

Professionalism among Teachers:- A study of Higher Education

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Education refers both, a process and a product. As product, it is sum of all that is received through learning i.e acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitude and values, transmission of culture, development of personality and liberation or self actualization. As process involves the act of developing these products in someone else or in oneself. The process requires a person is called teacher; who plays a pivotal role: in education.

The quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of its citizens depends not exclusively, but a critical measure upon the quality of their education, the quality of their education depends more than upon any single factor, upon the quality of their teachers. Teaching is considered as the noblest amongst all the professions because teacher not only guides the individuals but also the destiny of the nation. A nation's development largely depends upon the values of its teachers. Teacher has been recognized as the key person in preservation, progression and projection of a nation's cultural heritage. Those who teach effectively may make a progressive and productive society. On the contrary, poor teaching may lead to ignorance, misunderstanding and intellectual and cultural stagnation.

Teaching as a profession:-

Conference about teaching as a profession, let us understand the meaning of word 'profession'. Acc. To Saundres, "A profession is based upon specialized intellectual study and training, the main purpose of which is to supply skilled service and advice to others for a definite fee or service."

To quote Cogan, "the profession, serving the vital needs of man, considers its first ethical imperative to be altruistic service to the client." From this, we can say that a profession requires a high degree of a general and specialized knowledge along with it a specialized intellectual training to provide a unique social service.

Hema Raghavan has differentiated profession from job as "Profession is Job+ while job is profession -(minus). Acc. To her, profession is one who extends his chosen pursuit to benefit fellow beings and his work is marked by humanistic values and devotion to human development and welfare.

Teaching is a profession as it fits well with the definitions of profession, we have discussed. Teaching as a profession requires teacher's expert knowledge and specialized skills, maintained through rigorous and continuous study, it calls for a sense of personal and corporate/professional responsibility for education, development and welfare of the pupils. The profession of teaching should not be reduced to a trade, it should be confined to keep burning the lamp of civilization.

Need of professionalism among teachers:-

To profession of teaching ranks low amongst other professions. The teacher hardly gets respected from the society he lives in. Irony of the fate is that teaching is deemed to be the most unattractive profession. Peter F. Drucker said, “teaching is the only occupation of man for which we have not yet developed tools that make an average person capable of competence and performance. In teaching we rely on the ‘naturals’ the ones who somehow knows how to teach.” Merely the knowledge of subject is not sufficient to be a good and professional teacher, but it requires a lot i.e. skills of teaching, ethics and values, autonomy to work, commitment, passion and enthusiasm to make others learn.

As C.E.M JOAD says, “The good teacher must enlighten by his example, show wisdom in his discourse and overcome the recalcitrant with a patient determination and check the exhibitionist with a reasonable superciliousness.”

Professionalism in Higher Education:-

Professionalism is mainly concerned with professional status, methods, character, standards or ethics. Some people equated professionalism with ‘vocation’ while others equated with ‘passion’ and still others equated it with ‘devotion’.

Osgood(2004) proposed that the aspects such as values, ethics, attitude, passion, commitment, enjoyment, enthusiasm, play and playfulness, need to be embedded when interpreting the elements of professionalism.

The different elements of professionalism can be usefully addressed within six following dimensions:-

1. Knowledge:- Specialized knowledge, general knowledge, pedagogical knowledge.
2. Education and Training:- Higher education and professional qualifications, practical experience, intellect.
3. Skills:- competency, efficacy, task complexity, judgement, communication, presentation, evaluation.
4. Autonomy:- Entry requirement, self-regulations and standards, Discretionary judgement, voice in educational policy.
5. Ethics and values:- Code of conduct, moral integrity, confidentiality, trustworthiness, responsibility, ideology, honesty, altruism, dedication and service-motive.
6. Reward:- Influence, social status, power, fee or pay for service.

Thus professionalism, is the central point and money is its wonderful by product. To quote Prof. Raghavan, “Professionalism demands a focused approach, self-pride in what is being done, self-confidence, competence and motivation to achieve, respect, responsibility, commitment and control over personal emotions.”

Teaching is a profession which is concerned with the harmonious development (i.e. intellectual, physical, emotional, moral development) of pupils, due to which professionalism among teachers needs to be developed. Resurgence of a country could come not through the channels of

science and technology alone but also through the flood gates of value-oriented education. It can only be possible only through the teachers who are professionally competent and ethically sound. As S.E.C(1951-52) points out, “ we are convinced that the most important factor in the contemplated educational reconstruction is the teacher, his personal qualities, his educational qualifications, his professional training and the place he occupies in the institution as well as in community.”

So, a teacher must be anchored in pedagogy and bound imagination, creativity and inspiration to teaching and learning to ignite a passion for learning in pupils.

Houle has suggested that there are at least fourteen characteristics of a profession which are as:- def. of job's functions, mastery of theoretical knowledge, capacity to solve problems, use of knowledge, self-enhancement, public acceptance, ethical practices.

Mcfarland has given five characteristics of a profession as the existence of a body of knowledge or techniques, formalized methods of acquiring training and experience, the establishment of a representative organization with professionalisation as its goal, the formation of ethical codes for the guidance of conduct and the charges of fees based upon services but with due regard to priority of service over the desire for monetary reward.

Education Commission(1964-66):-

“Vitality and realism are lacking in the curriculum and programme of work which continue to be largely traditional with disregard for the present day need and objectives.”

L.C. Gupta:- “Professionalism does not come automatically by employment of people with professional degrees, unless the professionals have the necessary authority and use their professionalism in decision making. More than professional degrees what matters is professional ethics.”

K.R.S Iyenger:- “Our standards whether in scholarship or teaching, never very high or exacting, are now fast racing to the bottom.” In his book (A new deal for our universities)

The Mother:- “The attitude of the teacher must be one of a constant will to progress, not only in order to know always better what he wants to teach the students, but above all in order to be a living example to show them what they can become.”

Kothari Commission:- “Of all the different factors which influence the quality of education and its contribution to national development, the quality, competence and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant.”

Policies and Programmes ensuring Professionalism:

Higher education is “higher” because its concern is the education of people who are adults or almost adults. It is “higher” again by virtue of its being at frontiers of knowledge. It also is a means of initiating people into various professions. Since university education is the chief means through which

aspirants get initiated into profession of science, social science, engineering, medicine, management etc. the university teacher himself or herself ought to be a professional in one of these above mentioned areas. Since she is called upon to teach others behind a profession, she needs to be first of all more than an ordinary practitioner of his or her profession; she needs to have had undergone an advanced professional education, probably mastery over one specialized branch of the profession.

According to Drucker(1988), the full benefits of professional development become possible only when a collaborative culture exists which demonstrates 'Extended Professionalism' having following aspects to be developed:

1. Skills derived by mediating experience with theory.
2. Broader perspectives based in wider social and educational context.
3. Focus on classroom events in relation to institutional policies and goals.
4. comparative approach to teaching method-shares with others.
5. Professional collaboration valued.
6. Strong involvement in non-teaching professional activities.
7. Regular engagement with professional literature.
8. In-service focus broadly based, including engagement with 'theoretical' concerns.
9. Teaching viewed as largely 'rational' activity.

Professionalism as ideology control: Professionalism has been viewed also as an ideology of control, which would implicitly mean the professional group exercise self-imposed discipline in order to be more and more accountable to the larger society.

Developing professionalism among teachers is not a one time job. It is a continuous and life long process. Different activities need to be conducted at different levels in order to foster professionalism among teachers. Some of these activities are discuss below.

Promotion professionalism among teachers requires should strategy. Since teaching is essentially a social function and multi-faceactivity, it is socially valuable for a teacher to perform well in the classroom.

Teachers should be service oriented and not profit-oriented professional.

Self Activity

1. Continuous study and learning

As Education is a life-long process so a teacher should highly intrinsically motivated because his/her primary concern is learning to grow. He/she should be a long life learner. He/she should continuously be involved in conducting action research while encountering a problem in the classroom. This will help him/her to get updated on content knowledge as well pedagogical skills.

2. Self-introspection and Self-regulation

No external agency is responsible to supervise his/her work. It should be self-supervised. He/she should be involved in intellectual discussion with peers, seniors, and experts; attend seminars, conferences, workshops, and disseminate his/her innovations/thoughts.

College level Activity

Colleges should provide a congenial environment for teachers to grow as a professional. Enough autonomy should be given to teachers to conduct experiment with students, and to do action research in the classroom. They should be motivated to write books and articles; attend seminars, conferences, and workshops and present papers. There should be continuous interaction among teacher, management amid parents so as to know each other difficulties and problems. The teacher should get a decent salary in order to maintain standard quality of like in the society. They should also be given incentives from time to time for preparing teaching aids, conducting experiments and action research.

Group Participation:-

Workshops/seminars/symposia/conferences/research projects. There are certain methods of professional development which based on group participation. These methods are:

1. Refresher Courses

Refresher courses for teachers are conducted by Department of Education Universities. These courses are focused on specific subjects. The teacher associated with the subject can participate in such courses. New knowledge regarding their subjects is provided. Teachers should make use of these courses.

2. Orientation Courses

The department of education and universities have started now conducting refresher courses for in-service teachers. These courses are being conducted at all levels of education such as- primary, high school and college level. In these courses the teachers get an opportunity to become aware of problems and to solve them arising in their subjects.

3. Reliable Guide

A teacher can seek guidance of any senior lecturer by accepting him his ideal from time to time. This makes possible their professional development.

Teacher Associations

Associations of teachers have to be strengthened to perform role of social function of teaching and make efforts to make teachers service oriented. Official recognition to professional status of teachers association is essential. State should give grant, invite association representatives on

decision making bodies. Professional bodies be associated with regulations authorities in education who prescribe norms and set standards.

The period of pre-training of teachers should be made longer, vigorous and rigorous; longer the duration of training, higher will be social prestige for the teaching profession. Training for teaching is specialized complex and technical in nature. The teachers association should enforce code of ethics so as to develop commitment to the teaching job.

Apart from lobbying the government for the welfare of the teachers, the teacher organizations should be involved in professional development and in-service education of teachers. From time to time they should conduct subject-specific workshops, seminars and conferences. They should also update the pedagogical knowledge of teachers from time to time. Teacher organizations should publish periodicals, reports, and handbooks and circulate them among level, the information should be disseminated to teachers and suggestions should be sought from teachers through organization of meetings, workshops, seminars, panel discussion etc.

Community Participation

Participation in social life is also must, only then the teacher would not only be familiar with the community problems but would also make efforts for solving those problems. Social leadership is expected from the teachers. Community participation develops the social awareness of the teachers and also increases their social prestige.

Teaching as profession is under scrutiny because of several reasons. With the changing demands of liberalization and globalization, a teacher needs to be confident enough to foster essential values among students. He/she should also develop those competencies among student which will help them in competing in a market-oriented economy. Teacher education curriculum both at pre-service and in-service level needs to be changed to meet the growing demand of professionally competent enough to meet such growing demands. There should ample opportunities to teacher educators to get exposure to in-service education, attending conferences, seminars, workshops etc.

Motivation should also be given for conducting research activities, writing research papers, disseminating the research outcomes through publications, etc. Then only, professionally teachers could be produced.

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