

L–14: Role of Professional Societies



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Lesson –14

Role of Professional Societies

Learning outcomes: At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- LO 1. Describe role of professional societies.
- LO 2. Describe code of conduct for professionals.
- LO 3. Describe the role of professional teachers with respect to the professional societies.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the career of a technical teacher, membership of a professional society is very important as it is one of the main prime movers in his/her professional progress. Some teachers enter the profession because they're eager to make a difference — their students tend to remember their teachers for an entire lifetime, long after they have left the university/institute. Other teachers are inspired by their own teachers earlier during their education who had a positive impact on them. Although they are driven by a positive energy, many fail to understand the true meaning of being a professional educator. Professional teachers always recognize that change is the norm. They are growth-oriented and consider themselves life-long learners and contributors. This lesson discusses about the roles of different professional societies so that the technical teacher appreciates his/her role as a professional technical teacher with respect to the professional society.

2.0 PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

A professional society (also called a professional body, professional organization, or professional association) seeks to further the cause of that particular profession, the interests of individuals engaged in that profession and the public interest. In most countries, such societies are typically non-profit organisations for tax purposes. Many others are either supported by national governments, or are enacted by a national law. All professional societies define a code of conduct or ethics for their members. Though they operate in different professional spheres such as doctors, engineers, lawyers, accountants and so on, there is still a common set of ethics which all of them expect their members to follow. In addition, they have ethical rules that are specific to their respective professions.

3.0 ATTRIBUTES AND ROLES OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

Following are some of the attributes of professional societies:

- a) Such a society is a group of people, in an occupation who are entrusted with maintaining control or oversight of the legitimate practices of the occupation. It is also a body acting to safeguard the public interest. Such organizations fully represent the interest and well-being of the professional practitioners. They act to maintain their own privileged and powerful position as a controlling body.
- b) The Science Council, UK defines a professional society as 'an organization with individual members practicing a profession or occupation in which the organisation maintains an oversight (supervision or control) of the knowledge, skills, conduct and practice of that profession or occupation'.
- c) The mission of the professional societies is primarily educational and informational. Their influence flows from their continuing and highly visible functions: to publish

professional journals, to develop professional excellence and to raise public awareness. Through their work, they help to define and set standards for their professional fields and to promote high standards of quality through awards and other forms of recognition. In addition, there are statutory bodies and regulators that guarantee quality assurance and 'have powers mandated by Parliament to regulate a profession or group of professions and protect the use of professional titles'.

- d) There are professional societies that 'are independent membership organizations that oversee the activities of a particular profession and represent the interests of their members' and which 'may offer registration or certification of unregulated occupations on a voluntary basis.'
- e) Many professional bodies are involved in accrediting degrees, defining and examining the skills and competencies necessary to practice a person, and granting professional certifications to indicate that a person is qualified in the subject area. Sometimes membership of a professional body is synonymous with certification, though it may not be so always. In some professions, membership of a professional body, as a legal requirement, can form the primary formal basis for gaining entry to and setting up practice within the profession such as medical council of India (MCI), Nursing Council of India (NCI), Dental Council of India (DCI), Bar Council of India and such others.
- f) Many professional bodies also act as learned societies for the academic disciplines underlying their professions. Many professional, or disciplinary, societies were founded to support the single disciplines for which they are named. In recent decades, these societies, like many other organizations, have been increasingly called on to expand their relationships to new fields of research. Such societies are common in computer applications, bio-sciences, economic, statistics and applied mathematics.

Following sections highlight the different ethical code of conduct specified by different professional societies for different professions. The *details given below is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive*, but merely representative sample to show the basic expectations from members. The ethics expected from engineers and technical teachers are also included.

4.0 COMMON CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL PROFESSIONS

The professional ethics define how you agree to relate to one another and the codes of professional conduct lay out a road map for professional relationships. Though many codes may differ across the spectrum, few basic ethics stand out clearly. These are common to all societies and they expect their members to be a good human being first, before being a good professional. Same applies to technical teachers. First they are engineers, then they are teachers but underlying all this veneer, they are expected to be first a good human being. So, the common ethics are listed below for reconsideration and recapitulation:

- a) You shall be honest in your profession towards the person whom you are providing service (students).

- b) You shall be just and even-handed to all and show no favors or bias or prejudices.
- c) You shall be compassionate in dealing with others.
- d) You will take responsibility for all your actions.
- e) You will perform your task diligently, meticulously, punctually and cheerfully at all times.
- f) You will foster an atmosphere of peace, brotherhood, mutual cooperation and will never exploit others.
- g) You will abide by the rules of community and country and present a role model to others.
- h) Your conduct should be so as to enhance the honor, reputation, and usefulness of the profession.
- i) You shall be truthful and transparent.

ACTIVITY 1

- a) Describe your own behavior in the light of one aspect of ethical conduct i.e.
- b) *"You will take responsibility for all your actions".*

5.0 ETHICS FOR DOCTORS

In India the ethics for doctor's code of conduct was prepared or enforced by Medical Council of India (MCI) which is likely to be replaced by National Medical Commission (NMC), soon. The actual list for ethics is very long and only 4 guiding principles are given here:

- a) **Autonomy:** The doctor must provide the patient complete autonomy and freedom of thought, intention, and action when making decisions regarding health care procedures. Therefore, the patient's decision-making process must be free of coercion or coaxing. In order for a patient to make a fully informed decision, she/he must understand all risks and benefits of the procedure and the likelihood of success.
- b) **Justice:** The idea is that the burdens and benefits of new or experimental treatments must be distributed equally among all groups in society. The health care provider must do these tasks in an even handed manner - fair distribution of scarce resources, competing needs, rights and obligations, and potential conflicts with established legislation.
- c) **Beneficence:** Doctor must undertake a procedure with the intent of doing good for the patient involved. S/he must develop and maintain skills and knowledge, continually update training, consider individual circumstances of all patients, and strive for patient's benefit.
- d) **Non-maleficance:** Doctor must ensure that a procedure does not harm the patient involved or others in society. In some cases, it is difficult for doctors to successfully apply the do no harm principle.

6.0 ETHICS FOR LAWYERS

The profession of law is a noble profession with reference to professional ethics, harbored in compliance with the established set of rules and code of conduct for advocates. There is a given code of conduct for lawyers in India that they are expected to follow while practicing the profession. This code of conduct is laid down under legislation that governs the legal profession in India. Rule for Code of conduct of lawyers is mandated to secure the importance of legal profession in India as the lawyers are officers of the court who play an important and critical part in securing the administration of justice.

The Bar Council of India is a statutory body that has been set-up to perform several disciplinary, reformatory and regulatory functions in the field of law and other related fields. It recognizes Universities that award law degrees that act as a relevant qualification for the registration of an advocate. It also safeguards the privileges, rights as well as interests of the lawyer. So, in order to sustain his/her membership in the Indian bar, a lawyer has to follow the prescribed bar council code of conduct, standards, ethics and regulations righteously.

The **Advocates Act, 1961** was enacted to govern the law profession in India by making provisions that regulate their registration, admission, methods of practice and education, standardize the ethics of legal provision in India. Each lawyer who is a member of the State Bar Council and Bar Council of India has to follow the provisions of this Act. In India, advocate is a sub-set of lawyer but the act only applies to the Advocates as the Advocates are the ones who are allowed to practice in the court because of their membership in the Bar Council of India and State Bar Council whereas, lawyers are the persons who have completed their bachelor's degree in law. Thus, Bar Council code of conduct is applicable only to the member lawyers i.e., advocates.

Here are a few ethical conducts expected by lawyer member:

- a) A lawyer must accept bribes from their client in order to stand for them in the court.
- b) A lawyer cannot pull out of a case without a reasonable and serious cause.
- c) A lawyer has to be truthful and open to their clients and declare all details of the case even if those details may cause harm to the client's case in future.
- d) A lawyer has to always protect and defend the well-being of his client. It is an ethical responsibility of a lawyer to put his client's interest before anyone else's.
- e) It is unethical for a lawyer to hide or conceal any material evidence or information if that may lead to the unfair sentencing of a person who is innocent.
- f) A lawyer must maintain confidentiality of exchanged information in a client-advocate relationship. A lawyer must maintain trust and confidence of their client and must not ill-treat or abuse any information shared for any other purposes than representing the client.
- g) A lawyer cannot misuse or mis-arrange any of client's funds without informing them, like converting them into loans or any other wrongful means. A lawyer has to be

accountable to his client for any amount of money delivered by the client i.e. details of the money spent, records of information gathered by that money, and others.

- h) If a lawyer is representing one of the parties in a legal proceeding, he cannot represent any other party in that suit.

7.0 ETHICS FOR ACCOUNTANTS

The professional society of accountants expects their members to adhere to following code of conduct or ethics:

- a) **Integrity:** A professional accountant should be straightforward and honest in all professional and business relationships.
- b) **Objectivity:** A professional accountant should not allow bias, conflict of interest or undue influence of others to override professional or business judgments.
- c) **Professional Competence and Due Care:** A professional accountant has a continuing duty to maintain professional knowledge and skill at the level required to ensure that a client or employer receives competent professional service based on current developments in practice, legislation and techniques. A professional accountant should act diligently and in accordance with applicable technical and professional standards when providing professional services.*
- d) **Confidentiality:** A professional accountant should respect the confidentiality of information acquired as a result of professional and business relationships and should not disclose any such information to third parties without proper and specific authority unless there is a legal or professional right or duty to disclose. Confidential information acquired as a result of professional and business relationships should not be used for the personal advantage of the professional accountant or third parties.
- e) **Professional Behavior:** A professional accountant should comply with relevant laws and regulations and should avoid any action that discredits the profession.

8.0 ETHICS FOR ENGINEERS

Engineers provide growth and sustenance of material wealth of a nation. Their efforts improve living standards and well-being of the population. The tasks they perform involve huge investment in manpower, money and national resources and their effort has gigantic impact over their people. As professionals, engineers need to internalise their codes and to realize that they have a personal stake in the application of codes as well as the process of developing the codes. Yet, most engineers view professional codes as static statements developed by 'others' with little (or no) input from the individual engineer. Complicating the problem, questions of professionalism (such as ethics) are frequently viewed as topics outside the normal realm of engineering analysis and design. In reality, professional responsibility is an integral part of the engineering process. The professional societies, expect that in the fulfillment of their professional duties, they shall:

- a) Give high importance to safety, health, and welfare of the public.
- b) Perform services only in the areas of their competence.

- c) Avoid all conduct or practice that deceives the public.
- d) Maintain confidentiality and not disclose, without consent, information concerning the business affairs or technical processes of any present or former client or employer, or public body which they serve.
- e) Avoid to be influenced in the professional duties by conflicting interests.
- f) Avoid attempting to obtain employment or advancement or professional engagements by untruthfully criticising other engineers, or by other improper or questionable methods.
- g) Desist from attempting to injure, maliciously or falsely, directly or indirectly, the professional reputation, prospects, practice, or employment of other engineers.
- h) Present information to the competent authority for actions of others who are guilty of unethical or illegal practice.
- i) Accept personal responsibility for their professional activities while seeking indemnification for services arising out of their practice for other than gross negligence, where his/her interests cannot otherwise be protected.
- j) Give credit for engineering work to those to whom credit is due, and will recognize the proprietary and interests of others.

9.0 ATTRIBUTES FOR PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS

Following are some of the attributes for professional teachers. They are:

- a) Value-driven, guided by principles, passion, and a purpose bigger than themselves.
- b) Need analysts – competent to diagnose and prescribe options for educational success and significance.
- c) Believers of their profession is their calling.
- d) Growth-oriented and consider themselves life-long learners and contributors. They recognize that change is the norm.
- e) Climate creators, recognizing that the conditions that surround learning contribute to learning.
- f) Catalysts in promoting calculated risks that advance their profession and enable everyone to access success.
- g) Promoters of cohesiveness, collaboration, and team-building. They promote 'we are better together' philosophy.
- h) Creators of a climate of ownership by ensuring that everyone involved in the educational process is invited to participate.
- i) Accountable to their clients, community, students and their parents providing a quality educational program for all.
- j) A class that promotes their profession above personal gain.

10.0 ETHICS FOR TEACHERS

The technical teacher is first and foremost an engineer and are therefore governed by the ethics of engineering societies as well. It is very important that engineers need to observe an

honourable conduct towards other engineers, employers, clients, and toward the public. The current education curriculum and professional societies pay inadequate attention to the area. So, the burden of responsibility of technical teacher gets bigger because s/he has to follow two sets of codes of conduct - first for being an engineer and second for being a teacher. Indian Society for Technical education (ISTE) lists a few codes of ethical conduct for technical teachers as follows:

- a) Deal justly and impartially with students regardless of their social, economic, regional and religious background.
- b) Recognise the differences among students and seek to meet their individual needs.
- c) Encourage students to work for higher individual goals. Aid students to develop an understanding and appreciation not only of opportunities and benefits but also of their responsibilities.
- d) Inculcate in students respect for teachers, love towards fellow students and loyalty to institution and the country.
- e) Acquaint students with civic responsibilities and environmental protection.
- f) Never use students to solve his/her personal problems.
- g) Accept no remuneration for tutoring except in accordance with approved policies of Government / Institutions.

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), at Washington D.C., USA expects its members and even participants to communicate professionally and constructively, whether in person or virtually, handling dissent or disagreement with courtesy, dignity and an open mind, being respectful when providing feedback, and being open to alternate points of view.

ACTIVITY 2

Describe your own behavior in the light of one aspect of ethical conduct i.e. *Deal justly and impartially with students regardless of their social, economic, regional and religious background.*

11.0 SUMMARY

The professional societies play a very important role in the life of technical teachers as they set up the expectations about the expectations from its members and prevent members from any wrong actions which will negatively impact the lives of people and community. In short, they seem to become similar to an arm of law in the country.

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DISCUSSION FORUM

Discuss the role of a teacher in dealing with students having extremely poor academic background and also economic background. Assume that the institution in which the situation is a government institution having a committed Principal and adequate infrastructural and human resources.