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## Perception of stakeholders about practices of professional ethics by secondary school teachers in Mizoram

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**Abstract**

The main aim is to find out the perception of stakeholders (teachers, students and community members) on how far teachers adhere to the code of professional ethics. Professional ethics questionnaire prepared by the investigator was employed to collect data. All school teachers, students and community members residing within the feeding area of the secondary schools in all the eight districts of Mizoram constitute the population of the study. The final sample consists of 453 teachers, 403 students and 254 community members. It was found that majority of all respondents have favourable perception about practices of professional ethics by teachers. However, findings reveal that teachers have a more favourable perception about practices of professional ethics than students and community members. No significant difference was also found in the perception of all stakeholders (teachers, students and community members) about practices of professional ethics with reference to gender.

**Keywords:** *professional ethics; stakeholders; perception.*

**Introduction**

The role of a teacher is not only classroom teaching from the textbooks, there are many other roles that a teacher plays, such as a role model for the students, preparing the students to become contributing members of the society, helping to solve the personal problems of students, and so many more. To do this, a teacher needs to win the trust of the students, which can be done by building an atmosphere where there is mutual trust and understanding between the teacher and students, between the teacher and parents, between the teachers themselves, and between the teacher and the community or society as a whole. This can be achieved through strict adherence to the professional ethics for teachers. Without dedication and devotion to one's profession, no teacher could fulfill his/her roles or functions as a teacher.

**Professional ethics**

A skilled personnel belonging to a profession who conforms to the ethical standards to the profession in which he practices is considered to be a professional.

Ethics may be defined as the study of what is right or good in conduct. It is the general theory of conduct and considers the actions of human beings with reference to their rightness or wrongness, their tendency to good or to evil.

Professional Ethics refers to the desirable code of conduct of an individual towards his or her profession.

**Stakeholders**

In education, the term stakeholder typically refers to anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, city councillors, and state representatives. In another word, stakeholders have a "stake" in the school and its students, meaning that they have personal, professional, civic, or financial interest or concern. For the present study, 'stakeholders' is limited to the secondary school teachers and students as well as the community members residing within the feeding area of the secondary schools.

**Rationale**

One cannot deny the fact that there are several teachers who do not come to school in time to take classes – teachers who are not even aware of their own values of life and values of their students inside the parameters of professional ethics.

Teachers in the secondary level of education deal with adolescents, and adolescence period is considered to be the most awkward and most difficult stage of all the stages of human

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development. Teaching this group of young people hence involves ethical decisions more than it does in other groups of students. This and the above mentioned reasons give the need to know and follow professional ethics all the more. No studies have ever been conducted to find out the stakeholders' perception about teachers' practices of professional ethics' in the state of Mizoram. A study to find out their perception would provide us with an understanding of how far secondary school teachers practice the required code of ethics in their teaching profession. The investigator, through this study expects to reveal the teacher's true mind-set for quality education in the state.

**Objective**

1. To find out the perception of stakeholders (parents, students and community members) about practices of professional ethics by school teachers in Mizoram.
2. To compare the perception of teachers and students about practices of professional ethics by school teachers.
3. To compare the perception of teachers and community members about practices of professional ethics by school teachers.
4. To compare the perception of students and community members about practices of professional ethics by school teachers.
5. To compare the perception of stakeholders (teachers, students and community members) about practices of professional ethics by school teachers with reference to gender

**Methodology**

The present study belongs to the category of 'Descriptive Research Survey' with features of inter-group comparison.

**Population and Sample**

The population in the present study consists of all Government and non-Government Secondary School teachers and students in Mizoram, as well as community members residing within the feeding area of these schools. The total sample consisted of 453 teachers, 403 high school students and 254 community members from all the eight districts of Mizoram.

**Tools used**

Three sets of 'Professional Ethics Questionnaires', one for teachers, one for students and one for community members prepared by the researcher was employed for data collection. *The professional ethics questionnaire* is prepared on the lines of the draft code of professional ethics prepared by NCTE in 2010. There are 39 (thirty-nine) questions in each questionnaire. Each question has three response options: 'Always', 'Sometimes' and 'Never' where the respondent is required to tick the appropriate response according to his or her view. In order to quantify the questionnaire systematically, the responses 'Always', 'Sometimes' and 'Never' is given a score value of 3, 2 and 1 respectively for each response on every item of the questionnaire. Content validity was established by giving the questionnaires to several experts. Test retest reliability was also established with a correlation coefficient of 0.76

**Analysis and interpretation**

Analysis and interpretation was done in accordance with the objectives of the study as follows:

**Objective 1:** *To find out the perception of stakeholders (teachers, students and community members) about practices of professional ethics by school teachers in Mizoram.*

For the convenience of interpretation, the data collected through professional ethics questionnaires were transformed into percentages of favourable and unfavourable responses. The approving response of 'Always' is treated as 'favourable' perception and the disapproving response 'Never' is treated as un-favourable' perception, while the undecided response 'Sometimes' is ignored.

The percentage of the responses of the teachers, the students and the community members were calculated for favourable and unfavourable perception and are presented in the following table No 1

**Table 1:** Perception of Stakeholders (teachers, students and community members) about practices of professional ethics by school teachers.

Respondents	Favourable	Unfavourable
Teacher respondents (N=453)	70.49%	6.26%
Student respondents (N=403)	54.22%	15.93%
Community respondents (N=254)	50.87%	11.80%
All respondents (N=1110)	60.09%	11.04%

The above table-1 clearly shows that majority (60.09%) of all respondents have favourable perception about practices of professional ethics. Teachers have the highest percentage of favourable perception while students and community members have a lower percentage of favourable perception about teacher's practices of professional ethics. This could indicate that the students and community members do not perceive the teachers as practicing professional ethics as much as the teachers see themselves

**Discussion:** Professional ethics for teachers is essentially direction and guidance to the teachers in enhancing the dignity of their professional work. Therefore, it is quite normal that majority of teachers have a favourable perception about practices of professional ethics because they understand that the dignity of their profession is going to be enhanced as long as they adhere to the code of professional ethics. This could be the plausible reason why more teachers in the present study have a favourable perception about practices of professional ethics and that there are less number of students and community members who have favourable perception about teachers' practices of professional ethics.

**Objective 2:** *To compare the perception of teachers and students about practices of professional ethics by school teachers.*

For this comparison, the mean and standard deviation of the scores of the two groups are calculated and the mean differences was tested by applying 't' test and the details are presented in the following table no 2.

**Table 2:** Comparison in the perception of Teachers and Students about practices of professional ethics

Groups	Number	Mean	SD	MD	SE <sub>MD</sub>	t-Value	Sig. level
Teachers	453	102.29	7.435	10.458	.587	17.831	**
Students	403	91.83	9.458				

\*\*Significant at .01 level

Table 2 reveals that teachers have significantly higher perception about professional ethics than students since the mean score of the teachers is higher than the mean score of the students.

**Discussion:** A teacher may be good in pedagogy, may have quality and adequate teaching resources at his disposal, his students may be performing well, but if he lacks professional ethics, his good classroom teaching can be overshadowed by this. Jacques (2003) refers to lack of adherence to professional ethics as ‘a violation of the ethical requirements of the teaching profession’. A lack of such qualities may impact negatively on the students’ learning. This being the case,

teacher conduct has a direct link with students’ academic achievement. Perhaps, it is because of this that more teachers try to adhere to professional ethics. Therefore, it is quite natural that teachers’ perception is higher in the present study than students’ perception.

**Objective 3:** To compare the perception of teachers and community members about practices of professional ethics by school teachers.

For this comparison, the mean and standard deviation of the scores of the two groups are calculated and the mean differences was tested by applying ‘t’ test and the details are presented in the following table no 3.

**Table 3:** Comparison in the perception of teachers and community about practices of professional ethics

Groups	Number	Mean	SD	MD	SE <sub>MD</sub>	t-value	Sig. level
Teachers	453	102.29	7.435	10.821	.728	14.868	**
Community	254	91.47	10.175				

\*\* Significant at .01 level

The above table 3 shows that teachers have significantly higher perception about professional ethics than community members

**Discussion:** Adhering to professional ethics by the teachers can affect the image of the individual teacher, the image of the school, the image of the teaching profession as a whole, and the image of the country. Commitment to ideals and values are the two key features of a code of professional ethics. Between two good performing schools, parents would entrust their children to ones whose teachers adhere to professional ethics and values over one whose teachers are only good in content delivery but have a poor public image. The community members may not want to have their children attending an education system where the ethical conduct of

teachers is below standard. Conceivably, in order to attract the public many teachers are duty-bound to be aware of and to adhere to professional ethics. Hence, it is not without reason that the present investigation found teachers to have significantly higher perception about adhering to professional ethics than community members.

**Objective 4:** To compare the perception of students and community members about practices of professional ethics by school teachers.

For this comparison, the mean and standard deviation of the scores of the two groups are calculated and the mean differences was tested by applying ‘t’ test and the details are presented in the following table no 4.

**Table 4:** Comparison in the perception of students and community about practices of professional ethics

Groups	Number	Mean	SD	MD	SE <sub>MD</sub>	t-value	Sig. level
Students	403	91.83	9.458	.363	.793	.457	NS
Community	254	91.47	10.175				

NS=Not significant

Table 4 tells us that there is no significant difference between students and community in their perception about school teachers’ practices of professional ethics.

**Discussion:** Majority of the people in Mizoram, especially the students and the community members such as the parents do not even understand what teachers’ professional ethics actually means, or whether it existed at all. Perhaps, both the students and community members are not really concerned about teacher’s adherence to professional ethics. This could be the explanation why no significant difference is found

between the students and the community members in their perception about teachers’ adhering to professional ethics

**Objective 5:** To compare the perception of stakeholders (teachers, students and community members) about practices of professional ethics by school teachers with reference to gender

For this comparison, the mean and standard deviation of the scores of all the stakeholders (teachers, students, community members) each with respect to their gender were calculated and the mean differences were tested by applying ‘t’ test and the details are presented in the following table no 5.

**Table 5:** Sex difference in the perception of stakeholders about practices of professional ethics

	Groups	No.	Mean	SD	MD	SE <sub>MD</sub>	t-value	Sig. level
1	Male teachers	281	101.84	7.567	1.183	.709	1.669	NS
	Female teachers	172	103.02	7.174				
2	Male students	164	92.13	9.701	.511	.967	.528	NS
	Female students	239	91.62	9.302				
3	Male community	145	91.03	10.230	1.011	1.289	.785	NS
	Female community	109	92.05	10.121				

NS=Not significant

Table 5 illustrates that there is no significant gender difference in the perception of all stakeholders (teachers, students and community members) about teachers' practices of professional ethics.

### **Discussion**

It is not surprising that there exist no significant gender differences among the teachers, students and community members in their perception about practices of professional ethics, because by and large, majority of the Mizo community, whether they are male or female, are fairly ignorant about professional ethics for the teachers. Perhaps, for most respondents, the issue of teachers' professional ethics do not have much significance in their lives. Therefore the probable reason why no significant gender difference is found among different stakeholders in their perception could be attributed to this effect.

### **Conclusion**

Today we talk about quality education. The government at the central level as well as at the state level introduces schemes and policies for developing our educational system. However good these schemes and policies may be, in the end it is the teacher who holds the pivotal role of transacting the new schemes and measures to the students. The role of the teacher is therefore very important. Hence teachers need to be given awareness about their roles and responsibilities because many of them enter into the profession without any prior experience or training. Giving greater importance to teachers' adherence to professional ethics will prepare them to become more professional in their approach to their functions as a teacher. This will lead to better professional relationship with the stakeholders of their profession, and this will further lead to improvement in the quality of education as a whole.

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