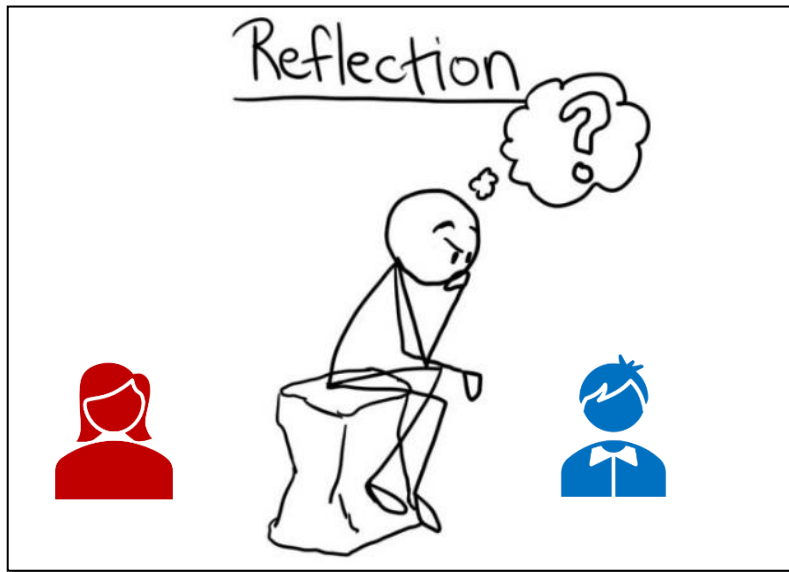


# L– 12: Ethical Conflict: Case Studies of Professionals



Contributors

**Prof. Prakash Dandekar**

(Evangelist & Visiting Professor, IIT Gandhinagar & Bombay, Member, Heartfulness Institute)

**Dr. Joshua Earnest**

(Professor of Electrical Engineering, NITTTR Bhopal)



**National Institute of Technical Teachers' Training and Research**  
Shamla Hills, Bhopal M.P. - INDIA 462002

## Lesson–12

### Ethical Conflict: Some Case Studies for Professionals

**Learning outcomes:** At the end of this lesson, you will be able to resolve ethical conflicts according to moral values and ethics.

#### Contents

1.0	INTRODUCTION .....	3
2.0	CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICAL CONFLICT IN TECHNICAL EDUCATION .....	3
3.0	Case 1 .....	4
4.0	Case 2 .....	4
5.0	Case 3 .....	4
6.0	Case 4 .....	5
7.0	Case 5 .....	5
8.0	Case 6 .....	5
9.0	Case 7 .....	5
10.0	Case 8 .....	6
11.0	Case 9 .....	6
12.0	Case 10 .....	6
13.0	SUMMARY .....	7
	BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	7

## Lesson –12

# Ethical Conflict: Some Case Studies for Professionals

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The personality of a person, his/her actions and choices made by him/her reflect his/her values. On the other hand, the 'ethics' control and govern the behaviour of a person according to norms set by others. In the sphere of business and services, the sellers and buyers follow some basic ethics which are accepted as a baseline by every stakeholder in that activity. In professional situations, such as teaching, medical, legal or hospitality and such others, the persons involved may experience ethical conflicts. This lesson presents some case studies based on some real incidents that have happened (or maybe happening now) in the Indian University system. The intention is to open up your minds of how to relate the situations in day-to-day life, how such ethical issues have to be handled without any compromise when striving towards excellence in your profession. Criticism and gossip over these 10 case studies presented in this lesson will not help much and will not help to achieve anything good. **Therefore, the cases given in this lesson are the ones which will help in introspection and learning.** Good values can also be inculcated by regular exposure to good behavior by teachers, seniors.

### 2.0 CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICAL CONFLICT IN TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Ethics are taught to everybody right from school days and generally students and teachers are fully aware of what ought to be done and what not to be done. All teaching institutions frame their code of conduct and everybody signs on the dotted line promising to conform to them. Something which is both morally and legally correct is not worth mentioning over here since it meets the expectations of all human beings. However, there are many infringements and rule breaking instances which are common in educational campuses all over the world.

Following are some cases where the persons who broke the rule of ethics knowing fully well what they were doing and had given one or the other moral justification for doing so. These cases for simplicity can be categorised as the following:

- a) Cases which are morally correct but legally incorrect (punishable)
- b) Cases which are morally incorrect but cannot be legally challenged
- c) Cases which are both morally and legally incorrect.

Both morally and legally incorrect behaviour is easy to spot. It is the other two categories where the teachers get confused and undertake them willingly or unwillingly and suffer from the consequences. The readers are encouraged to categorise the cases given here into these

two categories and judge which become the moral and legal traps for an unexpected or unsuspecting sincere teacher.

The case studies given below are more or less black and white cases and there is no reason for giving any benefit of doubt to the perpetrator. These are discussed here to highlight the fact that whatever may be the reason, the person concerned must follow the rules in letter and spirit. That may make him/her suffer the consequences including collateral damage to relationships with the teaching fraternity. These are stark reminders to teachers of what the profession and the rest of society expects from them to conduct.

### 3.0 Case 1

A theft has occurred in the laboratory and a meter is found missing. Students have been asked about it and they have denied taking it. After a few days, a bright and hardworking student confesses to a teacher that he had taken it for study at home and to conduct some experiments. Now he wishes to return it and he is seeking teacher's assistance in putting back the meter in its place in the lab, without anybody knowing about it.

**Question for Reflection:** Should the teacher condone this action in the light of the excellent academic record of the student or bring it to the notice of the head of the institution?

### 4.0 Case 2

The teacher 'A' finds that one of his colleagues, teacher 'B' is tutoring a few students at home and charging a fee for that. Teacher B openly advises weak students to visit his home and get personally tutored. Those students who attend his tuition are given undue benefits like more marks than they deserve. Those who do not attend tuition class are failed in the examination. An important point to note is Teacher 'B' has been very helpful to Teacher 'A' and teacher 'A' owes some money to 'B'.

**Question for Reflection:** Should teacher 'A' keep quiet about 'B's action due to a gratitude or friendship, or report it to the management about the malpractice.

### 5.0 Case 3

A student is exceptionally gifted in a game such as football and represents national team. Since he is most of the time travelling or practicing, he is not able to attend classes and is very weak in studies. Teacher has made all efforts to teach him, even teaching in extra time, yet in the final examination, the student has performed dismally and deserves to be failed. If the student fails, he would lose financial support from the college and will become ineligible to play for national team. So, his passing in all courses is most essential for his future.

**Question for Reflection:** Should the teacher bend the rules for this student, give him unearned marks and pass him or go by ethical standards and give him only the marks earned and if required, fail him?

#### 6.0 Case 4

A teacher is lazy in checking examination answer sheets. He cursorily glances at the answer book, leaves pen marks on each page but does not read the text. Then based on the general impression, gives almost similar marks to all questions. He does not check the quality of content written by the students, but looks at the total volume or length of the answer, neatness, quality and handwriting. He never fails any student, so nobody complains about his lack of efforts in checking the paper properly. One of his colleagues has come to know about this malpractice and has collected enough evidence against him.

**Question for Reflection:** Should this colleague keep quiet, since nobody is complaining and nobody suffers any loss or bring it to the notice of the administration?

#### 7.0 Case 5

A teacher has two bright students 'A' and 'B'. 'A' is topper in the class and 'B's' rank in the class is between 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. Student 'B' belongs to teacher's community and even distantly related to the teacher. When the final examination is conducted, the teacher gives undue extra marks to 'B' and reduces 'A's' score to enable 'B' to get the 1<sup>st</sup> position. On the complaint to head of institution, who asks for answer sheets are shocked by the blatant partiality. The teacher otherwise is a normal efficient person. A strong disciplinary action against him may upset the regular teaching operations.

**Question for Reflection:** Should head of institution look at teacher's usefulness and condone the act?

#### 8.0 Case 6

A teacher is very competent, dynamic and is always arranging college festivals and events. He has been given funds to purchase certain items needed for the stage. He gets the bills inflated from shopkeeper and uses the extra amount obtained illegally to compensate volunteer students' expenses of food and transportation, which, were otherwise, not admissible under the college rules. The head of the institution comes to know about it.

**Question for Reflection:** Should the head of the institution take action against the teacher for causing extra expenditure to the college? If he does that, will he cause a setback to the teacher's career, and the teacher may not volunteer to work for similar tasks again, at least not with the same willingness, zeal and initiative.

#### 9.0 Case 7

A group of four students 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' are a team which has been assigned a year-long project. 'C' is the only one who spends most of the time in researching about it, designing, building and testing. 'B' assists him but spends only 30% time as compared to 'C'. 'A' spends 10% time and 'D' is mostly non-participating. When the evaluation is done internally, 'C' gets high marks, while the rest of the 3 students get about 80% of what 'C' got, though they contributed very little compared to 'C'. When an external evaluation is done, the project is adjudged the best and everybody gets very high, but equal marks. 'C' is watching all this and wondering why the other 3 batch mates have been given equal marks. When he complains, his advisor tells him, why it should matter to him since 'C' is adjudged correctly and has not lost anything.

**Question for Reflection:** Should student 'C' complain to higher authorities about it?

### 10.0 Case 8

Teacher 'A' teaches his classes regularly and diligently. Another teacher 'B' who teaches another course to the same class, is sloppy, careless and disorganised and does not teach well. 'B' misses the classes many times on some pretext of administrative load. The students confide in 'A', that they are not being taught properly by 'B' but they cannot muster courage to go to higher authorities. They instead request A to intercede on their behalf. 'A' talks to 'B', informally but 'B' does not mend his ways.

**Question for Reflection:** What should 'A' do? Should he just be a passive onlooker or should he take student's complaint to higher authorities such as Dean or Principal.

### 11.0 Case 9

Teacher A is quite lazy in designing question papers. He has about 40 questions from last 4-5 year's question papers and selects eight questions randomly and creates a new paper, without changing anything in the questions. The student community too has access to old question papers too and is fully aware of teacher's laziness so they prepare a set of probable questions and not study the whole course. The students rote learn the answer and reproduce them correctly in the examination and get higher marks without learning. So they are not complaining. This is known to all of his colleagues but they do not complain because it does not affect anybody adversely.

**Question for Reflection:** How can the head of institution be made aware of it and what should be done to prevent it?

### 12.0 Case 10

On the practical examination day, a student broke his leg due to an accident and was confined to his bed. His parents approached the professor whether the student could be given another chance later when he is fit. The professor told them that student will have to

be declared absent and will have to reappear for that exam 6 months down the line. The father offered the examiner's panel to visit his home and take student's viva-voce exam over there, as an alternative to save student's loss of 6 months. The professor asked the other panel members and they all agreed after all other students are examined. At the end, they will visit the ailing student and take his viva-voce exam over there. The examination at home was duly carried out and student being good in studies, passed the exam easily. Another teacher in the institute complained to the head of the institution that this is an undue favour and illegal benefit given to a student which would set a wrong precedent and likely to be misused in the future.

**Question for Reflection:** What should the head of institution to do in this case?

#### ACTIVITY-1

For each of the 10 cases mentioned above, from ethical point of view, justify the actions that you will take.

### 13.0 SUMMARY

Personal '*values*' guide a person as to what is more important and help him/her to make better choices in various situations. On the other hand, the '*ethics*' control and govern the behaviour of a person according to norms set by others. In the sphere of teaching, the persons such as teacher, students, administrators and supporting staff involved may experience ethical conflicts. Counseling of persons can also be undertaken by appropriate persons to help the students. Good values and display of ethical behavior in tune with good practices by anyone should be brought to notice of persons involved as a matter of regular practice. Discussion platforms and debate forums can be created by you in different groups of students and teachers on different occasions in educational institutions, which can motivate many people especially teachers in such situations to adopt good values and follow ethics.

#### ACTIVITY-2

Prepare case on issues such as plagiarism in research papers, projects and assignments, ethics in organising conferences, assessment of student projects, preparation for teaching, interpersonal conflicts in faculty and staff that affect academics.

\*\*\*\*\*

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] <http://tutorials.istudy.psu.edu/academicintegrity/academicintegrity9.html>

[2] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5432416/>



## Lesson – 12 DISCUSSION FORUM

Start a discussion on social media on some *ethical conflict* issues for you seek solutions.