

Professional Attitudes and Skills of Teachers

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1.0 Introduction

Some believe that as long as you are in a profession, professionalism should flow naturally from that. This surely is not the case. Professionalism is practiced through one's craft and through one's approach to the profession. It is in this context that the correct attitudes and the skills become important. A skilled teacher is a special human being who is able to use him/herself to carry out his own and society's purpose in his/her education. He should be skilled enough to make professional judgments and should have the ability to diagnose situations and to adjust the available means to achieve the desired ends. These tasks have become increasingly difficult in the new century as what teachers are expected to do and know has increased in amount and complexity. Improving subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical skills, understanding cultural and psychological factors that affect student learning and assuming greater and in some cases new responsibilities for curriculum, assessment, outreach governance and interagency collaboration have made excessive demands on teachers. In an Indiana Department of Education Report published in U.S.A. Bull et al (1994) have pointed out that meeting these demands would be very stressful even for the teaching force in a developed country like America. In Sri Lanka the whole teaching force has not received professional training and even the majority of those who have received such training may not have developed many of the skills that are needed to function very effectively in the newly restructured system. Thus, it has led to a re-conceptualization of the term professionalism not only in Sri Lanka but in other developed countries as well. Therefore it is important to understand the term professionalism and the attitude and the skills required to become a true professional. This will be discussed in three sections.

Pre-test

List some of the attributes that a professional teacher would require to function effectively.

1.1 What is a Profession?

In the sessions that follow later in this course, on The Teacher as a Professional and the Empowerment of Teachers you will learn more about teachers and the teaching profession. However, it is necessary to direct you to a brief introduction of what a profession is and the teaching profession.

Teaching is one of a number of careers which are loosely classified as a “profession” From very early times many authors (e.g. Jackson, 1970; Corcoran, 1995) have spent a considerable amount of time trying to define what precisely is meant by the term profession and to determine whether teaching qualifies to be included in the term “profession”. There is no doubt that teaching requires professional skills and commitment to the service of others. It is assumed that the term profession may have something to do with the word ‘profess’ used for receiving formally into a religious group, to be a novice after accepting required vows. It also may have some association with the word ‘priest’ assigned to someone who is endowed with the power to perform religious activities and, in addition, is supposed to have the authority to work as a mediator between man and God. Accordingly, profession can then be defined as a calling, which has been accorded prestige, power and autonomy by the society in return for some service.

The authority of a profession, however, rests upon a body of knowledge and certified sets of skills characterized by self-regulation, a set of guiding principles, a shared identity and a sense of belonging. The assumption of this definitional approach given by Cullen (1978) is that professions have distinct attributes: systematic theory, professional authority, formal and informal sanction of a profession’s power and prestige, regulative code of ethics and a professional culture.

Based on the above notions it could be assumed that professional occupations are generally considered to be discrete disciplines requiring specific and intensive academic preparation and specialized knowledge and skills. In addition practitioners of a profession must be certified as competent to practice. The teaching profession possesses such characteristics. It has a developing knowledge base that may be subjected to intellectual analysis. It has a research component, which attempts to conceptualize professional problems and to solve them in a systematic and a scientific manner. Its practitioners are commonly required to obtain academic qualifications before practicing in the field. In addition education has distinct and separate specialties suggesting specialized skills and differential kinds of training common to occupations generally considered to be professions.

1.2 Can Teaching be Classified as a Profession?

The above concept of the teacher as a professional suggests a practitioner engaged in tasks that an ordinary lay person cannot perform. The professional teacher combines the qualities of an educated person with professional knowledge and behaviour which is what differentiates the teacher from a technician or a laymen. The professional teacher primarily has a specific personality with certain competencies. Therefore the effective professional teacher is a creative individual capable of shifting and changing to meet the demands and opportunities included in the daily tasks. Such a professional's behaviour would change from moment to moment, day to day adjusting continually and smoothly to the needs of the students, the situation, the purposes he/she seeks to fulfill and the methods and materials at his/her command.

Teacher professionalism has much significance in education as it affects the role of the teacher and his or her pedagogy which in return affects the student's ability to learn effectively. According to Ismat (1996) teacher professionalism contains three essential characteristics, competence, performance and conduct which reflects the educator's goal abilities and standards. These have a direct impact on the effectiveness of teaching.

The characteristic of competence is fundamental in an educator's pursuit of excellence. A discussion on competence focuses on three important ideas: (1) preparation, (2) knowledge of subject area and (3) defined pedagogy.

The first one, preparation prepares the professional for the adversities in the classroom. From language and cultural barriers to socio-economic differences all educators face deterrents in the classroom that must be broken down by individualized techniques. (You will discuss such adversities in a later session on Social, Economic and Political Contexts of Education) (You will discuss such adversities in a later session on Social, Economic and Political Contexts of Education) Decision making by well-trained professionals allows individual clients' needs to be met more precisely which results in continual refinement and improvement in overall practice.

Along with preparation, the other aspect which the professional teacher has to concentrate on is subject matter knowledge. A teacher with the relevant knowledge of the subject matter has the opportunity to concern themselves with preparing innovative techniques to teach the material thus utilizing the available time for the maximum benefit of the students. This in turn would make the professional more confident.

The other aspect of competence is discovering and assuming a defined pedagogy. A professional teacher who has a defined pedagogy would have a very intricate knowledge of which technique or style would work with different groups of students.

Although competence is essential to teacher professionalism its value lies in the ability of the teacher educator to perform using the competence. Performance could be defined as the ability to effectively teach the concepts of a curriculum. As individuals every professional has the right to perform their work as they see fit based on the knowledge that a professional is expected to acquire through professional training. Such a professional would always maintain high standards in order to maintain quality and in addition would be reliable and dedicated.

The final characteristic of teacher professionalism is conduct. The manner in which an educator carries himself/herself is a reflection on one's classroom, school, community and the educational system. Conduct also includes one's ability to initiate and maintain quality communication with all the parties involved in education (e.g. students, fellow teachers, parents). A professional teacher should have effective communication skills if the desired goals are to be achieved.

The above discussion on professionalism raises the question as to whether teaching could be categorized as a profession. Many teacher educators the world over has been trying over a number of years to discard the notion that teaching is not a profession and that teachers are not professionals. When one examines those characteristics which determine what makes a profession one finds that many, if not all of these, are present in one way or another in teaching. These can be listed as-

- An extensive period of study in the specific disciplines
- Training specific for the profession
- The use of technical jargon
- Appropriate certification in order to be engaged in the profession
- Courses of study to update knowledge, skills and attitudes
- Membership in a professional organization.

However, the inability of the teachers to control access to the profession and the fact that they are governed by rules and regulations set by the State set certain limitations

on the professional freedom of the teachers. Yet professional teachers have certain rights and responsibilities. One is not separated from the other. No one can insist on rights when the responsibilities are not carried out. It is necessary to focus on the role, responsibilities and right of the teacher in the next section of this session.

1.3 Roles, Responsibilities and Rights of Teachers

Biddle (1998) distinguishes between three separate concepts that may be designated by the phrase 'teacher's role'. They are 'role as behavior', 'role as social position' and 'role as expectation'. Each represents a facet of the complexities that embed the teacher and each is capable of generating information for educators and other social scientists (Biddle, 1998).

The behavioral role of the teacher may be defined as those behaviors that are characteristically preferred by teachers. Many teachers are called upon to disseminate information to pupils, to serve as pupil counselors, and to grade pupil performance on a regular basis.

The social position of the teacher may be defined as membership of the set of persons who regularly instruct pupils and are given such designations as 'teacher', 'instructor', 'master', and the like. The term 'status' is used to refer to social position and status is ranked according to such criteria as prestige, wealth and authority. Teachers are often placed towards the lower-end of the middle-class occupations that are deemed to be professions and consequently to be paid lower wages.

The teacher retains an authority in the classroom that is generated through custom, law, the teacher's expert knowledge and the teacher's control over grades and positions for pupils. They also have some authority over parental conduct in matters relating to education.

The expected role of the teacher may be defined as the set of expectations that are held for teacher behaviours by both teachers and other persons. These expectations form a context in which teacher conduct is interpreted and role expectations for the teacher are presumably a major motivator for teacher conduct.

As Biddle further explains teachers are employed to instruct pupils because of shared values concerning the importance of education and beliefs concerning the efficacy of

schools for fulfilling those valued outcomes. Kelsall and Kelsall (1969) argued that teachers are expected to emancipate pupils from their home communities, encourage achievement among pupils, sort out and socialize 'winners' and 'losers' in the achievement game, inculcate societal norms in pupils, teach technical skills, instill interpersonal sensitivity and aid pupils in making decisions and training for occupations. Others have identified expectations like maintaining order in classroom, accepting and promoting a common curriculum, following the orders of supervisor, maintaining effective communication with parents and exhibiting 'loyalty' for their schools

The responsibilities of the teachers flow from the above roles. In most countries the responsibilities of the teachers are prescribed by law. Teachers are held responsible for the education of the children in the country. Accordingly, they are expected to cooperate fully with the authorities in the interests of the pupils and of the society generally. This ensures that their activities are not confined only to the classroom. In addition they are expected to take part in extra-curricular activities as well, for the benefit of pupils, parents and the community.

Teachers should also adhere to a code of ethics since such adherence contribute immensely to ensure the prestige of the profession and the performance of professional duties in accordance with the agreed principles.

At the same time, it should not be forgotten that teachers have rights. There are those rights which the teachers enjoy which are common to all the other citizens. There are also certain rights which the teachers enjoy as a privileged group (i.e. employees of the State). These are set down in the various rules which govern teacher employment. There are also other rights which the teachers enjoy as a result of collective bargaining (i.e. trade union intervention). In Sri Lanka however teacher trade unions are not so powerful organizations like for instance the Government Medical Officers Association (G.M.O.A) which is capable of crippling all activities in the hospitals.

As a professional the teacher should have the freedom to practice his profession. Accordingly, the teachers should have a say in how they are appraised and the right to question or appeal against any evaluation system which attempts to diagnose them in a manner which they feel is unjust or inadequate.

Teachers also should be protected from undue interferences by parents especially in matters which essentially fall within the expertise of the teacher while at the same time maintaining closer links with the parents and the community.

The teachers also should have a hand in designing the curriculum and teaching methods, in the selection of textbooks and other teaching aids and materials. In fact they also should have a certain amount of authority in the formulation of policies related to the education of children whose care is entrusted to them.

It is relevant to note here that the attitudes of teachers decide to a great extent, the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities. Let us now examine how attitudes can be defined and what attitudes should be cultivated in a professional teacher.

1.4 Attitudes to be Cultivated by a Professional Teacher

An attitude can be defined as the meanings that one associates with a certain object or (idea) and which in turn influences the person's acceptance or rejection of it. Therefore attitudes influence an individual's thoughts, interests and behaviour. Attitudes constitute values that relate to self and are quite subjective. Therefore attitudes become dynamic forces which influence human behaviour. However, attitudes do not remain consistent right throughout one's life and can change with maturity, experience, and influences. In the case of a professional the attitude towards one's client plays a significant role in the way the professionals carry out their responsibilities and the tasks expected of them. Moreover, the rights the professionals are entitled to, too, plays a vital role in shaping the behaviour of the professionals by cultivating the correct attitude. Therefore it is important to focus on the rights and responsibilities of the teachers in our next step of the lesson.

Since teachers have an enormous amount of responsibilities it is evident that the professional teacher has to be always careful of the role he/she has to play in fulfilling the responsibilities allocated to him/her. The quality of the teacher affects many: the student, the parents, colleagues the public, the educational institution and even the professional organization in which the teacher is a member. The teacher has a commitment to these individuals and every agency that is engaged in education must understand that the practice of teaching must embrace a sense of honour and dignity.

Thus it is evident that the responsibility of the teacher is immense and that the teacher has to be committed to achieve excellence.

The teacher's prime concern should be in the interests and welfare of the pupil. The teacher should therefore act with humaneness, dignity and discretion at all times in the relations with the students. Students should not be discriminated on the basis of religion, class, colour, status or political beliefs and the professional relationship should not be used for any exploitative or immoral pursuits. It is the duty of the professional teacher to foster positive thinking and attitudes, a spirit of tolerance, a respect for the law, authority, freedom and social justice.

The professional teacher has certain obligations towards colleagues as well. Therefore the professional teacher would respect the administrative authorities and treat colleagues with respect and share professional knowledge, experience and insights with them in an atmosphere of meaningful fellowship. As such membership of a professional organization is an essential requirement for any professional teacher. The professional teacher should contribute actively where possible for the development of the professional organization. You will learn more about professional bodies later in this course. In all the dealings with the community the professional teacher should have the community welfare at heart and should respect the cultural beliefs and moral values upheld by the community.

Thus it is apparent that sound teaching merges with a commitment to students and allegiance to knowledge at all levels. There is a tendency to frame teaching either in terms of imparting valuable knowledge or as encouraging the acquisition of skills. Knowledge and skills are not disjointed. Knowledge in the form of specific facts and organizing principles is necessary to the exercise of most skills just as a range of skills is necessary to the acquisition and construction of knowledge. Knowledge and skill cannot be pulled apart nor can one assume pride of place over the other. Possession of knowledge and skill does not provide a sufficient condition for being a professional teacher. It is only if the teacher has the right attitudes that he/she will use his/her knowledge and skills as expected.

Accomplished teachers constantly assess and adjust their practice to maintain fidelity to students and to subjects, to knowledge and to skills, and to basic and advanced

functions. Professionalism in teaching entails the ongoing pursuit of these unities. Hence, teachers regularly find themselves confronting hard choices -- sometimes sacrificing one goal for another, sometimes making compromises. Teaching demands crisp reasoning but only a few settings yield to such a single approach. In fact, teachers do not have free rein to select any approach that strikes them as felicitous. Rather, their choices are anchored in their own experience and in the settled ground of the knowledge base that defines both efficacious and flawed practice. Being able to apply steady, disciplined judgment and reflective scrutiny within the bounds set by this constantly expanding body of knowledge is the hallmark of professionalism in teaching. The question that should be raised here is whether the teachers have the capacity and the opportunity to develop all these skills.

It is evident from the above discussion that a teacher's role is quite complex and demanding as the teachers must make dozens of decisions daily, command a wide body of knowledge and skill, learn to react instantly and be disposed to act wisely in all difficult situations. And while there are principles and precepts, skills and techniques to guide the work, teaching is also an activity with artistic aspects, a craft calling for reflection and judgment. In addition it also requires improvisation and conversation about meaning and ends. Human qualities, expert knowledge and skill and professional commitment together compose excellence in this craft. Therefore it could be assumed that to be an effective teacher and to develop the correct attitude the above requirements need to be met.

Fundamental to the teacher's credo is the belief that all students can learn. Acting on the belief that all students can learn, the accomplished teacher would treat all students equitably taking into account the individual differences. Success depends on teacher's belief in the dignity and worth of all human beings and in the potential that exists within each child. The competent teacher would organize the teaching taking into consideration the abilities, interests, skills, family circumstances and peer relations of the students. To achieve these objectives the teacher should cultivate the following skills as well.

Accomplished teachers are vigilant in ensuring that all pupils receive their fair share of attention, and that biases based on real or perceived ability differences, handicaps or disabilities, social or cultural background, language, race, religion, or gender do not distort relationships between themselves and their students..

The discussion so far makes it clear to you that the term "professional" is used as a honorific in our society, and denotes occupations characterized by certain attributes. The most important among those attributes are, a body of specialized, expert knowledge together with a code of ethics emphasizing service to clients. The knowledge base typically provides substantial, but not complete, guidance for professional practice. Professionals possess expert knowledge, but often confront unique, problematic situations that do not lend themselves to formulaic solutions. Professionals must cultivate the ability to cope with the unexpected and act wisely in the face of uncertainty. Professionals deal with urgent human problems: matters of life and death, justice, hope and opportunity.. Essential to their work is the trust of clients. What warrants such trust is the obligation, upheld within the community of professionals, to pursue an ethic of service and to employ special knowledge and expertise in the interests of their clients. These characteristics too could be identified in the teaching profession, but with important distinctions. While teachers employ their knowledge and skill on students, they also strive to empower students to continue the quest for understanding, so that one day the pupil may surpass the instructor. In this regard, teaching is the most democratic of professions. It aims to place within the hands, head and hearts of students the means to teach themselves.

The ethical dimensions embodied in teaching also distinguish it from other professions. Unique demands arise because the client's attendance is compulsory and, more importantly, because the clients are children. Thus, teachers of all levels primary, middle and upper school are obligated to meet stringent ethical standards. Other ethical demands too emerge from the teacher's role as a model of an educated person. Teaching is a public activity; a teacher works daily under the gaze of his or her students, and the extended nature of their lives together in schools places special obligations on the teacher's behavior. Students learn early to read and draw lessons from their teachers' characters. Teachers, consequently, must conduct themselves in a manner students would emulate. Their failure to practice what they preach does not long elude students, parents or peers. Practicing with this additional dimension in mind calls for a special alertness to the consequences of manner and behavior. Therefore, standards for professional teaching emphasize its ethical nature.

It is evident from the above discussion that it is not an easy task to be a professional teacher. This entails gathering a number of skills. It is therefore imperative to identify at least the important skills that a teacher should cultivate.

Perhaps you can now reflect on what the sort of teacher you want to be and how you should develop the skills needed to be such a teacher. The final section in this session would familiarize with the process of teacher preparation – developing desirable attitudes and skills.

1.5 Important Skills Professional Teachers Should Cultivate

A skill can be defined as the ability to perform processes or tasks. As a professional the teacher has to be well equipped with all the skills that would entail him to the title of a “professional”. Under such circumstances the professional teacher would have a positive attitude towards his profession. However, it is a difficult task for any teacher to develop all the skills with equal competence but most of the effective teachers have a large number of skills that enable them to function as professionals. Some of these skills are listed below with a brief description.

Most teachers consider mastery of the basics as a pre-condition to an advanced form of reasoning and functioning. Accomplished teachers assume higher order thinking as the hallmark of successful learning at all levels. Therefore all teachers have to acquire higher order skills with the executive function of reasoning and the capacity to monitor themselves. To unify these dichotomies in practice requires skill, wisdom and judgment.

1.5.1 Teachers Should Be Committed to Students and Their Learning

To recognize individual differences of the students **and** to respond effectively to individual differences, teachers must know many things about the particular students they teach, especially what sparks their interests. This kind of specific understanding is not trivial, for teachers use it constantly to decide how best to tailor instruction. As diagnosticians of students' interests, abilities and prior knowledge, skillful teachers learn to “read” their students. By keeping a finger on the pulse of the class, teachers decide when to alter plans, work with individual students, or enrich instruction with additional examples, explanations or activities.

Teachers should also know how children develop and learn. In addition to the particular knowledge of their students, teachers should use their understanding of individual and social learning theory, and of child and adolescent development theory, to form their decisions about how to teach. They have to be familiar with the concepts generated by social and cognitive scientists that apply to teaching and learning. Moreover, they must be able to integrate such knowledge with their personal theories of learning and development generated from their own practice. In addition teachers must be able to recognize the ways in which intelligence is culturally defined. Intelligent behavior is largely determined by the values and beliefs of the culture in which that behavior is being judged. Accomplished teachers therefore should be able to recognize that in a multicultural society students bring to the schools a plethora of abilities and aptitudes that are valued differently by the community, the school and the family. Thus, teachers must be able to recognize the diversity that is found among students and develop an array of strategies for working with it. Such an understanding will enable teachers to have a broad mission of ensuring optimal development of students

Teachers have to be concerned with their students' self-concept, with their motivation, with the effects of learning on peer relationships, and with the development of character, aspiration and civic virtues. These aspects of the student, important as they are in their own right, are also essential to intellectual development. Proficient teachers consider students' potential in this broader sense when making decisions about what and how to teach. The professional teacher should always attempt to develop the critical and analytical capacities of the students.

1.5.2 Teachers Should Know the Subjects They Teach and How to Teach Them.

One cardinal precept of teaching is a commitment to the welfare and education of young people; the other is a commitment to subject matter. An accomplished teacher must have a deep understanding of the subject and should be able to expose the students to the social, cultural, ethical and physical worlds in which they live. The professional teacher's repertoire allows the creation of multiple paths to the subjects taught and they are adept at teaching students how to solve their problems. Appreciative of the fact that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations in each discipline, accomplished teachers encourage students to question prevailing canons and assumptions to help them think for themselves.

Teachers should have specialized knowledge. Accomplished teachers should possess what is sometimes called "pedagogical content knowledge." It includes knowledge of the most appropriate ways to present the subject matter to students through analogies, metaphors, experiments, demonstrations and illustrations. Subject-specific knowledge also includes an awareness of the most common misconceptions held by students, the aspects that they will find most difficult, and the kinds of prior knowledge, experience and skills that students of different ages typically bring to the learning of particular topics. Subject-specific pedagogical knowledge is not a bag of tricks, but a repertoire of representations that combines instructional techniques with subject matter in ways that take into account the mix of students and school contexts that confront the teacher. Such subject-specific teaching knowledge embodies a way of reasoning through and solving the problems that arise in the daily work of teachers -- decisions ranging from what aspects of the subject matter to emphasize to decisions about how to pace instruction. In making these choices, teachers combine their knowledge of students and learning and teaching and subject matter.

Teachers should generate multiple paths to knowledge Knowledgeable teachers are aware there is value in both structured and inductive learning. That is, while it is useful to teach students about the concepts and principles that scholars have generated in the various disciplines, it is also valuable to engage students in learning by discovery, where they themselves search for problems, patterns and solutions. Teaching for understanding requires students to integrate aspects of knowledge into their habits of thinking, rather than simply store fragmented knowledge bits.

1.5.3 Teachers are Responsible for Managing and Monitoring Students' Learning

Accomplished teachers are expected to create, enrich, maintain and alter instructional settings to capture and sustain the interests of their students and to make the most effective use of time. Such teachers command a range of generic instructional techniques, know when each is appropriate and implement them as needed. Moreover, they do not hesitate to enlist their colleague's knowledge and expertise to compliment their own. They are proficient at setting norms for social interaction among students and between students and teachers. They employ multiple methods to measure and assess students' growth and performance.

Teachers need knowledge about multiple methods. Accomplished teachers know and can employ a variety of generic instructional skills. It is not sufficient that teachers know about different modes of instruction; they must also know how to implement those strategies. Traditional distinctions between knowing and doing have obscured the fact that thought and action interpenetrate in teaching -- knowing about something and knowing how to do something are both forms of understanding central to teaching. Because students vary in learning styles and because different settings afford differing learning opportunities, accomplished teachers should know when and how to alter the social and physical organizational structure of the learning environment.

Teachers should be able to work with different groups. Teachers should know how to manage groups of students. They are responsible for setting forth the social norms by which students and teachers act and interact, helping students learn to adopt appropriate roles and responsibilities for their own learning and that of their peers. Discipline and management techniques vary, and no one system has been proven most effective. Hence, proficient teachers have the capacity to consider the desired learning results, their knowledge of their students and the social context, and their own prior experience in selecting management strategies. Applying their knowledge of the relative strengths and weaknesses of different structures, they weigh these considerations when deciding which instructional strategy and organizational structure will best enhance student learning.

Teachers should know how to engage students actively. To practice effectively, teachers need to know how to encourage students even in the face of temporary failure and the inevitable doubts that students meet as they push themselves to new affective, intellectual and physical planes.

Teachers must be aware of student assessment and evaluation methods. Teachers are ultimately responsible for what students learn at school. Proficient teachers, therefore, can judge the relative success of the activities they design. Assessment in teaching is not a simple task; teachers must have the ability to monitor the successes and failures of individual students and evaluate their classes as collectives of learners. Therefore accomplished teachers should be able to track student progress with a variety of evaluation methods. They should have the knowledge to create their own, sometimes

innovative, tools for evaluation. By using a variety of methods accomplished teachers should be able to provide constructive feedback to students, parents and themselves.

Teachers should know their objectives. Teachers also have to know about planning instruction; identifying and elaborating educational objectives, developing activities to help them meet their goals and drawing upon resources that will serve their purposes.

Teachers should think systematically about their practice and learn from experience. Accomplished teachers should be able to inspire in students traits like curiosity, tolerance, honesty, fairness and respect for diversity and appreciation of cultural differences.

1.5.4 Teachers Must Learn from Experience

Teachers have a professional obligation to be lifelong students of their craft, seeking to expand their repertoire, deepen their knowledge and skill, and become wiser in rendering judgments. Accomplished teachers, therefore, should be inventive in their teaching and, should incorporate ideas and methods developed by others that fit their aims and their students. They should be committed to lifelong professional development.

Teachers have to face challenges. The demands of teaching often present stiff challenges that do not lend themselves to simple solutions. . Such circumstances call on teachers to employ their professional knowledge of what makes for sound practice, with the interest of their students given paramount consideration. On such occasions the teacher's decision has to be grounded in established theory and reasoned judgment.

Teachers should draw new knowledge to improve their practice. Proficient teachers search out opportunities that will serve to cultivate their own learning. Thus, masterful teachers develop specialized ways to listen to their students, colleagues and administrators, and reflect on their teaching in order that they might improve their practice. They stay abreast of current research and, when appropriate, incorporate new findings into their practice.

1.5.5. Teachers are Members of Learning Communities

An accomplished teacher will always work collaboratively with other professionals on instructional policy, curriculum and staff development. Teaching reaches beyond the boundaries of individual classrooms to wider communities of learning. There are two broad areas of responsibility. One involves participation in collaborative efforts to improve the effectiveness of the school. The second entails engaging parents and others in the community in the education of young people.

Teachers must collaborate with other professionals. Teaching is often portrayed as the implementation of policy and curriculum developed by others, as following orders. Professional teachers should share responsibility with colleagues and administrators for decisions about what constitutes valuable learning for students. This includes their participation in critically analyzing the school curriculum, identifying new priorities and communicating necessary changes to the school community. Teachers' knowledge of curriculum and their students are essential to discharging these responsibilities effectively. Teachers should possess the interpersonal skills needed to work on teams and a willingness to work together in the interest of the school community.

Teachers must work collaboratively with parents. Teachers and parents are mutually reinforcing partners in the education of young people. But three circumstances complicate this partnership. First, the interests of parents and schools sometimes diverge, requiring teachers to make difficult judgments about how best to fulfill their joint obligations to their students and to parents. Second, students vary in the degree and kind of support they receive at home for their schoolwork. The effects of culture, language, and parental education, income and aspirations influence each learner. Third, the behavior and mind-set of schools and families can be adversarial. Some parents are distrustful of the school's values, and the schools sometimes underestimate the family's potential to contribute to their children's intellectual growth. Accomplished teachers develop skills and understandings to avoid these traditional pitfalls and work to foster collaborative relationships between school and family. The changing family structure in our society creates new challenges as well. Therefore teachers have to acquire the relevant knowledge and understanding to function effectively for the benefit of the students.

Teachers must be able to use community resources. Any community -- urban or rural, wealthy or poor -- can be a laboratory for learning under the guidance of an effective teacher. Moreover, within all communities there are valuable resources such as other teachers and students, senior citizens, parents, business people, and local organizations that teachers can engage to assist, enhance and supplement their work with students. Teachers need not teach alone.

The above discussion makes it clear that developing attitudes and skills in keeping with professional status is not an easy task. Accomplished teaching involves making difficult and principled choices, exercising careful judgment and honoring the complex nature of the educational mission. Teachers employ technical knowledge and skill, yet must be ever mindful of teaching's ethical dimensions. In addition they must acquire and employ a repertoire of instructional methods and strategies, yet remain critical and reflective about their practice, drawing lessons from experience. The knowledge base for teaching is growing steadily. Professional consensus and research findings have begun to provide authoritative support for knowledge related to many of the tasks, responsibilities and results of teaching. Therefore much remains to be learned.

1.6 Teacher Preparation

Now that we have discussed the different aspects connected to professional attitudes and skills of teachers (teaching profession, roles, responsibilities and rights of teachers, attitudes and skills needed by teachers to become professionals and the challenges faced by teachers) it is useful to dwell briefly on how these professional attitudes and skills can be developed in teachers.

Connelly and Clandinin (1998) trace how teacher preparation has passed through several steps: no training or on-the-job training, training by religious orders, government-based training in "normal schools", teachers' colleges and university faculties, schools and departments of education. This shift is interpreted as a transition from reliance on practical wisdom to academic knowledge.

The expert-novice conception provides a detailed description and analysis of the identifiable skills of experts as distinct from novices. The task of teacher preparation then is to provide these skills to novices and less expert teacher and thereafter to

'coach' them until they are able to adequately perform the skills. In describing teacher preparation you will come across various matters raised by in the earlier sections in this session.

Teachers acquire these skills using strategies such as 'clinical supervision', 'peer teaching' and 'coaching' of the less expert teachers by more expert teachers and others. In the case of **subject matter knowledge conception of teaching**, the prospective teachers must either have or acquire disciplinary knowledge. They can learn ways of transforming this knowledge to pedagogical knowledge. Administrative arrangements for teacher preparation (for example, practicum, induction) necessitate collaborative relationships among universities, teachers, school boards and government.

Practice-based conception of professional knowledge introduced by Schon (1983) emerges from the context of practice – through reflection in and on practice. In Schon's view teachers are thinkers who turn thought on action in what he terms 'reflective in and on action'. Conception of teaching is one of practice – a process in which the teacher reflects on the understandings which have been implicit in his action, understanding, which he surfaces, criticizes, restructures and embodies in further action.

This view is suitable for a 'supervision-evaluation setting' (supervised reflective practice) where the supervisor is neither an 'inspector' ensuring that that policy is adequately adhered to, nor a 'consultant' acting as an on-call resource for teachers, but instead, simultaneously represents the teachers' interest, the pull of local conditions (e.g parents, community) and policy.

In their developmental model, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) specify five stages through which an individual moves from novice to expert status. The stages characterized the transition as moving from a teacher-centered or self-centered novice to a more student-centered advanced beginner to a stage in which the expert teacher becomes a much more integrated individual.

1.7 Descriptive Propositions of Teacher Expertise

1. Berliner et al (1988) describe the status of expert teachers. 'They know their students personally so that in their classrooms they do not need to rely on bureaucratic

and formal mechanisms of control while teaching. Their student know about them and had certain expectations about what their teaching would be like'.

2. Expert teachers often develop automaticity for the repetitive operations that are needed to accomplish their goals. 'The expert (is) able to pick up information about attendance, about who did not do the homework and is also able to identify who was going to need help later in the lesson'(Glaser, 1987).

3. "Experienced teachers (are) more sensitive to the task demands and social and physical environment under which instruction is to take place. When actually teaching they implement changes in their instruction more using social cues to guide their interactive instructional decision-making' (Cushing et al, 1989).

4. Experts are more opportunistic and flexible in their teaching than are novices. They have a well-thought-out general script to follow but are very flexible in following it in order to be responsive to what students do (Livingston, 1988).

5. Experts understand problems at a deeper level than do novices and apply concepts and principles that are more relevant to the problem to be solved. The understanding of novices seemed to be at a more superficial level, with fewer instances shown of principled reasoning (Chi et al, 1988).

6. Experts have fast and accurate pattern-recognition capabilities. Novices cannot always make sense of what they experience. The ability of novices or relatively inexperienced teachers to interpret classroom information in some reliable way is limited precisely because of their lack of experience. Accurate interpretation of cues and the recognition of patterns reduce a person's cognitive processing load. Novices are not so good at recognizing such patterns and when they do note them they are less likely to make proper inferences about the situation (Sabers et al, 1991).

7. Experts perceive meaningful patterns in the domain in which they are experienced. The superior perceptual capabilities of experts can be attributed to the way in which experience affects perception. While the responses of the novices may be clearly descriptive though accurate, experts often respond about what they see (Carter et al, 1988)

8. Experts bring richer and more personal sources of information to bear on the problem that they are trying to solve. Experts provide longer and more detailed analyses of situational data, are more creative and thorough in description of ways to handle various teaching concerns, provide more solutions to the problems, are more thoughtful to needs of individual students, and display a variety of application of sound principles of teaching. (Nelson, 1988).

1.8 Summary

In this session, we have discussed the attitudes and skills that are needed by teachers to perform the roles expected of them as professionals and how teachers can prepared to develop them from novice status to experts. We have devoted much attention on the characteristics of the expert teacher as the goal of every teacher educator would be to develop the student teachers under their charge to the level of experts eventually.

You would have noted that teacher preparation requires collaboration among several stakeholders with whom you need to work. At the same time, as teachers themselves have personal characteristics of their own and also because they work in specific communities with particular social, economic, political and cultural contexts, we cannot think of developing a 'universal' who can fit and adapt to every school context. We will be exploring the challenges that emerge from the specificities in later sessions.

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