Ethics in Teaching Profession

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Abstract:
For the purpose of this Code, the term "teacher" covers all school teachers, whether in government or private schools, on full-time or part-time basis, at the elementary and secondary levels and the teachers holding administrative and supervisory positions. The Code of Professional Ethics for teachers provides a framework of principles to guide them in discharging their obligations towards students, parents, colleagues and community. Increased awareness of the ethical principles governing the teaching profession is essential to ensure 'professionalism' among teachers.

The code set out the standards of professional knowledge, skill, competence and conduct which are expected of registered teachers. In all, there are 33 such standards which reflect the complexity and variety of teaching and cover areas such as communication and relationships, equally and inclusion, compliance with national and school policies, professional development and pupil/student welfare. The standards are underpinned by four core values – respect, care, integrity and trust. Education, as asocial venture, a mediator between a past that is to be conveyed and a future that is to be prepared, presents tension on the one hand between socialization and conservatism, while on the other, is itself and interpreter, constructor and diffuser of meanings. Thus on confronting issues of meaning and aim, but also environments and processes, its participants, organized around structures of various levels and ranges, also address ethical issues, whether they are aware of this or not.

Key Words: Ethics, Professionalism, Complexity, Integrity.

Introduction:
The teaching profession has a distinguished record of service in Ireland. This Code of professional Conduct for Teachers reiterates and makes explicit the values and standards that have long been experienced by pupils/students through their participation in education. Purpose of the Code of Professional conduct for Teachers applies to all registered teachers.

1. It serves as a guiding compass as teachers seek to steer an ethical and respectful course through their career in teaching and to uphold the honor and dignity of the teaching profession.
2. It may be used by the education community and the wider public to inform their understanding and expectations of the teaching profession in Ireland.
3. It has an important legal standing and will be used by the Council as a Reference point in exercising its investigative and disciplinary functions under Part 5 of the Teaching Council Act, 2001, dealing with fitness to teach.

Professional misconduct by a registered teacher is defined in Section 41 of the Act in the following terms:
(a) Engaging in conduct which is contrary to a code of professional conduct established by the Council under section 7(2Xb);
(b) Engaging in any improper conduct he or she is unfit to teach." in his or her professional capacity or otherwise by reason of which

It is envisaged that the Council will exercise its powers in this respect when the requisite legal effect is given to part 5 of the Teaching Council Act. In respect of each individual complaint against a registered teacher, the Council, according to its procedures, will consider whether the conduct complained of amounts to a serious falling short on the part of the teacher, of the standards of teaching, knowledge, skill, competence and conduct that could reasonably be expected.

There is considerable power and authority in teaching. Like doctors and lawyers, teachers are considered experts and are expected to act in the best interests of their constituents' However, unlike medicine and law, the profession of teaching does not have a formal code of ethics. Although the American Association of University Professors (AAIIP) has a statement on ethics, it is not a binding code and there may be many in the profession who are unaware of it. Ethical questions can feel complicated, and there are always grey areas; still, there is some basic information that all college instructors should be aware of.

Ethical issues are concerned with the ideas of right wrong, duties/obligations, rights/responsibilities. When making decisions, instructors should rely on ethical standards (based on objective obligations) and should not rely merely on values (based on subjective considerations). Many issues will be unproblematic based on the informal standards shared by most teachers (i.e., that plagiarism, cheating, favoritism or discrimination are unethical). Other issues, however, will require the application of ethical reasoning. Patricia Keith-Spiegel, et. al., (2002) offer eight general ethical principles that one ought to consider in thinking through an ethical dilemma:

- Respect for the autonomy of others: as long as actions do not interfere with the rights and welfare of others, value free expression of appropriate ideas, student discovery, and a comfortable environment conducive to learning.
- Doing no harm (physical or emotional resulting from acts of commission or omission): do not tolerate unethical behaviors and seek consultation if you are unsure.
- Benefit to others: accept responsibility for student welfare, deliver services students deserve and recognize our roles as models.
- Fairness and equity: be objective; treat others as we would like to be treated.
- Fidelity and honesty: exhibit integrity and follow through. Use informed consent procedures when applicable.
- Dignity: consider the dignity of all and respects diversify.
- Caring: be compassionate toward peers and students; exercise professional duties with care.
- Doing one's best: value the pursuit of excellence and take pride in one's work.

Instructors have more power over students than they may realize, and many ethical dilemmas can arise as a result of this built-in inequality. For example, even something as simple as an instructor asking a student in his or her class to babysit may present an ethical issue if the student feels compelled in any way. This certainly does not mean that instructors should never ask students to babysit; but it does mean that instructors must carefully consider the ethical dimensions of their behavior. The eight general ethical principles can serve as a guide to instructors as they consider the implications of their actions in teaching and dealing with students.
Ethical issues are divided into four principles for better understanding of every teacher.

**Principle I: Ethical Conduct toward Students**

The professional educator accepts personal responsibility for teaching students character qualities that will help them evaluate the consequences of and accept the responsibility for their actions and choices. We strongly affirm parents as the primary moral educators of their children. Nevertheless, we believe all educators are obligated to help foster civic virtues such as integrity, diligence, responsibility, cooperation, loyalty, patience, and respect-for the law, for human life, for others, and for self.

The professional educator, in accepting his or her position of public trust, measures success not only by the progress of each student towards realization of his or her personal potential, but also as a citizen of the greater community of the republic.

- The professional educator deals considerately and justly with each student and seeks to resolve problems, including discipline, according to law, and school policy.
- The professional educator does not intentionally expose the student to disparagement.
- The professional educator does not reveal confidential information concerning students, unless required by law.
- The professional educator makes a constructive effort to protect the student from conditions detrimental to learning, health, or safety.
- The professional educator endeavors to present without distortion, bias, or personal prejudice.

**Principle II: Ethical Conduct toward Practices and Performance**

- The professional educator assumes responsibility and accountability for his or her performance and continually strives to demonstrate competence.
- The professional educator endeavors to maintain the dignity of the profession by respecting and obeying the law, and by demonstrating personal integrity.
- The professional educator applies for, accepts, or assigns a position of responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications, and adheres to the terms of a contract or appointment.
- The professional educator maintains sound mental health, physical stamina, and social prudence necessary to perform the duties of any professional assignment.
- The professional educator continues professional growth.
- The professional educator complies with written local school policies and applicable laws and regulations that are not in conflict with this code of ethics.
- The professional educator does not intentionally misrepresent official policies of the school or educational organizations, and clearly distinguishes those views from his or her own personal opinions.
- The professional educator honestly accounts for all funds committed to his or her charge.
- The professional educator does not use institutional or professional privileges or personal or partisan advantage.

**Principle III: Ethical Conduct toward Professional Colleagues**

- The professional educator, in exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues, accords just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession.
The professional educator does not reveal confidential information concerning colleagues unless required by laws.

The professional educator does not willfully make false statements about a colleague or the school system.

Tire professional educator does not interfere with a colleague's freedom of choice, and works to eliminate coercion that forces educators to support actions and ideologies that violate individual professional integrity.

Principle IV: Ethical Conduct toward Parents and Community

The professional educator pledges to protect public sovereignty over: public education and private control of private education.

The professional educator recognizes that quality education is the common goal of the public boards of educational) educators and that a co-operative effort is essential among these groups to attain, that goal.

The professional educator makes concerted efforts to communicate should be revealed in the interest of the student.

The professional educator endeavors to understand and respect the values and traditions of the diverse cultures represented in the community and in his or her classroom.

The professional educator manifests a positive and active role in school/community relations.

Conclusion

The professional educator strives to create a learning environment that nurtures to fulfillment the potential of all students. The professional educator acts with conscientious effort to exemplify the highest ethical standards. The professional educator responsibly accepts that every child has a right to an uninterrupted education free from strikes or any other work stoppage tactics.

A teacher may know many things about the life and conduct of his/her fellow teachers. Some information may be of confidential nature while some other may be of routine type involving no component of confidentiality. If a teacher has expressed his/her services for undertaking a specific task, there is no element of confidentially in these facts as these are already in the public domain. However, if there is an allegation that a teacher has committed some irregularities in the maintenance of accounts of an activity or if a student makes a complaint that a particular teacher misused his/her position during an educational tour, the school authorities are likely to appoint an inquiry committee to probe the matter. While investigating the matter, the members of the committee are likely to obtain information of confidential nature from the teachers, students and officials. A teacher shall be violating the Code of Professional Ethics if he/she chooses to publicize the information obtained during the course of investigation.

A young teacher facing some sort of turmoil in his/her personal, social or professional life may decide to seek the emotional support of an elderly and senior teacher and in the process may divulge some confidential information. The teacher who has received the information shall be violating the ethical principles of teaching profession if he/she passes on the information shared in confidence to other teachers.
References


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