought, feelings, reactions and behavior of the teachers have a powerful influence on the child in the class-room. Korthagen and Lagerwerf (2001) concluded that teachers' behavior become final thought for students. Therefore teachers should be careful in their performance towards the child.

It is observed that a monitoring mechanism is available for school teachers but no particular design and structure exists (Romiszowski, 2016). So, there is need to develop a professional standard with the spirit to shift moral codes in behavior of our school teachers. Teachers' moral codes are vital for the process of teaching. It also provides socialization and stability in our younger

generation because teacher's morality always acts as a model for students. The present study is about the professionalism as a moral code for secondary school teachers in Pakistan. This discusses the teachers' awareness about the code of professionalism and also their behavior in following the code in practice.

Literature Review

Teachers have key importance in providing education and progress of the nation. They can make or stain the educational progress of their students. Thus quality of education has significant relation with quality of the teachers who play central role in any type of educational institutions. Mpokosa and Ndaruhutse (2008) and Doyran (2012) stated that effect of educational system can be powerful and effective when teachers perform their duty with required professional standard. According to Barber and Mourshed (2007) and Ogunyinka, Okeke, and Adedoyin (2015) the professionalism of teachers reflects in the citizens of tomorrow.

Teachers have professional standards that are related to their students, teaching process, teachers' personality, subject matter, self-regulation and their professionalism in general. The first phase in becoming a professional is to earn a degree in education. Professionalism with regard of mode of actions may vary, but mostly standards of professional teachers are common. The concept professionalism is subtle and mostly observed differently by researchers.

Rizvi and Elliott (2007) view that teacher professionalism consists of four aspects teacher efficacy, teacher practice, teacher collaboration and teacher leadership. Among these four aspects of teachers' professionalism the first aspect is about teacher efficacy where emphasis on teachers' confidence regarding their job related matters. The second feature is pedagogy that teachers adopt to give proper attention toward learning. While the third component is concerned to teachers' style regarding work and help each other as team members. The fourth element is about teachers' role in developing a professional learning community to improve their practice and overall betterment of the schools.

According to Ambrosie and Haley (1988) professional teachers are those who have expertise, autonomy, and commitment for students' learning and their moral development. The professional teachers have some experience, power of decision making and have deep concern with students learning and their educational achievements. Bottery and Wright (2000) found that teachers' expertise and autonomy are central elements of their professionalism. Teachers' expertise and independence with regard of school or class work is concerned to some vital aspects like; subject matter, discipline, self-regulations, and teachers' appearance.

Professionalism of teachers basically is a pedagogical aspect that stresses to improve the quality of teachers' work (De Clercq, 2013). It is a venture that demands to improve teachers' working conditions, their status and their performance (De Clercq, 2013; Hargreaves, 2000). The conditions or environment put deep effects on teaching learning and the job of teachers. Good learning conditions always yield good learning outcomes of the students. In report of Desimone et al. (2002), like all other professionals, teachers also need to grow and develop professionalism constantly and reflect it on their practice and daily tasks in schools.

Education and human development are closely related phenomenon in present time. Better use of human resources is deeply concerned with teachers' professionalism and their moral code of conduct. External factors like; material, resources, authorities, changing control patterns, enrolment variations and policy instructions imposed from the education department are also related with teachers' professionalism (Lam & Pang, 2003).

People are generally judged by their appearance. Appearance is the first thing that we focus, to form an instant impression of the person. Smita (2012) found out that how the physical appearance of a teacher influences on students' learning and learning environment. In his study about 116 students of Jodhpur of different educational streams, gender and age were given a questionnaire to know their opinions. The study concluded that teacher's physical appearance makes good impact on students as most of the students scored well in the subject the concerned teacher has nice physical appearance while teacher who uses to come very shabby in the classroom the most of the students scored bad in the subject that taught by that teacher.

As the number of earlier studies were done on teacher professionalism in research literature evolving from the advanced countries like UK, USA, France and Australia. Judyth (2001) found that it is in the best interests of government as it gives greater opportunity for regulative control of the profession. The notion of teacher professionalism is not the responsibility of individual teacher it is the responsibility of the entire system from classroom to all levels of government. The policy makers and teacher training institutions in higher education are responsible for quality of knowledge and skill transmitted to teachers. There is a difference between the teachers' perception and their practice by their professionalism except of their relation with their colleague.

In the previous study, Andy, Abbot, and Dam (2013) investigated the link between teacher subject content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. The participants of the study were principals working in Southeastern Unites States completed an e-mailed survey and reported lack of subject content knowledge from

unsuccessful teachers. The study suggested that teacher's expertise in subject content must be developed. In other such studies, Kane, Rockoff, and Staiger (2007); Darling-Hammond (2006); Marzano (2006) found that subject knowledge is the central element for effective learning in teaching. Birgitte (2009) found that cultivation of meaningful relationships; stimulating classroom climate and significance of the self-regulations of emotions by teachers are most important commitments in teaching profession.

Statement of the problem

Present study was conducted to investigate the "professionalism as a moral code observed by secondary school teachers". In this study, Researchers were intended to study teachers' perceptions and practices about the key factors responsible for teachers' professionalism and investigate gap between teachers' perceptions and practices. Keeping in view the limited resources, present study was confined to government sector schools in Bahawalpur district of Pakistan only.

Research Questions of the study

The present study committed to search for answers to the following research questions

1. How do teachers perceive and follow teachers' code of professionalism regarding the appearance, professionalism, subject matter and self-regulations?
2. What difference exists in teachers' perceptions as they claim and practices that they actually perform?

Significance of the study

The present study has explored the awareness and practices of teachers regarding the professional code of conduct for school teachers. Therefore, monitoring authorities can understand the gap between required and actual situations in schools. Management can make guidelines for the betterment regarding conduct of teachers and think about the roots of issues regarding decline of teachers' moral in the country.

The study will positively help our educational managers in obtaining teacher education objectives on national level. The results of this study will be helpful for concerned authorities in improving teacher training programs utilizing results of this study regarding faults in practicing moral code of professionalism by teachers.

Research Methodology

This study was descriptive in nature. The survey method using a questionnaire and observation sheet were tools of this study. Keeping in view the expected hurdles in data collection at large scale, this study was delimited to secondary schools of Bahawalpur district in Punjab province of Pakistan.

Population

All the government secondary school teachers of public institutions in District Bahawalpur were population of the study.

Sample

This study focused to adopt multistage sampling. At first stage, 40 public schools were selected according to convenience of researchers. But efforts were made to include variety of schools without the effect of researchers' biasness. On second stage, three teachers from each school were chosen randomly from available teachers in the school selected in sample. Therefore, total one hundred twenty teachers were approached.

Research Instruments

A questionnaire on five-point Likert scale was designed consisting eighteen (18) items related to four factors; appearance of the teachers, teachers' professionalism, subject matter and self-regulations. Moreover, an observation sheet having same content of questionnaire was developed. It had options on a scale of 4 namely; always, often, rarely and never. The both research instruments were designed on the base of deep study of relevant literature on the topic. Difference between the items of both tools was that statements of teachers' questionnaire were worded to explore teacher's understanding/ perceptions. But observation sheet had statements to direct observer to mark the items on the basis of practice of teacher in real situation.

Face validity and content validity of the research instruments was analysed through experts' opinions and a pilot study by using there tools separately on a sample of 15 cases. Reliability of tools of the study was analysed through Cronbach's alpha value after collecting data of the study involving 120 cases. Value of r (correlation) 0.664

for teacher's questionnaire and 0.885 for observation sheet indicated that tools were usable in providing reliable data about the study.

Data Collection

Data collected through questionnaires and observation sheets. The questionnaires (120) were delivered and also collected personally by the researchers. Hundred percent questionnaires were returned. The researchers also attended 120 classes actively of these selected teachers and recorded data on observation sheet. Permission by teacher was taken before observation. For the sake to record reliable data through observation, researchers had at least three meeting with the teachers under observation. After three observations, researchers recorded data on the observation sheet. Keeping in view the environment restrictions and research ethics, no electronic or pictorial recording was done during data collection. The sample were informed that their identity will never be reported to any one at any stage.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software used for the purpose of data analysis. To find out the results of the study, paired t test statistics were applied on the data.

Results and Interpretation

Data of the study was related to four components of teachers' professional code of conduct; appearance of teachers, teachers' professionalism, command on subject matter and self regulations in the form of teachers' perceptions and researchers' own (our) observations during data collection. Therefore, results regarding each component of professionalism investigated were combined in same table to easily view and compare teachers' perceptions and practices in real. Explanation of the results have been given after each table in the next.

Table 1. Paired t- test Based Results Related to Appearance of the Teachers Related Items

Groups	Statements	Mean	Correlation	Sig.	MD	t - score	Sig.
Perception	Teacher should wear neat and clean dress.	4.03	.196	.032	1.850	24.518	.000
Practice	Teacher wears neat and clean dress.	2.18					
Perception	Teacher's shoes be should polished.	3.94	.117	.204	2.392	27.946	.000
Practice	Teacher's shoes are polished.	1.55					
Perception	Teacher should seem a simple person.	4.00	.212	.020	2.083	24.752	.000
Practice	Teacher seems a simple person.	1.92					
Perception	Teacher should have good haircut.	3.92	.117	.202	2.575	23.788	.000
Practice	Teacher has good haircut.	1.34					

Note= perceptions data showed in table was based on reported by teachers, practice data reported in table was based on observation by researchers

Table 1 indicates that teachers have strong perceptions about the code of professionalism regarding the appearance of teachers about the factors; neat and clean dress and simplicity in looking and good understanding about having good haircut and wearing of neat shoes. But, data about the practices of teachers exhibits that teachers poorly follow the code of professionalism regarding all items related to the appearance. Although this explores teachers have clear thinking about the code of professionalism about the appearance of teachers but about their practices, they are poor in acting upon this code. T- test results indicates strong significant mean difference between perceptions and practices of teachers regarding all items. Therefore, a gap is visible between teachers' perceptions and their practices about appearance of the teachers. This explores that teachers have awareness about the demands of teaching profession regarding their appearance/ outlook but do not follow the code of professionalism in practice.

Table 2. Paired t- test Based Results Related to Teachers' Professionalism Related Items

Groups	Statements	Mean	Correlation	Sig.	MD	t- score	Sig.
Perception	Teacher should have good relations with his colleagues.	3.93	.129	.161	1.800	19.379	.000
Practice	Teacher has good relations with his colleagues.	2.13					
Perception	Teacher should have command on different teaching methods.	3.65	-.020	.830	2.417	15.917	.000
Practice	Teacher has command on different teaching methods.	1.23					
Perception	Teacher should have knowledge about students' individual differences.	3.83	-.007	.942	2.483	18.770	.000
Practice	Teacher has knowledge about students' individual differences.	1.34					
Perception	Teacher should create good learning environment for students.	3.82	-.079	.391	2.425	19.136	.000
Practice	Teacher creates good learning environment for students.	1.39					
Perception	Along with teaching of subject matter teacher should try to develop good morale to his students.	4.17	-.103	.264	2.583	30.103	.000
Practice	Along with teaching of subject matter teacher tries develop good morale to his students.	1.58					

Note= perceptions data showed in table was based on reported by teachers, practice data reported in table was based on observation by researchers

Table 2 exhibits data about the factors regarding teachers' professionalism in perceptions and practices of teachers. Analysis of mean scores shows that teachers have strong insight about doing efforts to develop good morale in students. They also have good awareness about need of having good relations with colleagues, command on pedagogical teaching skills, command on learning students' differences and development of learning environment in the institution. But, observed data explains that teachers are poor in acting according to their thinking. T- test results indicate strong significant mean difference between perceptions and practices of teachers regarding all items. Therefore, teachers do not follow the code given to them that goes averse to the professional code of teachers.

Table 3. Paired t- test based results related to subject matter related items

Groups	Statements	Mean	Correlation	Sig.	MD	t- score	Sig.
Perception	Teacher should have knowledge of national education objectives.	3.89	.180	.049	2.942	25.071	.000
Practice	Teacher has knowledge of national education aims.	.95					
Perception	Teacher should try to solve students' problems.	3.95	-.103	.263	2.117	17.276	.000
Practice	Teacher tries to solve students' problems.	1.83					
Perception	Teacher should have information of course objectives.	3.79	.048	.605	2.075	16.130	.000
Practice	Teacher has information of course objectives.	1.72					
Perception	Teacher should have good command on subject matter.	3.82	.004	.964	2.017	14.152	.000
Practice	Teacher has good command on subject matter.	1.80					

Note= perceptions data showed in table was based on reported by teachers, practice data reported in table was based on observation by researchers

Table 3 exhibits data about the factors related to teachers' professional code regarding subject matter items. Review of mean scores indicates teachers' good insight about having knowledge of national educational goals, solve students' problems, information of course objectives and command on subject matter. But, observed data points out that teachers are poor in their practices especially in awareness about the national educational goals. T- test results indicate strong significant difference between perceptions and practices of teachers regarding all items. Therefore, data regarding subject matter indicates a clear gap between teachers' perceptions and practices regarding subject matter code of professionalism.

Table 4. Paired t- test based results related to Self-Regulations related items

Groups	Statements	Mean	Correlation	Sig.	MD	t- score	Sig.
Perception	Teacher should come to school on time.	4.04	.119	.194	1.767	23.682	.000
Practice	Teacher comes to school on time.	2.28					
Perception	Teacher should plan and conduct classes regularly.	4.07	.150	.102	1.850	24.518	.000
Practice	Teacher plans and conduct classes regularly.	2.22					
Perception	Teacher should follow all the school rules.	4.08	.035	.704	1.850	20.412	.000
Practice	Teacher follows all the school rules.	2.23					
Perception	Teacher should perform other than teaching duties on time.	3.84	.170	.063	2.158	19.667	.000
Practice	Teacher has ability to do assignments other than routine work of teaching.	1.68					
Perception	Teacher should maintain his self-esteem when face unwilling situation.	3.85	.003	.975	2.392	21.151	.000
Practice	Teacher maintains his self-esteem when faces unwilling situation	1.46					

Note= perceptions data showed in table was based on reported by teachers, practice data reported in table was based on observation by researchers

Table 4 displays data about the factors of self- regulations as a part of teachers' professional moral code. Mean analysis of teachers' perceptions data shows that teachers have strong awareness regarding need to reach school timely, plan and take classes regularly and follow school rules. They also have good understanding about performing duties timely and maintaining self- esteem on facing unwilling situations. But, in observations poorly follow these rules. T- test results indicates strong significant mean difference between perceptions and practices of teachers regarding all items.

Conclusion and Discussion

The target of this study was to analyze teachers' gap between their understanding and practices regarding professional code of ethics. After evaluating data reported by the teachers, we concluded that teachers have good awareness about the professional code of ethics. They strongly admit that they should follow rules devised for teachers regarding their appearance, subject matter, self-regulation and professionalism. But when observed data was analyzed, conclusion was that teachers poorly follow the rules regarding code of professionalism. So, a strong gap between teachers' perceptions and practices has been inferred by this study. This is alarming for the teaching profession and teaching management authorities for a defective monitoring process.

The bright side of this study is that results have indicated a good understanding and familiarity of teachers regarding the code of professionalism that can be result of effective training of teacher educators during pre-service and in-service teacher training. This also indicates a bright side of system of circulation of orders and rules for teachers as professionals for teachers working in the school education department. But, lays down foundation for a number of questions about the reasons behind the negligence by teachers regarding rules of professionalism.

A major part of results of this study provide a strong base for the growth of frustration of stakeholders about school education in Pakistan. This also express a sign of stress among school teachers. Because, professionals attached to teaching profession can ignore the rules in situations when they are unhappy with their profession that is a source of income for their living in this society.

A comparison of the results of this study with literature available on the topic gives a clue for a culture of indiscipline and dishonesty in present teachers and future generation. Because professionalism of teachers reflects in the citizens of tomorrow (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Ogunyinka, Okeke & Adedoyin, 2015). No doubt, teaching is a profession and teachers as professionals should follow rules of professionalism regarding the four aspects “efficacy, teacher practice, teacher collaboration and teacher’s leadership” (Rizvi & Elliot, 2007). Moreover, teachers should develop professionalism constantly and reflect it in their practice and daily tasks in working situations (Desimone et al, 2002). Results of this study have indicated negligence of teachers in following rules in their practices regarding all four aspects of professionalism investigated. So, indicates a defective process in developing positive character and discipline related remedies for effective character-building aspects in the light of teachers’ actions.

On the whole, results of this study have similarity with the results of study of Tichenor and Tichenor (2005) that reported all teachers do not exhibit the behaviors and characteristics of teachers as professionals. Therefore, keeping in view the situation, the need is to study reasons behind the strong gap between teachers’ knowledge and practices. The possible factors behind the situation can be the poor monitoring by school heads and other management bodies or the lack of teachers’ interest in performing duties due to their dissatisfaction in teaching profession. Therefore, it is recommended that department should exploit appearances of teachers, teachers’ professionalism, subject matter and self-regulations in their teachers and make a special mechanism for practice on moral code of professionalism. Moreover, a study at large scale on reasons behind the situation may be conducted in Pakistan and other parts of the world. Further study should also compare the attitude of teachers regarding professional code of ethics on the bases of gender, qualification, age and other demographic variables.

A major limitation of this study is that it did not cover the private sector teachers in sample. Sample was also confined to Bahawalpur district of Pakistan only. So, a study about the same area should be replicated including teachers working in private schools in comparison to government sector school teachers in Pakistan and other parts of the world.

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