


TEACHERS' DISPOSITIONS AT TERTIARY LEVEL: AN INQUIRY IN THE PREPARATION OF PROSPECTIVE PROFESSIONALS

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Teachers' dispositions are mainly effective in the optimization of quality education. At the tertiary level, it plays a significant role in the process of educating students. It is primarily concerned with successful and effective teaching. Such dispositions are directed by the beliefs and viewpoints concomitant to ethical principles like honesty, equity, accountability and social justice. Professional dispositions of teachers involve the technical aspects of teaching such as a wide array of knowledge, subject expertise, pedagogical skills and experience that they engage in advancing the intellectual growth of students. These technical aspects of teaching, however, overshadow the non-technical qualities of teachers like their personal virtues, character, and personality that are immensely important for the inculcation of values in students. The paper proceeds to argue that students of higher education would be prospective professionals, it is, therefore, the responsibility of teachers to promote and instill virtues in students during their academic years. It further argues that virtuous disposition not only mediates value inculcation in students but it also empowers teachers to perform through thick and thin in conformity with normative professional dispositions. The analyses deduce that the scope of teachers' dispositions should be widened to take into account the importance and relevance of virtues in order to bring affirmative change in the professional skills of teachers. The study attempts to find out the significance of virtuous dispositions in practice teaching and argues for the internalization and implementation of the same within the professional dispositions of teachers.

KEYWORDS: Professional Dispositions, Pedagogical Skills, Virtuous Disposition

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INTRODUCTION

In general sense, professional dispositions include five major components of effective teaching such as (1) Love and compassion for students; (2) Affirmative view of the learners; (3) Self beliefs and self-efficacy; (4) Accountability towards profession and (5) Authenticity of teaching practices. Teachers in tertiary education are obliged to practice teaching irreproachably in consonance with certain moral standards and virtuous aspirations. However, modern conceptions of teaching certainly emphasize more on competence based skills and techniques than on the non-technical qualities of teacher such as personal virtues, character and personality that are equally essential for quality and effective teaching (Carr, 2007). The technical aspects of teaching involve professional adroitness and pedagogical skills that demands teachers to enhance the professional knowledge and skills of students. Above and beyond, they are morally obliged to inculcate the non-technical qualities so as to make students capable of using their accomplished knowledge and skills in an ethical way. In this capacity, teachers are expected to be morally upright persons, and their professional skills must be grounded in moral values so that they could serve themselves as moral models before students. It is therefore anticipated that the compatibility of virtue with professional dispositions would enable teachers to develop their students not only intellectually and professionally but also morally and ethically. Thus, teachers' virtuous disposition is suggested as an extension of professional dispositions of teachers. On the whole the objective of this paper is to provide an overview of teachers' dispositions in higher education and how virtuous dispositional attitude of teachers facilitate in producing ethical prospective professionals.

DEFINING DISPOSITIONS

Dispositions in teachers' behaviour are not new in the field of teaching profession. In fact, long back John Dewey (1922) envisioned that dispositions are not related to possession instead they are concerned with those performances that are experienced previously with positive response "the essence of habits is an acquired predisposition to ways or modes of responses, not particular act ...Habit means special sensitiveness or accessibility to certain classes of stimuli, standing predilections and aversions rather than bare recurrence of specific acts". Dispositional behaviours are the consequences of the previous performances that have been experienced positively. This positive experience uprights, conditions and modifies further actions thereby such performances are admired and repeated in future. Apparently, dispositions of teachers involve appropriate personal attributes of teaching such as passion for teaching and reflective practice in teaching that are highly

desirable in practice teaching. However, these attributes of teachers were not designated as dispositions at that time but as habits that defined their characters. Nevertheless, the early scholars of this approach were mainly Mayo and Arnstine. According to Mayo (1958) a person's character is not just a list of dispositions rather it includes the natural unification of something that is considered more than the sum of its parts. Arnstine (1967) envisioned that a disposition is a concept that has its application in extrapolative statements. It is a desirable trait of teachers' behaviour that allows them to behave in a specific way in a particular condition.

Later, Katz and Raths (1985) affirmed, "...because it is reasonable to assume that human behaviour is stable, the summary of the trends of a teachers' behaviour, fundamentally descriptive, can also serve as a basis for predicting future trends in behaviour". Dispositions in terms of Katz and Raths are the modes of conduct and diverse methods of teaching in which beliefs and attitudes are exhibited by teachers' performance. Indeed, dispositions involve the professional virtues and beliefs gradually developed by teachers through practicing skill, managing course content, and planning strategies to bring improvement in teaching-learning process and engaging in research work to make immediate solutions to academic problems. In addition to this, it is argued that the personal virtues and inner qualities mediate teachers to develop virtuous dispositions. Such virtuous dispositional attitude of teachers empowers them to manage classroom functions proficiently as well as practice knowledge and skills in an ethical way. For example, they would not just pay lip service to professional codes for the sake of their personal advantage instead they would be persistently loyal to assigned duties. In the classroom setting, their pedagogical and practical understandings are demonstrated in an ethical language such as fairness, equity and care to access and meet the distinct academic needs of students. Moreover, they would not simply adhere to the prescribed rules and principles mechanically rather they would think critically and reflect on the underlying principles and struggle to change if required. Thus, the accomplishments of their expertise are therefore not the results of deep observance of rules but are partly improvised by virtue of his inner qualities and virtues.

ANALYTICAL DESCRIPTION OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS

In conventional parlance professional dispositions of teachers' entail both an instructional responsibility and a regulative responsibility. Instructional responsibility includes expertise in content knowledge; pedagogical skills and appropriate conduct in professional institutions. Regulative responsibility emphasizes on academic association of teacher with students (i.e., teacher-

student relationship); well cognizant of distinct learning abilities of students and accountability towards profession. Moreover, it also comprises of teachers' personal beliefs that have an influential impact on their pedagogical behaviours and serve as powerful resources for teaching effectively. Thus, professional dispositions are the pattern of behaviours that involves both cognitive and affective attributes respectively. These dispositions not only filter the knowledge of educators but also have positive impact on their performance in the classroom. Arthur W. Combs (1999) expended almost three decades in exploring the essential dispositions for being an effective educator. In his work he suggested that the beliefs of teachers largely determine the effectiveness of their performances. These beliefs include:

1. Effective practitioners are sensitive and mostly people oriented.
2. He essentially holds optimistic views about his colleagues.
3. He maintains positive belief and attitude toward his work.
4. He holds beliefs about purposes that are for the sake of the people.
5. His beliefs of openness allow him to be self-reflective that are mainly characterized by truthfulness in his beliefs.

However, the term “belief” was displaced with “disposition” by Usher. He reformulated those areas of beliefs into five major dispositions of effective teachers. His interpretation of teachers' professional dispositions includes the positive interpersonal relation between teacher-students and its impact on teaching-learning process; teacher's optimistic view of students learning; teacher's strong sense of self-efficacy through which he implements innovative methods of teaching; his optimistic belief related to pedagogy as a practice and as a technique and his critical and accountable attitude towards the profession. Furthermore, he remarked that a good professional is distinguished through the possession of controlling perceptual skills such as mental, spiritual and emotional. These qualities empower them intrinsically to determine usual ways of thinking and acting in the classroom (Usher, 2002).

Usher reinvented Combs's extensive five major professional dispositions of effective teachers that are as follows:

1. **Love and Compassion for Students:** He develops interpersonal bonds with students because he believes that an accurate communication between teachers and students is the most important key to develop academic relationship with each learner. He respects students' individualities.
2. **Affirmative View of the Learners:** He believes in the ability of learners and has credence that all students can learn. He respects the inner self-respect

and integrity of students. He demonstrates no sign of overt bias or prejudice toward certain students rather demonstrates diligence in helping them all to achieve success.

3. **Self-Beliefs and Self-Efficacy:** He maintains a high sense of self efficacy; he endeavours to exhibit greater levels of planning and organization, greater perseverance when there are impediments in academic progress. He has a positive belief in self-adequacy and sees himself as efficiently capable in teaching tasks. He has a feeling of great respect for the inner self-esteem and truthfulness of self. He upholds optimistic views for his performances.
4. **Authenticity of Teaching Practices:** His practice of teaching is authentic and unpretentious, self-revealing and is not without personal-professional appraisal. He has the tendency to experiment and espouse innovations in teaching methods so as to improve the quality of teaching. He does not always rely on scientific competences rather he includes a variety of teaching methods to motivate their students. He perceives the importance of sincerity and self-disclosure and always tries to be real as a person or a teacher.
5. **Accountability towards Profession:** He seeks opportunities to learn new ways of effective teaching. He has passion for learning, for teaching and for his students. He exhibits creative ideas and their application to the concepts of education. He pursues opportunities in professional educational organizations and associations. Furthermore, he responds constructively to professional feedback from his seniors and makes changes to the required educational demands or legitimate concerns. He commits to the growth of all students in intellectual and spiritual aspects in order to achieve the universal goal of education.

All these dispositions of teachers identified by Usher seem to represent that the inner virtues, personal beliefs and potentials of teachers illuminate their professional behaviour in practising pedagogy effectively. It is therefore implicitly anticipated that their professional beliefs and perceptual skills are strongly connected to their inner attitudes. In this respect, if teachers' effective teaching is connected to their inner beliefs then it is extremely essential for them to acknowledge the significance of virtues in teaching practice.

VIRTUES IN TEACHING PRACTICE

A virtue in general sense is a disposition, habit, quality, or trait of a person which he/she either has or seeks to have. Aristotelian concept of virtues, involves that virtues are not the accomplishment of technical skills or rules,

principles or practices but the properties or qualities of person. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle deliberates that moral virtues intend to describe the features of personhood which means to describe a good person is to describe a person's virtuous characteristics. Thus, he suggests that in order to acquire or develop a moral virtue is to become a particular kind of person. In academics, teachers are required to specify the content that are to be taught, select the topic that possess relevance for the students, and the obligation to practice pedagogically suitable knowledge to students. These essential conditions involve cognitive and affective spheres of teaching and teachers' professional expertise while virtues stand as potential signifier for practicing that expertise. In this sense, the motive behind considering the effectiveness of virtues as signifiers of professional expertise is that professional virtues must involve "those acquired moral qualities that are embedded in the social practice of teaching and that are necessary to the particular professional task" (Sockett, 1993).

Virtues of professional teachers however are not only a matter of mere observance to the rules and principles or a matter of cognitive or intellectual agreement but they also encompass the emotive perspective of human nature (Carr, 2011). In terms of Carr, the commitment towards profession is not limited to the honest observance of rules and principles rather professionals must possess certain significant personal virtues that is a *sine qua non* for good and effective professional practice especially in teaching. Though professional virtues are informed by rules and principles but this does not mean that the professional behaviour of teachers is reduced to strict observance of rules and regulations or to develop professional expertise. Indeed, teaching is a moral enterprise that needs personal virtues and support to encourage students towards learning. Furthermore, there are many occasions in teaching, when teachers have to act in opposite to the prescribed rules and principles in order to perform a virtuous action. For example, teachers are obliged to give equal treatment to all students in terms of their academic development. It is true that teachers under the guidance of professional codes aim to provide fair and just distribution of educational assets to students. Apparently, treating all students equally and the equal distribution of academic resources is considering all of them in a mathematical sense and ignoring their individualities. However, Aristotle's language of equal distribution in his 'Politics' treating unequal people equally is no less than an unjust treatment of them (Sheldon, 2001). Not all students have the same learning tendencies or similar way of viewing things therefore treating them equally is a matter of indifference to them. It is therefore important to seriously take into account students' distinctive nature, abilities and their unique learning tendencies so as to maintain fairness, equity

and justice in academics. Such implications in teaching practice require teachers to develop virtuous disposition that gradually advance their moral reasoning. By virtue of this moral reasoning they often attempt to apply a theory of partiality in dealing with students as per their individual academic needs. In doing so, they do not actually defy the professional codes or rules instead they choose an alternative approach to reach the expected goals that are desirable in educational setting and justified in professional terms.

For Aristotle, such type of judgment is 'practical wisdom' that an individual must cultivate to practice his skill authentically. The application of practical wisdom unavoidably demands the possession of moral character what he calls 'virtues'. One cannot develop the capacity of such judgment without the qualities of moral character. In other words, practical wisdom and virtues presupposes one another. On this view, to procure and possess the capacities for judgment that is called 'pedagogical phronesis' (McLaughlin, 1999) is to have procured qualities of character. The virtuous character and the capacity for sound judgment thus facilitate teachers in managing the implications of teaching practice. They gradually develop certain skills and character traits that are correspondingly important to manage teaching tasks, listen and understand students individually. Practicing in such a way involves the experience of positive response from students that encourages teachers to reiterate that performance for progressive outcomes. The repetition of particular skills gradually becomes dispositions hence it is important to acknowledge that in teaching both skills and dispositions are distinct entities and both are mandatory for effective teaching. It is therefore essential to make certain that teaching skills are not inherited rituals rather they are deliberately devised maneuvered techniques. These techniques do not happen instantaneously instead they develop through consistence practice till the expertise is achieved. However, Winch delineates that skills and dispositions generally go together in the process of teaching but skills cannot be reduced to dispositions because skills involves a specific kind of knowledge (Winch, 2010) acquired through a systematic process of learning and persistent practice of that knowledge. For example, in the profession of nursing, one of the essential qualities of nurse is that she is expected to be a caring person but her disposition to care requires the knowledge of certain professional skills. In this sense, mere dispositions of caring are not sufficient in providing care unless the possession of certain skills of caring must accompany dispositions. Thus, in terms of the applicability of skills, they cannot be reduced to dispositions. This view is also supported by Zagzebski who applied the irreducibility of skills to dispositions in her epistemological analysis of virtue. She considers dispositions as habits from repeated choices. She acknowledges that virtues and skills are distinct

entities, and maintains that virtues are not on the same plane as skills. She further categorizes both virtues and skills as 'higher-grade dispositions' because intelligence is the prerequisite condition for their functioning. She affirms that though virtues are intelligent responses but this is not to say that virtues are the instinctive behavioural responses. Indeed, they are strongly linked with the inner motivational structure. This motivational structure according to her is something that places virtues prior to skills (Zagzebski, 1996). Thus, the compatibility of virtue with skills becomes the virtuous dispositions of teachers.

The need and requirement for teachers to be virtuous human beings connects to a dimension of educational value and accountability above and beyond the requirements of other professionals like physician or lawyer. Like other professions, the professional practice of teachers is also grounded in the observance of certain forms of regulations. What distinguishes teaching from other professions is that teachers are inescapably held responsible for inculcating moral values together with academic course in their students not at tertiary level only but almost at levels. However, professionals other than teachers like doctors or lawyers are normally not held responsible for such improvements rather they are subjected to improve the conditions of their patients and clients in the relevant health and legal related respects. Furthermore, teaching profession explicitly entails the subjective expression or illustration of certain values and beliefs of teachers precisely because they are expected to exhibit those values that are educationally desirable. These qualities are those that tend to make one-self or other people better human beings thereby the possession of these qualities is identical to a professional requirement. From this view point, university teachers should inculcate in themselves values like integrity, fairness, honesty, self-control and respect for others in order to model such values and virtues before their students (Carr, 2006). A virtuous disposition of teachers is therefore the proper way to act in any problem or situation that might occur in the classroom or in academic setting. These virtues consistently provide avenues in the character transformation of students so that the expected goal of education could be achieved. These virtues complement teachers' professional skills; without them, they might turn to be meaningless. Such skills are meaningful only within the larger contexts of professional dispositions in which moral considerations are paramount.

Clark an eminent educational psychologist shows his apprehension concerning the contemporary trends of educating the students of technical schools, "This is probably one of the most dangerous things facing mankind today; a use and training of intelligence excluding moral sensitivity". Kenneth

apprehends the conventional preparation of prospective professionals that stresses more on the technical aspects of education than on the moral aspects. He envisages that education must not aim to prepare the fine and skilled products instead it should endeavour to make students more humane in general and morally sound professionals in particular. Another significant example in line with this is:

“Dear Teacher,

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness: gas chambers built by learned engineers, children poisoned by educated physicians, infants killed by trained nurses, women and babies burned by high school and college graduates. So I am suspicious of education. My request is: help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmann's. Reading, writing and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human”.

This piece of information is forwarded by an anonymous person to all teachers and parents for demonstrating the purpose of education (Carnie, 2003). The philosophy behind this information is that the technical education of students would remain partial without the reference of moral education hence it must not be conducted in the absence of moral understanding. The university students would be the prospective professionals thereby their moral profile should be shaped during their academic years so that they could practice their accomplished knowledge and skills in an ethical way. Since teachers and students uphold symbiotic relation it is the moral responsibility of teachers to instil in students attitudes, skills course content together with moral sensibility. The inculcation of moral values in students is highly suggested so as to make them not learned professionals but morally sensitive professionals.

In India such dispositional behaviours of teachers are not designated as dispositions but as the professional conduct of teachers. The All India Federation of Educational Associations, the All India Federation of University and College Teachers Organization made certain attempts to evolve a code of professional ethics for quality teaching. In pursuance of this the Department of Teacher Education NCERT, (1986) New Delhi developed a code of ethics for teachers. The salient features of this code involve social justice, integrity, excellence, accountability, continuous learning and association with professional organization (Mohanty, 2003) as given below:

1. **Social Justice:** The teachers should be impartial to all students they are asked to help them in their intellectual, physical, social, emotional and moral development and character formation as well. They shall also promote scientific temper, inquisitiveness and creative self-expression.

They shall maintain the confidentiality of students and co-ordinate with parents in order to provide information regarding the attainments and shortfalls of their children.

2. **Integrity:** The teacher shall promote the development of the educational institutions as a community and human resource development center and must battle against fissiparous tendencies based on religion, region and language.
3. **Excellence:** Contemporary teachers should be expert of subject knowledge because information related to subject changes constantly. They should possess specialized skills and sense of individual and collective responsibility for the welfare of the recipient of the education and society at large.
4. **Accountability:** The teachers shall be aware of legislative enactments, rules and regulations governing educational policies and must cooperate with the head of institutions, the management and educational administrators.
5. **Continuous Learning:** The teachers shall seek opportunities to learn new skills and participate in programs of continual professional growth like in-service education seminars, symposia etc.
6. **Association with Professional Organization:** The teachers shall be a member of a professional organization and contribute to build up the unity and solidarity of the professional organization and observe its code of behaviour and discipline

These codes simply provide as the guidance for the professional conduct of teachers instead of addressing the significance of their personal conduct or virtues required for good teaching and inculcating values in students. Such codes are akin to the professional dispositions of effective teachers. They mainly involve in promoting the acceptable conduct of teachers at work place thus maintaining the modern conceptions of teaching that are certainly competence based with little moral sensitivity. Nonetheless, their personal virtues found no place within their professional abilities that are explicitly desirable in achieving the ultimate goal of education. However, the appropriate professional conduct of practitioners is that they are expected to be honest, just or respectful professionals rather than honest, fair or respectful persons as such (Carr, 2011). For instance, professionals like doctor or lawyer is essentially required to be truthful, just or dutiful to patients or clients respectively, however from a personal-moral point of view it is not obvious for him to be a nice or good person (persistently unfaithful to his wife, betrays his friends or exploits his acquaintances). But in the case of teacher, besides his

excellence in teaching if he is an adulterer, liar, sardonic or deceitful it is a matter of serious deliberation to hand over the future posterity in such hands. It is therefore arguable that it cannot be a matter of complete indifference either to professional teachers or parents what kind of person a teacher is in his personal life in the sense that it is a matter of comparative indifference what kind of person a doctor or lawyer is in his personal life (Carr, 2011). This is because the goals of education cannot be separated from wider contemplations and ideals of personal moral development. It is therefore a serious matter of apprehension if teachers exhibit values or personal characteristics apparently that are not desirable in educational setting. Considering the viewpoint of Swami Vivekananda, a renowned Indian philosopher also attaches great importance to the character and personal life of a teacher. According to him good teaching requires compatibility with personal beliefs and moral efficiencies. He further envisaged that a teacher who upholds a good persona is unsullied in mind and heart and is capable of influencing his students through his behaviour. He develops sympathy with his students through mutual interaction. He not only trains minds, develops manners but also shapes the morals of students (Bharathi & Rao, 2005).

Besides teaching, teachers must seek virtuous elements that involve the demonstration of their values and beliefs in their pedagogical and personal conduct so as to educate students about socially acceptable virtues, values and norms. The possession of virtuous character and the exemplification of the same in his professional conduct is the fundamental requisite of transmitting those virtues to students. The gist of the argument is that the agencies of education must take into consideration the significance of virtues within the professional codes of teachers and the virtuous dispositions of teachers must be highlighted along with other objectives of educational subtleties. Thus, professional development would need to extend beyond professional commitments to the cultivation of virtuous dispositions.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As a result of this exploration, the significance of teachers' virtuous dispositional behaviour may captivate the academic community concerning the quality education at higher level and may also bring the affair to the cognizance of the teachers' preparation institutions and educational agencies. Nevertheless, education is the social process but fundamentally education is different from the social world thus future research should investigate educational implications to understand the specifics of the educational world only. It certainly recommends that teachers and administrators should comprehend the significance of classroom relationships in general and teacher-

student relationship in particular. Furthermore, the impact of these relations must be taken into consideration in order to signify the importance of virtue in the professional development of teachers as well as how the virtuous dispositions of teachers promote the preparation of prospective professionals. Hence, it is concluded that teachers' virtuous dispositions should be included in the professional dispositions of teachers and must be considered as a relevant research agenda for higher education.

CONCLUSION

To conclude it can be said that the inclusion of virtuous dispositions in practice teaching is a step in the direction of recognizing the moral aspects of education. The conceptual work of the present article has shown that the implementation of virtuous disposition, facilitates teachers not only in managing implications in teaching practice but also in meeting the universal goal of education. Thus, it recommends that the better quality of teacher would lead to better learning, the better learning would finally lead to better education system.

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