



## Research Paper

# Christian Response to Professional Ethics

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## I. Introduction:

Professional ethics has become increasingly professionalised, segregated, and individualised during the previous two decades. At the same time, higher education's realm of academic practise has become increasingly stratified. Teachers and educational leaders are devoted to professional ethics and cannot avoid their professional obligations. Academicians' political duty is to encourage learning, development, and the formation of values-based generations. And, in the current climate, maintaining professional ethics is difficult, especially in the teaching profession. This study examines the ethical difficulties surrounding academics and teaching, as well as the Christian response to them. Professional ethics has become increasingly professionalised, segregated, and individualised during the previous two decades. Teachers and educational leaders are devoted to professional ethics and cannot avoid their professional obligations. Academicians' political duty is to encourage learning, development, and the formation of values-based generations. And, in the current climate, maintaining professional ethics is difficult, especially in the teaching profession. This study examines the ethical difficulties surrounding academics and teaching, as well as the Christian response to them.

### Professional Ethics:

“Ethics is defined here as a system of principles or norms designed to provide a framework for the practice of one's profession. In order for one's profession to be practiced with integrity and accountability, defined standards of competence are necessary.”<sup>1</sup>

### Professional Identity:

**Professional identity** is defined as one's **professional** self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences (Ibarra, 1999; Schein, 1978).

“Identity can generally be defined as who or what someone is, the various meanings people can attach to themselves, or the meanings attributed by others”<sup>2</sup>

“The American Institute of CPAs published a 2012 article titled, “Five Tips to Branding Yourself,” suggests that creating a personal brand is a way to stay current in one's field, open doors of opportunity, and create a lasting impression on those with whom one works.”<sup>3</sup>

Professional Identity in Teaching profession depends on the basis of three distinctive categories, namely: the subject one teaches, the relationship with students, and the teacher's role or role conception.

### Ethical Issues related to Academics and Teaching:

#### Knowledge Enhancement:

Every Professional Practitioner should have a strong foundation in research. They should heed the advice of Martin Luther's friend Philip Melanchthon: "Have the courage to learn."<sup>4</sup> The learning needs courage

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<sup>1</sup> Brown, Thomas L Professional Ethics and Ministry. The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center, 26 no 1 Fall 1998, p 74-102, 76.

<sup>2</sup> D. Beijaard et al. “Teachers' perceptions of professional identity: an exploratory study from a personal knowledge perspective”. Teaching and Teacher Education 16 (2000) 749 – 764, 750

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Developing-a-Professional-Identity.aspx#sthash.s6NbFbF5.dpuf>

<sup>4</sup> Feng Su and Bart McGettrick, Professional Ethics: Education for a Humane Society, Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2012, X.

since the one who learns never knows what they learn until one has learnt it and new knowledge may be uncomfortable.<sup>5</sup>

Traditionally, knowledge of subject matter is a relevant part of a teacher's professional knowledge base. Teachers require a deep and full understanding of the subject area, in other words, an understanding that is characterized by knowledge of many concepts and their relationships.<sup>6</sup>

It is necessary to avoid knowledge stagnation. With the help of technical knowledge and societal awareness, one must improve in his field of specialty. If not, it is unethical because the person is ignoring their responsibilities. It is unethical and unbiblical to ignore the obligation.

### **Unethical and unprofessional activity:**

Sexism: While there is a greater awareness of the challenges that women face in both public and private life, institutionalised male supremacy and the old boy network continue to dominate the workplace. This is an ethical dilemma that practically all academics must tackle right away.

Politics at Office: The institution's flow chart should be clearly established, and company guidelines should include an open-door policy. When compared to the gain of personal power and prestige by some individuals, an organization's stated aims may be a low priority.<sup>7</sup>

### Partiality and Neutrality

Partiality, whether exclusive or impartial, should be avoided. Professors, Lecturers, Teachers, and Academicians fall into the following groups while teaching, which raises one ethical thread.

"Exclusive partiality" - The instructor instils in the students their own value viewpoint in a way that prevents challenge.

"Exclusive neutrality" — This is the policy of omitting from the curriculum any subject that involves assertions about views and values that are contentious in the larger community.<sup>8</sup>

"Neutral impartiality." – In response to criticisms of the neutrality gambit, this viewpoint mandates that the curriculum contain an exploration of all types of thought and experience that play a role in society. In circumstances when disputed beliefs are in doubt, however, the teacher is expected to act as an impartial arbitrator whose personal viewpoint is kept hidden in order to avoid undue psychological pressure on the students.<sup>9</sup>

"Committed impartiality." – The teachers are given the choice to promote critical analysis of various beliefs and values and provides additional data of analysis on their own beliefs. Cautions should be taken that their procedures for teaching and assessing remain impartial.<sup>10</sup>

Whatever the stance is, the students should never be exposed only to the teacher's own ideological stance rather they should be given freedom to learn and analyze the situation from the knowledge available.

### **Confidentiality:**

Many supporting professions, such as social workers, counsellors, and psychologists, are obligated by professional and ethical obligations to maintain confidentiality and protect the person's privacy. Academic mentoring is becoming more successful nowadays. Mentors must respect the mentee's privacy and try to improve the future.<sup>11</sup>

The Bible does not specifically address the question of confidentiality, but it does define the principles for community communication. Recognizing that God created each member of the community and viewing them as God's image requires us to think of them as better than ourselves is the best standard of communication. Confidentiality is guided by the notion of the power of words. When it comes to secrecy, words count a lot, especially when it comes to gossip and slander, which damage fellowship, but prayer and encouragement build up and heal.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>6</sup> Douwe Beijaard, Teachers' perceptions of professional identity: an exploratory study from a personal knowledge perspective. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 16 (2000) 749 – 764, 751.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>8</sup> Hill, Brian, Teacher commitment and the ethics of teaching for commitment. *Religious Education*, 76 no 3 May- Jun 1981, p 322-336, 330 -331.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 332.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>11</sup> Yancey, Gaynor, Confidentiality in the Church. *Family and Community Ministries*, 23 no 4 Wint – Spr 2010, 61-69, 61

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 65

### **Professional Integrity:**

Professional integrity is founded on ethical awareness and excellent professional competence, both of which are necessary in generating favourable conditions. The right to methodological flexibility and professional discretion carries with it a special obligation to be transparent about academic and pedagogical decisions. Organizational ethics must be adhered to. Integrity checks should be performed on a regular basis, which is sadly absent in the academic community.

There has been a lot of talk recently about the absence of integrity in many aspects of private and public life. Politics, economics, business, journalism, and the media, as well as the church, are all concerned about it. It's frequently discussed from a psychological and moral standpoint. In all aspects of life, there must be honesty both within and beyond. There is no shortcut to being a wise and trustworthy person, according to Fr. William Barry, S. J. It's more of a journey than a destination.<sup>13</sup>

### **Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty in which one person submits or presents the work of another person as his or her own, whether from intent to deceive, lack of understanding, or carelessness.<sup>14</sup>

Plagiarism is defined as the following behaviours: Incorporating one or more phrases, sentences, concepts, code, equations, or arguments in written work, software, or other assignments without recognising an author or other source (substantial plagiarism); Presenting the entirety or significant portions of another person's paper, report, programme, or other work as a credit assignment, even if that paper or other work is cited as a source in the accompanying bibliography or list of references (complete plagiarism).<sup>15</sup>

Plagiarism in academia is fairly widespread, and recently it has taken on a new strand in which an academician claims credit for a student's production of papers, projects, and reports and publishes them in journals as their own. Professors pursuing a Ph.D. assign the UG Student with a portion of their project and serve as a guide for them in the research field. The lecturer takes credit for the discoveries because the students worked it out and came up with them.<sup>16</sup> Fudging or fabricating of reports is at the increase in the field of academics which need to be addressed. Honesty in interpretation of the report is the need of the hour.<sup>17</sup> Never take someone's idea and pitch it as your own. And don't jump on a wagon at the end of a successful ride that you didn't contribute to.

### **Ethics of Authority and Employees at Work:**

A code of ethics is a set of moral rules or guidelines that govern behaviour while also enshrining a set of values and beliefs. Thus, codes of ethics address what is good and bad, right and wrong in organisational decision-making, and frequently reflect senior managers' attempts to shape and steer their organization's culture ( Andrew D. Brown, 1995). Work has become a significant aspect of our lives. It offers us a sense of self-identity and gives life meaning and purpose. It has shifted from being need-driven to being joy-driven. The attitude toward work is significant because it determines the quality of job, which in turn influences the quality of life. Work has many different aspects. It can take the form of something physical, material, social, aesthetic, or spiritual.

Work ethics can be inferred from this approach toward work. When a person works to earn a living, he or she must work honestly and sincerely. However, when labour takes on a new dimension—that of societal service—a sense of duty is added to the work ethics along with integrity, honesty, and commitment. As a result, a worker's work ethics entails carrying out his responsibilities in such a way that the firm and society profit as well as the company.

When faced with a conflict of interest, an ethical worker must be able to set his own interests aside and prioritise the larger good, i.e., the benefit of many rather than the profit of one.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> [http://www.preacherexchange.com/dp\\_livingwithintegrity.htm](http://www.preacherexchange.com/dp_livingwithintegrity.htm),

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.uregina.ca/business/assets/faculty-information/Academic-Misconduct-Handout.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>16</sup> Interview with the Engineering students as on 20th August, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Ethical issues in College Teaching, Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Teaching Centre

<sup>18</sup> Samita Manna, Values and Ethics in Business and Profession, New Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited, 2010 (Dr. A. Elangovan, The Influence Of Organizational Culture On Work Ethic - A Study With Special Reference To Steel Authority Of India, Salem, Madras University Journal Of Business And Finance, Vol. 1 No. 2 July 2013 Pp. 23-33, 25)

### **Work and Leisure:**

A day's work for a day's pay should be the code of ethics for the person at work. The work time should be used for the official work not for the personal work. Doing course work for graduate school, or private consulting work during office works, or using the corporate system time without paying for it need to be avoided.<sup>19</sup>

The salary is paid to do a job not to goof around. Ethics should be maintained in working during the working hours. There are of course exceptions; you may be done with one project and have nothing to do until you get your next assignment. Even if there is no assigned work, avoid spending time for personal work, watching games and being on social network.

### **Theological Response to Professional Ethics:**

Are rules and standards out of date? Does the standards as per the circumstances? What is the measuring rod to decide what is wrong and right in any situation? Is it possible that different communities can have equally valid, but contradictory standards?

Ethicists have proposed answers to these questions. Some have insisted that the essence of ethics is obedience to laws (deontological ethics). Others have said that the essence of ethics is the pursuit of some human good, such as happiness or pleasure (teleological ethics).<sup>2</sup> Religious people believe that ethics is "the study of the way of life that conforms to the will of God—the way that is good, that pleases God and fulfills human nature."

But how does anyone know what pleases God? Even Christians who claim that the Bible is their guide are seemingly able to derive different ethical systems from it.

Every Christian needs to be a student of Scriptures to the extent that he comprehends a systematic theology that becomes the foundation for his moral standards, decision-making process, and manner of living.<sup>20</sup>

Douglas Groothuis says it well: "Theology is not merely an endeavour of academic theologians, but the concern of every Christian who desires to understand and apply God's truth for life and make it known to others. Consequently, our theology affects all that we do, whether or not we have thought it through systematically. It directs our sermons, our evangelism and apologetics (or lack thereof), and our personal and social ethics. In other words, it is indispensable and inescapable. This underscores the urgency of developing a theology that is both faithful to Scripture and which speaks forcefully."<sup>21</sup>

### **Christian Response to Professional Ethics:**

Work is a gift of God and God the greatest worker become the role model for the worker of God. The society has questioned the morality of hard work or debated the ethics of leisure. Nowadays, the working hours are 40 hrs of work per week. If a person works for 40 hrs a week, then the person is designated as workaholics. Whatever the work is done, it should be done as the service to God which makes the Christian's work "relevant to every social structure in every age of history, precisely because it is "irrelevant" to all of them."<sup>22</sup> "Work is to be done for the benefit of humanity in Jesus' name."<sup>23</sup> The rationale of the statement is very simple, that is, if the work does not benefit either God or man, it cannot honor God. Work should not cause damage physically, morally, spiritually to the worker.

Karl Barth rightly states that

"To work tensely is to do so in self-exaltation and forgetfulness of God ... Tension makes work a drudgery, a mad race, an affliction, not only for the worker himself but also for those around."<sup>24</sup>

Designating a worker as Workaholic based on his intense work, working long hours, enjoying the work is biblically wrong. If such be the case, Jesus himself is the guiltiest<sup>25</sup>

A person may not get a sense of divine calling (Vocation) in his/her occupation and if one does not have such a vocation, it is not wrong, if the motive of working is service to God. On the other hand, if God gives a mission and if a person does not pursue it with vigor, then it is not biblically ethical. Vice versa, to avoid the mission of God,

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<sup>19</sup> John R Wilcox, *Engineering Ethics: Challenge and opportunity for the Christian Ethicist*, *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 1985, p 203-215

<sup>20</sup> Larry Pettegrew, *Theological Basis of Ethics*, TMSJ 11/2 (Fall 2000) 139-153, 139.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>22</sup> Alan Richardson, *The Bible's Doctrines of Work* (London: SCM Pres, 1952), 50

<sup>23</sup> Alfred A Glenn, *Taking Your Faith to work* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 57

<sup>24</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, tras. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol.3 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), 553.

<sup>25</sup> Robertson McQuilkin, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, USA: Tyndale House Publishers, 1989, 390

if a person compulsively work other responsibilities as an escape or work for the wrong motives and neglect family responsibility, then it is not a work ethic.<sup>26</sup>

Ethical guidelines in align with the scriptures have to be developed by each individual irrespective of their workplace.

## II. Conclusion:

We live in a society that increasingly is denying the existence of God, absolute truth, and absolute moral standards. What should be our response to our society's deteriorating value system?

As Alister McGrath has written,

Good doctrine makes for good ethics. . . . And doctrine seeks to preserve Christian distinctiveness, to present Christianity from submerging in the swamp of liberal American culture. We must not be afraid to be distinct. As Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, we must shine out as stars in the darkness of the night sky.<sup>27</sup>

World and Word should never contradict. The Christian should follow the Word of God in the profession and live a life that imitates Christ. Being a professional person, we should never be applied to be distinct. Being distinctive, we need to have sense of identity and confidence. There should not be a conflict between Professional life and religious belief.

Paul Wellstone, "Never separate the life you live from the words you speak."

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 390-391.

<sup>27</sup> Alister McGrath, "In What Way Can Jesus Be a Moral Example for Christians?" *JETS*34/3(September 1991):298.