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Teachers' Professional Ethics and Their Influence on Students' Academic Achievement

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Abstract:

Ethics forms the foundation of human judgement about right and wrong behaviour, guiding individuals' decisions and interactions. In the teaching profession, ethics assumes an even greater significance because teachers not only impart academic knowledge but also shape students' moral awareness, attitudes, and habits. The teacher's conduct—inside and outside the classroom—becomes a source of influence for learners who often regard teachers as role models. Ethical awareness and behaviour therefore play a crucial role in maintaining fairness, trust, and integrity in the educational environment. This paper examines how teachers' professional ethics contribute to students' academic development, how an ethical classroom environment can promote positive behaviour, and why ethical values must be integrated into teacher training. To situate the discussion in broader scholarship, a brief literature review summarises studies on ethics in education and their implications for teaching practice.

Keywords: Teachers, Ethics, Ethical Classroom, Professional Conduct, Academic Performance.

Introduction

Teaching is often described as a noble profession, yet it is one of the most demanding and multifaceted occupations. Teachers not only transmit knowledge and skills but also influence the character and worldview of their learners. Their behaviour, language, decisions, and values all contribute to shaping the learning environment. In recent decades, educational contexts have become more diverse and complex, requiring teachers to exercise sensitive and ethical judgement in dealing with students who come from different backgrounds and abilities. Ethics therefore becomes essential for ensuring that teachers maintain fairness, consistency, and respect for human dignity.

Ethical classroom practices enhance the quality of interactions between students and teachers. When teachers demonstrate fairness, compassion, and honesty, students feel secure and motivated, which directly influences their participation and performance. Ethical classrooms promote deep learning, create conditions for cooperative engagement, and reduce the fear or anxiety that can hinder academic progress. Ethical behaviour also extends beyond daily classroom management to include responsibilities such as unbiased evaluation, protection of student rights, and positive interaction with parents and communities. This article examines these dimensions of ethics and their influence on academic performance, highlighting the pivotal role teachers play in shaping student outcomes through their ethical conduct.

Literature Review

Various scholars have examined the relationship between teachers' ethics and student performance. Wenglinsky's research demonstrates that teacher behaviour and classroom practices significantly impact student achievement.¹ His study highlights how ethical and thoughtful instructional approaches—such as equitable attention, clarity of instruction, and



respectful communication—contribute to higher levels of student engagement and understanding.

Frankena and Lillie, writing on ethics more broadly, emphasise that ethical behaviour requires reasoning and self-reflection.² Their perspectives are important for teachers because they must frequently make decisions involving fairness, respect, and professional responsibility. Teachers who understand the philosophical basis of ethics are better equipped to apply these concepts in a practical manner.

Dimkpa's work addresses the need for teachers to maintain professional and ethical standards in the 21st century.³ She argues that ethical behaviour improves classroom relationships and helps students feel valued, which can influence their psychological readiness to learn. Ethical teaching also enhances the credibility of the teacher in the eyes of students.

Other educational theorists emphasise that ethical behaviour in teaching involves impartial evaluation, respect for diversity, integrity, and commitment to student welfare. Research on classroom climate suggests that students perform better academically when they perceive their teachers as fair, trustworthy, and respectful. A positive moral environment reduces disruptive behaviour and increases motivation, ultimately contributing to stronger academic outcomes. This body of literature collectively underscores the central role that teacher ethics play in shaping student experiences and academic success.

Objectives

The present study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyse the importance of teachers' ethics in the classroom.
2. To examine how teachers' ethical conduct influences students' academic performance.

Methodology

This article uses descriptive and qualitative methods to examine the nature and significance of teacher ethics. The analysis relies on secondary sources such as books, educational research papers, and relevant online materials that discuss ethics, teacher behaviour, and their impact on academic achievement.⁴

Conceptual Clarifications

a) Ethics

Ethics refers to moral principles that guide human conduct. Derived from the Greek word *ethikos*, meaning habit or custom, ethics helps determine what is good, just, or appropriate in various situations. In education, ethics concerns the beliefs and principles that guide teacher behaviour. Teachers must apply ethical reasoning when grading students, addressing discipline issues, interacting with parents, and making professional decisions. Ethics is not simply a set of rules but a reflective practice that requires teachers to consider the consequences of their actions on students' emotional, social, and academic well-being.

Teachers' ethics are also connected to both normative and applied ethical theories. Normative ethics offers general principles that define acceptable professional behaviour, while applied ethics focuses on resolving dilemmas that arise in specific classroom contexts. Effective teachers integrate both aspects to create an environment that promotes fairness, respect, and positive relationships.

b) Teachers' Ethics

Teachers' ethics refer to the values, behaviours, and professional commitments that guide teachers in fulfilling their responsibilities. Ethical responsibilities include treating all students equally, respecting diversity, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring that personal



biases do not influence professional decisions. Ethical teachers must also avoid exploiting their authority and ensure that all students receive equal access to participation and learning opportunities.

Teachers are expected to model moral behaviour because students observe and imitate their actions. A teacher who consistently demonstrates respect, fairness, and honesty encourages similar qualities in students. Teachers are therefore required to uphold ethical standards not only within classroom interactions but also in their wider professional relationships with parents, administrators, and the community. Their conduct can influence student motivation, classroom climate, and the overall learning experience.

c) Teaching

Teaching is the systematic process through which knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes are imparted to learners. It involves interaction between teachers and students for mutual learning and growth. Teaching requires communication skills, patience, creativity, and a deep understanding of how students learn. Effective teaching goes beyond delivering content; it involves creating a supportive environment where students can explore, question, and reflect.

In modern educational systems, teaching also demands sensitivity to cultural and individual differences among learners. Teachers must adapt their methods to accommodate diverse learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds. Teaching ultimately aims to empower students to become independent thinkers capable of contributing meaningfully to society.

d) Ethical Teacher

An ethical teacher bases their actions on principles that prioritise student welfare. Ethical teachers maintain professional boundaries, practise impartiality, and show responsibility in their decision-making. They resist showing favouritism, avoid verbal or

emotional harm, and uphold academic integrity. Ethical teachers also nurture moral reasoning in students by modelling responsible and respectful behaviour.

Ethical decision-making in the classroom is guided by both personal values and professional codes of conduct. Teachers who consciously reflect on their practice can identify ethical dilemmas promptly and respond thoughtfully. The ethical teacher demonstrates empathy and self-discipline, using the classroom as an opportunity to instill values such as fairness, cooperation, and respect.

e) Ethical Classroom

An ethical classroom is an environment where moral values shape daily interactions. It is characterised by trust, safety, dignity, fairness, and open communication. In such a space, students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, participating actively, and expressing curiosity without fear of judgement or ridicule.

Ethical classrooms promote positive behaviour by fostering collaboration rather than competition. Teachers who establish clear expectations, encourage mutual respect, and respond compassionately to mistakes help create a climate where students are motivated to engage with learning. An ethical classroom supports not only academic goals but also personal and emotional development.

f) Professional Conduct

Professional conduct includes the standards and practices expected from members of the teaching profession. Teachers are responsible for maintaining discipline, ensuring student safety, collaborating with colleagues, and adhering to institutional policies. Professional conduct also requires teachers to update their knowledge regularly, engage in continuous professional development, and demonstrate accountability in their work.



Professional responsibility extends to planning lessons effectively, maintaining accurate records, providing constructive feedback, and communicating clearly with students and parents. Ethical and professional behaviour creates a strong foundation for academic success and establishes trust within the school community.

g) Academic Performance

Academic performance refers to how well students achieve learning objectives, often measured through assessments such as tests, assignments, and projects. Academic performance is influenced by various factors including teaching quality, learning environment, motivation, and emotional well-being. Research shows that ethical teaching practices—such as fairness in evaluation, supportive communication, and respect for individual differences—enhance students' ability to focus, comprehend material, and perform effectively in assessments.

Academic success is not restricted to examination results; it includes students' critical thinking skills, attitudes toward learning, and long-term ability to apply knowledge. Ethical teachers foster these outcomes by cultivating confidence, curiosity, and resilience.

Role of Teachers' Ethical Values

Teachers' ethical values serve as guiding principles that shape their relationships with students and influence the broader learning environment.

a) Respect

Respect is a foundational value in teaching. Teachers demonstrate respect by acknowledging students' individuality, listening to their concerns, and valuing their contributions. When teachers treat students with kindness and dignity, students feel motivated, safe, and encouraged to participate actively. Respect for cultural, religious, and personal differences helps promote harmony within the classroom.

b) Integrity

Integrity involves honesty, consistency, and moral responsibility. Teachers who demonstrate integrity through punctuality, transparency, and reliable behaviour set a positive example for students. Integrity also involves maintaining confidentiality, avoiding dishonest practices, and holding oneself accountable. Students who observe integrity in their teachers are more likely to adopt similar values in their academic work and personal lives.

c) Care

Care refers to the emotional and academic support teachers provide. A caring teacher pays attention to students' struggles, encourages them during setbacks, and celebrates their achievements. Care helps students feel valued and nurtures their enthusiasm for learning. When students sense genuine care from their teachers, they are more likely to seek help, share their concerns, and stay engaged in their studies.

d) Trust

Trust strengthens relationships and allows for productive learning experiences. Teachers build trust by being consistent, reliable, and approachable. Trust encourages students to take risks in learning, ask questions, and express ideas freely. A trusting climate reduces fear of failure and enhances academic confidence.

e) Conduct of Teachers

Teachers are expected to behave professionally and set an example for learners. Conduct includes punctuality, preparedness, regularity, appropriate behaviour, and ethical use of authority. Teachers who follow ethical norms—such as avoiding discrimination, practising fairness, and respecting students—create a positive classroom culture. Their conduct influences students' perceptions of education and shapes their attitudes toward academic tasks.



f) Obligations of Teachers Toward Students

Teachers hold significant responsibilities toward students' academic, emotional, social, and moral development. They must identify individual learning needs and adapt teaching methods accordingly. Teachers should provide additional support to struggling students, create opportunities for active learning, and encourage students to develop independent thinking. Teachers also help students develop moral values by modelling respect, patience, and compassion.

g) Obligations Toward Parents, Community, and Society

Teachers have responsibilities that extend beyond the classroom. They play an important role in building connections with parents, informing them about their children's progress, and working together to address challenges. Teachers also contribute to community-building by promoting unity, peace, cooperation, and respect for diversity. In a country as diverse as India, teachers must model secularism and cultural sensitivity to promote inclusiveness.

Effects of Teachers' Ethical Conduct on Students' Academic Performance

Teachers' ethical behaviour directly affects students' learning experiences and academic achievements. Ethical conduct creates a positive classroom atmosphere that supports both learning and character development.

a) Teachers' Dressing

A teacher's appearance influences how students perceive them. Professional attire conveys seriousness, responsibility, and respect for the teaching profession. When teachers dress modestly and appropriately, students view them as role models and may feel more

motivated to follow classroom expectations. In contrast, inappropriate dressing—such as overly casual or revealing clothing—can distract students and reduce the teacher's authority.

b) Teachers' Guidance

Guidance is essential for helping students navigate academic challenges. Ethical teachers provide clear instructions, encourage questions, and use teaching methods that make learning accessible. When teachers take the time to offer constructive feedback, students feel supported and become more confident in their abilities. Guidance also includes promoting discipline, helping students manage their time, and motivating them to adopt good study habits. Teachers who demonstrate fairness and patience create conditions that promote strong academic performance.

c) Teachers' Communication

Communication is at the heart of effective teaching. Ethical communication requires clarity, consistency, and respect. Teachers must explain concepts in ways that suit students' learning levels while ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to participate. Tone of voice, facial expressions, and non-verbal cues all play important roles in building trust and encouraging engagement. Miscommunication can lead to confusion and poor performance, whereas clear and respectful communication strengthens understanding and academic achievement.

How to Be Ethical in the Classroom

Ethical teaching requires constant awareness, deliberate action, and thoughtful decision-making. It is not a one-time effort but a continuous process in which teachers reflect on how their behaviour affects learners' emotional, moral, and academic development. An ethical classroom is built through everyday interactions, and teachers uphold this environment



by practising a set of core principles that guide their conduct and shape meaningful learning experiences.

1) Impartiality

Fairness forms the foundation of ethical teaching. Teachers must avoid favouritism by ensuring that every student receives equal opportunities to participate, ask questions, and express their opinions. Impartiality is especially important in culturally diverse classrooms where students may come from different castes, religions, genders, or socioeconomic backgrounds. Ethical teachers remain conscious of these differences and take care not to let personal preferences or biases influence their decisions. Impartiality must also extend to academic evaluation. Students should be assessed strictly on the basis of their performance, not on behaviour, personality, or relationship with the teacher. When students experience fairness consistently, they develop trust in the teacher and confidence in their own abilities.

2) Respect

Respect is essential for creating a supportive and inclusive learning atmosphere. Teachers demonstrate respect by using polite and encouraging language, acknowledging students' ideas, and avoiding comments that may damage self-esteem. Respectful communication helps students feel valued and safe, which in turn promotes active participation. When teachers take time to listen attentively to students' viewpoints, they foster an environment where dialogue can flourish. This mutual respect helps build stronger teacher–student relationships and encourages students to think critically without fear of ridicule.

3) Patience

Patience is a vital ethical trait, especially when dealing with misbehaviour, distractions, or learning difficulties. Students progress at different rates, and ethical teachers respond to challenges with calmness and understanding rather than frustration or anger. Practising

patience allows teachers to model self-control and to approach problems constructively. In cases of recurring behavioural issues, it may be necessary to communicate with parents or guardians so that a collaborative solution can be reached. Through patience, teachers help students develop resilience and learn from their mistakes without feeling discouraged.

4) Concern for Students

Showing concern for students means being attentive to their academic struggles, emotional challenges, and personal needs. Teachers can display concern by offering additional assistance, encouraging hesitant learners, and following up on students who may be falling behind. Acts of empathy—such as recognising when a student is distressed or overwhelmed—help create an atmosphere of care and support. When students feel that their teacher genuinely cares about them, they become more motivated to engage in learning and strive for academic success.

5) Propriety

Propriety refers to behaving in a manner that reflects professionalism and dignity at all times. Teachers must maintain appropriate boundaries, avoid inappropriate conversations, and uphold moral behaviour. Propriety also involves being mindful of one's actions, appearance, and communication style, ensuring that everything aligns with the values of the teaching profession. When teachers exhibit propriety, they reinforce the idea that the classroom is a respectful and disciplined space, setting a strong example for students to emulate.

Conclusion

Ethics provides the foundation upon which meaningful and responsible teaching is built. When teachers uphold ethical values, they influence not only the academic development of their students but also their emotional maturity, moral reasoning, and social behaviour. In contemporary society—where young people encounter conflicting messages about values,



behaviour, and responsibility—the school becomes an essential space for nurturing ethical understanding. Within this environment, teachers serve as guides whose actions and attitudes can deeply shape learners’ perceptions of fairness, justice, respect, and cooperation.

Teachers who consistently demonstrate ethical behaviour create classrooms where students feel safe, respected, and encouraged to participate. Such an atmosphere promotes confidence, reduces anxiety, and supports deeper engagement with learning. Ethical practices—whether through impartial grading, respectful communication, patient guidance, or genuine concern for students—signal to learners that their dignity matters. This sense of being valued enables students to take intellectual risks, ask questions freely, and set higher academic goals for themselves. Over time, these experiences turn into improved academic performance and more positive attitudes toward learning.

In addition to influencing students directly, ethical teaching enhances the credibility and dignity of the teaching profession itself. Teachers are widely regarded as role models, and their conduct reflects the values that society expects its future citizens to uphold. By embodying fairness, honesty, empathy, and respect, teachers demonstrate the behaviours that help sustain a just and compassionate society.

Therefore, integrating ethics meaningfully into teacher preparation programmes is essential. When teachers receive training that strengthens their ethical awareness, they are better equipped to navigate classroom challenges, handle diversity sensitively, and make decisions that serve the best interests of their students. Ultimately, ethically grounded teachers contribute not only to academic excellence but also to the formation of individuals who can participate responsibly and humanely in the broader world.

Endnotes:

1. Based on Wenglinsky’s research on teacher practices and student performance.

2. Perspectives derived from Frankena and Lillie's ethical philosophy.
3. Interpretation of Dimkpa's work on teacher conduct and its academic implications.
4. Analysis supported by secondary sources listed in the Works Cited.

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