

PROFESSION

special training
high status
high pay packet
high level of education

The Oxford Dictionary defines profession as a type of job that requires special training or skill, especially one that needs a high level of education such as medical, legal, or teaching.

Sometimes, the definition of profession also includes a high status in society due to the high level of education and the high pay packet a person gets by virtue of being in the profession.

In this description, two distinguishing features of a profession are given. A profession requires special training, and it generally gives a high status to the individuals in the society.

The meaning of special training needs clarification. A carpenter, an electrician, a plumber, or a welder also gets special training in industrial training institutes in our country. Can they be considered to be following a profession? We may say in common parlance, 'He is a carpenter by profession.' In general, special training in the case of professions means special training to acquire a high level of cognitive knowledge and practical skills in a university or a higher educational institution. This is what distinguishes a profession from, for example, carpentry, which is considered to be a trade or craft. Such workers are called craftsmen and not professionals. It is presumed that to be a carpenter you do not need extensive knowledge of the botany of trees. On the other hand, to be in a profession, you need to have extensive training at university or college level in the chosen subject area.

The question of status is relative. A person following a profession generally commands a higher remuneration than a craftsman. This, together with his/her high level of education and training, brings in a better status in the society. Ours is a degree-conscious society. It is not that a craftsman's job is not important. In fact, it has become very important in today's context as it is very difficult to find good craftsmen. They are in high demand and get paid highly as well. Nevertheless, their status in the society is low.

In many other countries, status differences do remain, but may not be as stark as in India. Craftsmen, many times, earn more than professionals.

PROFESSIONAL

A professional is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as someone connected with a job that needs special training or skill, especially one that needs a high level of education, and does this as a paid job rather than as a hobby.

A professional is someone who does a job that requires special training and enjoys a high status. The word professional is used many times with different connotations.

A professional sportsperson is someone who gets paid for his/her...

He/She is distinguished from an amateur...

When we say someone did a 'professional' job, we speak of the high quality of work done by him/her. High quality of work is a cardinal tenet of a professional. Professionals not only have special knowledge and training to do a job, but also use that knowledge and training to do a high-quality job.

Many times, the word professional is used to denote ethical behaviour. Consider a batsman in a cricket tournament. The batsman nicks the ball and is caught by a fielder. He is out. Knowing that he has nicked the ball and has been caught by a fielder, if the batsman walks away to the pavilion before being given out by the umpire, we say, 'He acted like a true professional.' This speaks of the ethical behaviour expected of a professional. Many cricketers do that, but there are also many who will wait for the umpire's decision (which is not wrong as per the rules of the game). There may be a remote chance that the umpire has not seen or heard the nick and may not declare him out, but such batsmen do not behave like professionals. There is a spirit behind the actions of a professional and that makes him/her stand above the rest.

From these discussions, we work out certain cardinal features of a professional, which are as follows:

- A professional does a job that requires him/her to possess a large body of academic knowledge with practical training.
- He/She possesses academic knowledge obtained generally through formalized training from a university or higher level academic institution.
- He/She enjoys a certain amount of autonomy in the workplace even if doing a salaried job.
- He/She does a job requiring him/her to exercise independent thinking and judgement in the work being done.
- He/She has the authority to take decisions and does that with great honesty and integrity.
- He/She does a professional job, meaning the quality of work done by him/her is high.

- He/She is able to utilize the natural and harnessed/acquired talent to do jobs that cannot be done by others or even by machines.
- He/She shows a high level of ethical conduct in the profession. This is a hallmark feature of a professional and is the reason why ethics is important for a professional.
- He/She works in an area that is self-regulatory to some extent, that is, there is centralized training and evaluation of new persons entering the profession.
- He/She is controlled by a professional organization related to that field in terms of registration to practise the profession, code of conduct, and so forth.
- He/She generally enjoys a high status and is highly rewarded in terms of money earned by practising the profession.
- He/She generally possesses knowledge and skills that the common man is ignorant of. One danger to be avoided in practising a profession is the temptation to exploit this ignorance and take undue advantage of it as in the case of a doctor or a lawyer.

PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalism is again a term used in different contexts with different meanings. The Oxford Dictionary defines professionalism as the high standard that you expect from a person who is well trained in a particular job requiring great skill or ability.

Professionalism is a trait of professionals. David M. ...

- Family loyalty, ancestor worship, and respect for elders
- Superiority of personal exemplification over explicit rules of behaviour
- Self cultivation
- Emulation of moral exemplars
- Attainment of skilled judgement rather than the knowledge of rules
- Doing proper things at the proper time
- Maintaining existing norms to perpetuate an ethical social fabric
- Violating rules in order to get ethical good

Let us now understand the last point using an example: You are approached by someone whom you know to be a confidence trickster, asking for the address of somebody in the locality. You know the address and the person living there well. Telling the truth is a universal value. But here, should you tell the truth? You are not sure what the person will do with the address. So you tell him that you do not know the address. It is highly likely that some good may result from telling this lie.

VALUE EDUCATION

The term value education has come into focus in recent times. There is a general feeling that there has been considerable erosion of values in the society and this has to be set right by providing value education to students studying in schools and colleges. Some people feel that the term value education is a misnomer because if education does not imbibe values, it is not education at all. The objectives of education are not to teach Newton's laws and mathematical theorems alone, but to develop human beings with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. Education is believed to be incomplete if it does not inculcate values in students. Values are closely linked to ethics. Right values help us to live ethically.

Current Scenario

One of the reasons why value education has come into focus is the current social, economic, and political scenario. Whatever we see around us is presumed to be due to the degeneration in values amongst people and within systems. An analysis of the current scenario shows some depressing features.

Violence is evoked by trivial issues causing damage to property and life. We have forgotten Mahatma Gandhi's emphasis on non-violent struggle as the path to attain our goals. We have become a violent society with little tolerance.

- The exposure of corruption cases in our country has caused much concern. Our greed and ambitions have no limits and people are stooping to any level to get what they want. The tragedy is that we have been found to accept it as a fact of life and are ready to live with it. Corruption eats into the very fabric of democracy and value systems and creates conditions of anarchy and lawlessness. The fact that corruption is most prevalent among lawmakers and has even found its way into the judiciary is a matter of greater concern.
- We have also lost faith in the structures and systems of governance. Though the executive, legislature, and judiciary are keen on maintaining the smooth functioning of a democratic

government, the politicians who form the executive arm have a very poor image before the public. The legal machinery is, again, seen as a monster not helping the public but harassing them and has been largely ineffective. Lately, judicial activism has come into prominence but the judiciary itself is so mired in controversy that people have only little faith in the judicial system.

- We live in a country of riches that can provide quality life to one and all. The material resources are plenty; our human resources are known to equal any other group's in the world. In addition, the country has a rich cultural heritage. Yet, we are a developing country with a huge population and without the wherewithal to have three meals a day. Unequal distribution of wealth keeps 30–40 per cent of the population below the poverty line. Whatever action the government takes to help the poor—subsidized food and related measures—incur such huge losses that the beneficiaries do not receive the benefits. This is a tragic instance of mismanagement of resources.
- Globally, mistrust amongst countries has grown so much that every time it appears we are on the verge of a third world war. The amount of money that countries spend on defence preparedness is colossal.

The total military expenditure of these ten countries totals 1.29 trillion dollars. This is not only for defence preparedness but also to combat terrorism in various forms. If a part of this expenditure can be saved, we can feed millions of poor people in the world. This need for militarization of the whole world is a clear example of the society discarding some fundamental values. Globally, there is a need to appreciate the importance of sharing global wealth and ensuring equity for one's own prosperity (see Chapter 7).

- One generation learns from the previous generation. The various aspects of the current scenario shows that one generation has failed to show the way for the next generation. The waywardness in the generation is a clear indication that the previous generation has failed to set examples to follow.

Objectives of Value Education

A person attains lasting values by conviction. There are many kinds of values such as personal, family, social, aesthetic, and spiritual. The objectives of value education are listed here:

- Create an awareness and appreciation of the right values to be imbibed for peaceful and harmonious co-existence.
- Appreciate the importance of values in personal and professional life.
- Develop a personal value system that guides one through life.
- Develop a passion for right values in life.
- Have the conviction and capacity to influence others to follow the right values.

Importance of Value Education

Value education cultivates essential values in people. Value education is not limited to schools and colleges. It is important to every one. The right values and attitudes need to be developed amongst youngsters in schools and colleges as they have more pliable minds that can be easily convinced. Education should inherently include value education. Every teacher, whatever subject he/she may be teaching, has a responsibility towards value education. Through his/her behaviour

and the type of learning experiences that he/she has designed, the teacher must try to cultivate essential values in students. Having a separate subject on moral education or value education should not deter other teachers from fulfilling their own responsibilities.

It is necessary to inculcate the right values in students because these ideals guide them through their lives. A person without the right values will have thoughts and perform actions that will not be good for him/her and others. The goals one sets for oneself may not be good and the means one uses to achieve them may also not be proper. Value education helps an individual in five ways:

- It guides us in living our life well. When we live our life well, it not only helps us but also helps others.
- It helps us find true happiness and peace in life that cannot be acquired from material wealth.
- It helps us make others happy. Making others happy is as important as finding happiness for oneself. It also helps us deal with people and events in the best possible way. Values help us face challenges in the most ethical way.
- It helps us achieve our goals in an ethical manner. Every one of us has objectives, aspirations, and ambitions.
- It guides us to set appropriate goals in life. Once we have set our goals, values guide us in using appropriate means to achieve those goals.

Acquiring Values

Values are acquired by individuals in two ways: natural acceptance and experience. The way one acquires values has been described by the taxonomy of affective domain by Krathwohl et al. One goes through a complex process that involves receiving, responding, valuing, organizing, and characterizing. These are explained in detail in Chapter 10. Natural acceptance is a process by which we accept what is told to us as the right value without much questioning or thinking. Natural acceptance generally occurs during early childhood.

The Gurukul system of education, prevalent in India in the past, naturally cultivated values among children at an early age. The education system of the country has undergone large-scale changes and the many technological developments have made it impossible for teachers and parents to control what students imbibe from various sources. This makes it all the more necessary to have a formal system of value education that focuses on the young minds to acquire the right values.

The second source is personal experiences. You can acquire appropriate values from your experiences, your successes, and failures. As we go through different types of experiences with events and people, we must learn and internalize the right values.

DIMENSIONS OF ETHICS

As human endeavours grow, ethics does not remain confined to the single paradigm of right or wrong. Developments in science and technology have evoked several ethical issues and intense debates. Along with this development, various branches of ethics have evolved.

- Engineering ethics deals with ethical aspects of the engineering profession.
- Bioethics deals with issues such as cloning, DNA mapping, and so on.
- Medical ethics is concerned with issues such as euthanasia (mercy killing) that relate to the medical profession.
- Environmental ethics deals with the management of the ecosystem that is vital to human existence.
- Media ethics including newspapers, television, and multimedia information technology, refers to issues of privacy, sting operations, and so on.

Computer ethics, human rights ethics, and minimal right ethics are all new branches that have evolved with time. Some of the ethical issues under these disciplines will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 7.

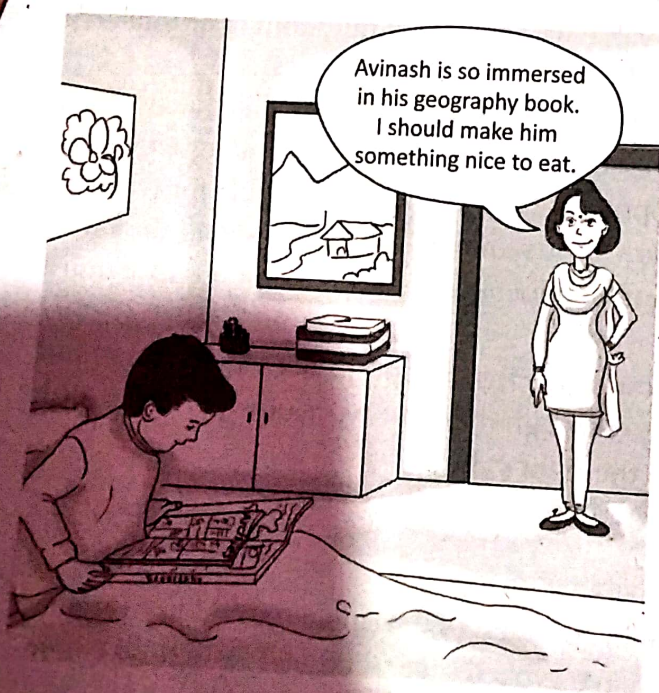
SETTING GOALS IN LIFE

A poster reads as follows: 'What you are is God's gift to you. What you become is your gift to God'. Setting goals in life is an important aspect of your development. It is all the more important for young people. Imitation is a basic trait in human beings. Unfortunately, we find it difficult to find perfect, living persons to imitate.

While setting goals in life, an important point to remember is the moral and ethical aspects of our personal and professional life. We should not become part of the prevailing rat race. Today, not only is life fast-paced, but we also believe in getting quick returns from the goals we pursue. It is the order of the day to achieve our objectives in the shortest possible time by any means. This has led to social conflicts. Though we all want to live in peace, our uncontrolled ambitions and an 'end justifies the means' attitude in all walks of life has attained dangerous proportions.

In your personal life, set goals to lead a blemish-free life. In today's world, the motto is 'do not follow the crowd'. Have your own ethical standards consistent with your beliefs and the standards of the society you are living in. It takes courage to lead an ethical life. Do not forget that you may appear to lose in the beginning but in the end you will have all the peace and happiness you are looking for.

In professional life, you may have a liking for a particular profession. Pursue it further to qualify for that profession. Hard work is the only way to succeed. Your choice of profession is very important. There are many types of people holding various jobs these days. Only a lucky few get to do the job they like. Many others do not like their jobs, but still have the will and tenacity to



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