

Professionalism in Teaching

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Abstract

Education is very socially oriented activity and quality education has traditionally been associated with strongly skillful teachers having high degree of professional efficiency and sound piece of personal and professional traits in teaching. The purpose of this paper is to discuss how professionalism in teaching is defined in scholarly debates in recent times. Within this purpose a literature review regarding professionalism in teaching is provided i.e. concept of professionalism; different perspectives in professionalism in teaching; critical elements of a professional teacher vital for professionalism in teaching; core attributes of professionalism in teaching; barrier in path of professionalism in teaching has been talked about.

Keywords: Professional efficiency, professionalism in teaching, core-attribute, vital

Introduction

In this paper concept of professionalism is defined from the point of different perspectives and then how these definitions are associated to professionalism in teaching is analysed. The concept of professionalism in teaching is commonly discussed on sociological, educational and ideological

basis in the literature. The key idea of professionalism approaches underlying these bases are reflected in brief. Lastly, in the light of multiple perspective and arguments, a workable definition for today's teacher professionalism notion and an interpretation embracing these perspectives are tried to be presented.

The need to attain and develop certain standards and benchmarking criteria for all profession has increased in today's competitive working conditions. Standards create a professional environment of 'best practice' procedures enabling organisations to confidently create systems, policies and procedures; they also assure high operational quality (Krishnavenive Anitha, 2007). The dynamic nature of the term and its multiple interpretations introduce different definitions of the concept with different functions. When the subject is professionalism in teaching (Sachs, 2003; 17), the meaning of the term changes as a response to external pressures, public discourses and scientific development.

The Concept of Professionalism

The term 'profession' and 'professor' have their etymological roots in the latin for 'profess'. To be a professional or a professor was to profess to be an expert in some field or skill of knowledge (Baggini, 2005). It is said by Hoyle professionalism is related to improvement in the quality of service rather than enhancement of status (Hoyle, 2001). One another concept explained on professionalism see it as a multi-dimensional structure consisting of one's

attitudes and behaviour towards his/her job and it refers to the achievement of high level standards (Boyt, Lusch and Naylor, 2001). If we synthesize the definitions upto now, it is possible to interpret professionalism as a multidimensional structure one's work behaviour and attitudes to perform the highest standards and improve the service quality.

Before deepening the teacher professionalism discussions, it would be useful to mention the distinction between 'professionalism' and 'professionalization' which usually accompany each other in scholarly discourses. Whereas 'professionalism' focuses on the question of what qualifications and acquired capacities, what competences is required for a successful exercise of an occupation (England, 1996; 76), 'Professionalization' is related to promoting the material and ideal interests of an occupational group (Goodson, 2000; 182). So it includes the 'attempt to gain professional associated with professions' (Whitty, 2000).

Different Perspectives on Professionalism in Teaching

On educational context, it is possible to say that definitions of professionalism in teaching focuses on teachers professional qualifications such as 'being good at his/her job', 'fulfill the highest standard', and 'achieving excellence'. For example (Baggini, 2005) claims that for today's teachers, professionalism is interpreted in terms of what extent the teacher overcomes difficulties and to what extent they are able to use their skills and experiences

related to the profession. On the most basic level, 'professional teacher refers to the status of a person who represents the best in the profession and set the highest standards (Tichenor and Tichenor, 2005). Phelps believes professionalism in teaching is enhanced when teacher use excellence as a critical criterion for judging their actions and attitudes. In other words professionalism in teaching is measured by the best and the highest standards (Phelps, 2006).

New understanding of teacher professionalism provides professional space and conditions for the teachers to take responsibility in their practice. Sachs call this transition from old to new understanding as 'transformative professionalism' (Sachs, 2003). His approach to professionalism in teaching can be interpreted as an attempt to revitalize the concept in a rapidly changing work environment. He considers the professionalism in teaching issue as a social and political strategy to promote the status of teaching profession. This approach is alternative and contemporary one when compared to traditional approach.

Hargreaves (2000), analyse the development of professionalism in teaching as passing through four historical phases in many countries. The key features these phases could be summarized as follows:

- (1) **The Pre-Professional Age:** In this age, teaching was managerially demanding but technically simple so the teacher were only expected to carryout the directives of their knowledgeable superiors.

- (2) **The Autonomous Professional Age:** This phase was remarked by a challenge to the singularity of teaching and the unquestioned traditions on which it is based. “Autonomy” was considered as an important component of teaching profession. The principle that teachers had the right to choose the methods they thought best for their students was questioned, also here teacher gained a considerable pedagogical freedom.
- (3) **The Collegial Professional Age:** This phase draw attention with the increasing efforts to create strong professional cultures of collaboration to develop common purpose, to cope with uncertainty and complexity and to response the rapid changes and reforms effectively.
- (4) **The Post-Professional Age:** This phase is marked by a struggle between forces and groups intent to de-professionalizing the work of teaching, and other forces and groups who are seeking to re-define teacher professionalism and professional learning in more positive and principled post-modern ways that are flexible, wide-ranging and inclusive in nature.

Critical Element of Professionalism in Teaching

It is advocated that to develop a strong sense of professionalism in teaching a teacher must inculcate and focus on the critical element of attitude, beaviour and communication (Pamela A. Kramer, 2003). According to her addressing these area can help any teacher to develop a stronger sense of professionalism.

Attitude: Attitude is everything! A positive attitude is essential component of professionalism (Hurst and Reding, 2000). It says that beginning at a simplest level, teacher can't let their personal life interfere with their professional attitude. Even when having a bad day, a teacher still need to maintain a positive attitude and not to take a bad experience further to indulge with professional handlings. A professionalism says to push away outside concerns or distractors and focus on the task in hand. For example as no one would want a 'surgeon' to let personal anger interfere with a patient's operation, similarly in profession of teaching a teacher should not let negative experience spill over to the teaching environment.

Behaviour: Behaviour is associated with professionalism. Wong and Wong (1998; 293) stated, "A professional – is defined not by the business a person is in but by the way that person does his/her business." A teacher need to be prepared to teach the content of their lessons, as well as be prepared with the proper materials and resources. Hurst and Reding (2000; 45) reminded us that "Teachers need to be prepared everytime they enter the classroom."

Communication: Numerous facets of communication impact professionalism in teaching-learning. Among these are collaboration, cooperation, support and encouragement and participation in teaching-learning communities, as well as basic modeling of proper language usage. Hurst and Reding (2000; 26) stated,

“Building good and strong relationships in a part of being a professional and hence advocate professionalism in teaching.”

Core Attributes of Professionalism in Teachings

Professionalism in teaching has a soul composed of many component skills. This combination as a whole is known as core attributes of professionalism in teaching. These attributes are as follows: (Modi, J.N., Anshu, Gupta, P., Singh, T.)

- (a) Competence
- (b) Compassion
- (c) Insightful and self-aware
- (d) Commitment
- (e) Confidentiality
- (f) Altruism
- (g) Morality and ethics
- (h) Teamwork
- (i) Responsibility to profession
- (j) Responsibility to society

Barriers in Professionalism Promotion in Teaching

Professionalism in teaching can be stopped anytime in presence of some obstacle to its path. According to Sockett's (1993) these are as follows:

- (1) Absence of personal virtues such as patience, determination, courage in a professional.
- (2) Lack of subject and pedagogical knowledge.
- (3) Bound to classroom limit.
- (4) Non-commitment to change and continuous improvement.

Conclusion

In the light of different approaches to professionalism in teaching in scholarly debates, it is obvious that the meaning attributed to professionalism and status in teaching have dynamic characteristics. Professionalism in teaching could be interpreted as a professional work field with its sociological, ideological and educational dimensions that aims at achieving the highest standards in teaching profession which is based upon the professional formation, knowledge, skills and values. The dominant discourses in the field of education indicates that professionalism in teaching is associated with improving the quality and standards of professional in teaching and also to improve their efficiency and public image. It could be concluded from the whole discussion that although we cannot talk about agreement to promise surge increase in a standard and height of professionalism in teaching, yet a sincere effort will definitely deal in this respect.

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