PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE AMONG TEACHER TRAINEES: A CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

Anjali Tyagi [1], Dr. Vinod Kumar Jain [2]

[1] Research Scholar, Faculty of Education, Teerthanker Mahaveer University, Moradabad, UP, India
[2] Principal, Faculty of Education, Teerthanker Mahaveer University, Moradabad, UP, India

ABSTRACT

Professional attitude in teacher trainees plays a vital role in determining their success and effectiveness in the teaching profession. It refers to a set of values, beliefs, behaviors, and commitments that align with the high standards expected from educators in today's classrooms. This paper explores the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that help define and shape such attitudes in teacher education. It draws on insights from educational psychology, which explains how teachers think and behave in learning environments; from professional ethics, which guide their moral responsibility; and from pedagogical theories, which support effective teaching and student engagement. The review identifies key qualities of a professional teacher—such as responsibility, respect, fairness, commitment, and a positive attitude. These traits reflect not only personal integrity but also an educator's role in creating a healthy learning environment. Several factors influence the development of professional attitudes. These include personal values, the culture of the teacher education institution, support from mentors, and the structure of training modules. These elements work together to shape how future teachers view their roles and responsibilities. The paper emphasizes that teacher preparation programs should focus not only on academic skills but also on fostering professional growth. Reflective practice is particularly important, as it helps trainees critically analyze their teaching behavior and make improvements. A strong professional attitude also supports ethical decision-making and encourages the habit of lifelong learning. This ensures that teachers remain updated with current educational trends and continuously improve their teaching practices.

Keywords: Professional Attitude, Reflective Practice, Ethical Conduct, Pedagogical Theories

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of **professional attitude** is central to the **identity, competence, and long-term effectiveness** of teachers. It not only shapes the way educators interact with students and colleagues but also influences their ethical decisions, commitment to learning, and the overall quality of education delivered Sockett (1993). For **teacher trainees**, the development of a professional attitude is a foundational aspect of their journey toward becoming responsible educators. It involves more than mere adherence to codes of conduct; it requires the **internalization of core professional values** such as integrity, empathy, accountability, and respect for diversity Shulman (1987), InTASC (2013). In recent years, the demands placed on educators have expanded significantly due to the

complexities of the 21st-century classroom, including **inclusive education**, **technological integration**, and **holistic development** of learners. These challenges necessitate that teacher trainees possess not just knowledge and pedagogical skills, but also a **strong and reflective professional attitude** Day (2004). A teacher with a well-developed professional attitude is better equipped to **adapt to educational changes**, **collaborate with stakeholders**, and foster a **positive and inclusive learning environment** Larrivee (2000). Research indicates that professional attitude significantly affects **teachers' performance**, **classroom climate**, and even **student achievement** OECD (2005). Professionalism in teaching includes dimensions such as **commitment to continuous learning**, **ethical decision-making**, and **collaborative practices**, all of which must be cultivated early in the teacher education process Hargreaves and Fullan (2012). Hence, developing a professional attitude is not an optional aspect of teacher training; it is a **non-negotiable core component** of effective teacher preparation. Teacher education programs, therefore, carry the **responsibility to intentionally nurture professional dispositions** through curriculum design, reflective practice, field experiences, and mentorship NCATE (2008). Yet, despite its importance, professional attitude remains a **conceptually under-explored and inconsistently defined area** in many teacher training curricula Wilkerson and Lang (2007). There is an urgent need to **theoretically explore and clarify** what constitutes a professional attitude in teacher trainees and how it can be effectively nurtured.

This paper aims to provide a **conceptual and theoretical exploration** of professional attitude among teacher trainees, highlighting its significance, core components, and implications for teacher education. By reviewing major theoretical perspectives and educational frameworks, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how teacher education institutions can better prepare pre-service teachers to enter the profession with the **ethical grounding and reflective mindset** essential for quality education.

2. UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE

A professional attitude is a complex and multidimensional construct that reflects the dispositions, values, beliefs, and behaviors expected of individuals engaged in a particular profession Wilkerson and Lang (2007). In the context of teaching, it serves as the moral and ethical compass that guides teachers' actions and decisions in and outside the classroom. It is not confined to observable behaviors alone but includes internalized ethical principles, personal responsibility, and a commitment to students' holistic development Sockett (1993). At its core, professional attitude in teaching includes a strong sense of duty and commitment to student learning, a commitment that goes beyond delivering content. It demands that educators care deeply about students' academic and emotional well-being and are willing to adapt pedagogical approaches to meet diverse needs Campbell (2003). For instance, professional teachers demonstrate patience, fairness, empathy, and inclusive thinking—characteristics that are critical for establishing trust and promoting a safe and nurturing learning environment Tschannen et al. (1998). Teacher trainees, being in the formative phase of their professional journey, must develop attitudes that align with the ethical and pedagogical expectations of the profession. According to the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium InTASC (2013), dispositions such as respect for learners, openness to feedback, and reflective practice are essential attributes of teacher professionalism. These attitudes are integral to building long-term professional identity and sustaining teaching as a vocation, not merely an occupation Kelchtermans (2009).

Furthermore, professional attitude is strongly linked to lifelong learning. Effective teachers continually seek to improve their practice through feedback, collaboration, and engagement with current educational research Darling (2006). Teacher trainees must be encouraged to see teaching as a dynamic process that requires ongoing personal and professional development. This learning-oriented attitude underpins the ability to innovate, solve problems, and remain responsive to societal changes. Another important component of professional attitude is collaboration and teamwork. In modern educational settings, teaching is increasingly viewed as a collective activity that involves cooperation with colleagues, parents, administrators, and the wider community Hargreaves and Fullan (2012). Teacher trainees must, therefore, develop attitudes that support open communication, shared responsibility, and mutual respect in professional interactions. Importantly, professional attitudes also encompass ethical integrity—adherence to codes of conduct, respect for confidentiality, and a strong sense of justice and equality Campbell (2003). Trainees should be equipped with the capacity to make ethical judgments in complex classroom situations, uphold professional boundaries, and act as role models for their students. In sum, a professional attitude is not merely a set of desirable traits but a moral and intellectual disposition that shapes how teachers understand and enact their role in the educational process. It is cultivated through reflective training, mentorship, and experiential learning, all of which are essential components of high-quality teacher education programs Loughran (2006). Without a well-formed professional attitude, the effectiveness, credibility, and sustainability of a teacher's role can be severely undermined.

3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Understanding the development of a professional attitude among teacher trainees requires grounding in multiple theoretical frameworks that highlight the cognitive, emotional, social, and ethical dimensions of learning and behavior. The following key theories and frameworks offer insights into how professional attitudes are shaped, nurtured, and sustained during teacher education.

3.1. CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY

The constructivist perspective, rooted in the work of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, posits that learning is an active, contextual, and social process where individuals construct new knowledge and meanings based on their experiences Piaget (1973), Vygotsky (1978). In teacher education, the development of professional attitudes is viewed as an evolving construct that is built through self-reflection, collaborative learning, and experiential engagement in real classroom settings. Constructivism emphasizes the significance of scaffolding, dialogue, and authentic practice. For instance, Vygotsky's concept of the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) illustrates how teacher trainees can develop higher-order professional values when guided by mentors and cooperating teachers Vygotsky (1978). This theoretical approach supports the idea that professional attitudes are not innate but constructed through meaningful interaction and critical engagement with pedagogical dilemmas.

3.2. HUMANISTIC THEORY

Humanistic psychology, pioneered by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, centers on the belief that individuals possess an innate drive toward self-

actualization, empathy, and personal growth Rogers (1969), Maslow (1970). Within the context of teacher education, the humanistic approach encourages the nurturing of self-awareness, authenticity, and intrinsic motivation, which are essential elements of a professional attitude. Rogers emphasized student-centered learning and the importance of creating non-threatening environments that allow teacher trainees to explore their values and develop confidence in their professional identity. Maslow's hierarchy of needs also implies that teacher trainees are more likely to exhibit professional attitudes when their basic psychological and emotional needs are met, enabling them to focus on ethical practice and professional excellence.

3.3. SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory highlights the critical role of modeling, observation, imitation, and reinforcement in the development of attitudes and behaviors Bandura (1977). In teacher education, this theory is particularly relevant because teacher trainees often observe and emulate the behaviors and attitudes of experienced educators, mentors, and peers. Bandura's concept of *self-efficacy*—the belief in one's capabilities to perform tasks effectively—is deeply intertwined with professional attitude. Teacher trainees who observe confident, ethical, and student-focused educators are more likely to internalize those professional standards and develop a strong sense of efficacy in their own abilities Bandura (1986).

3.4. PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITION FRAMEWORKS

In addition to psychological theories, professional disposition frameworks provide structured guidelines and benchmarks for evaluating and nurturing professional attitudes in teacher trainees. The Danielson Framework for Teaching (2013) and the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium InTASC (2013) are two widely recognized models that define essential professional dispositions such as reflective practice, ethical responsibility, fairness, respect for diversity, and collaboration. Danielson's Framework includes domains like professional responsibilities, which stress the importance of ethical conduct, communication with families, and engagement in continuous professional learning Danielson (2013). Similarly, InTASC standards emphasize **professional ethics**, learner development, and collaborative leadership, offering a comprehensive lens to assess whether teacher trainees are cultivating the attitudes required for effective teaching. These frameworks reinforce the notion that professionalism in teaching is not only about competencies but also about **who the teacher is**, how they **think** and behave, and their **ethical** commitment to students and society.

Together, these theoretical perspectives underline that professional attitude formation is a **dynamic and multifaceted process**. Constructivist, humanistic, and social learning theories emphasize **internal growth and external modeling**, while professional frameworks provide **normative standards** for professional identity. Understanding these perspectives can help teacher education programs design more effective strategies to instill lasting professional attitudes in their trainees.

4. CORE COMPONENTS OF PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE

Professional attitude is not a singular trait but a complex integration of values, behaviors, and beliefs that influence how teachers perceive their roles and responsibilities. These core components serve as guiding principles for teacher

trainees as they transition into professional educators. Each component is essential for fostering a strong and sustainable teacher identity that aligns with both ethical standards and pedagogical goals.

4.1. ETHICAL COMMITMENT

At the heart of professional attitude lies ethical commitment, which refers to a teacher's moral responsibility to act with honesty, fairness, justice, and respect in all interactions—with students, colleagues, families, and the broader community. Ethical commitment ensures that decisions are not made based on convenience or personal interest, but rather on what is best for student learning and wellbeing Strike and Soltis (2009). Teacher trainees are expected to internalize ethical principles during their preparation phase by engaging with code of conduct policies, analyzing ethical dilemmas, and participating in discussions on moral reasoning. This component also encompasses confidentiality, equity in assessment, non-discrimination, and the protection of students' rights and dignity Campbell (2008).

4.2. REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Reflective practice refers to the ability and habit of analyzing one's teaching experiences in order to understand successes, challenges, and areas for improvement. Introduced by Schön (1983), this practice encourages teachers to move from routine action to deliberative, evidence-informed decisions about pedagogy. Teacher trainees develop reflective abilities by maintaining teaching journals, engaging in peer observation and feedback, and participating in mentored teaching rounds. Reflection is vital not only for identifying mistakes but also for critically examining underlying beliefs, assumptions, and values that shape classroom practice. Effective reflection results in improved lesson planning, classroom management, and responsiveness to diverse learner needs. It also fosters adaptive expertise, which is essential in a rapidly changing educational landscape Loughran (2002).

4.3. LIFELONG LEARNING

A professional attitude encompasses a firm commitment to lifelong learning, where teacher trainees recognize the importance of continual professional development (CPD) and staying current with educational research, pedagogical innovations, and technological advancements OECD (2009). This mindset includes participating in workshops, attending seminars, engaging with professional learning communities, and pursuing advanced degrees or certifications. Lifelong learning reflects an understanding that teaching is not static but requires ongoing renewal of knowledge and practices to meet students' evolving needs. Moreover, lifelong learners model a growth mindset for their students, reinforcing the idea that learning is a continuous process Dweck (2006).

4.4. COLLABORATIVE DISPOSITION

Modern educational settings demand collaboration, not isolation. A collaborative disposition refers to a teacher's willingness to work constructively with colleagues, parents, administrators, and community stakeholders to enhance student learning outcomes Hargreaves and Fullan (2012). Collaboration in education involves co-teaching, interdisciplinary planning, shared leadership, mentoring, and active participation in professional learning teams. Teacher trainees

learn to appreciate different perspectives and value the collective expertise that arises from working in diverse teams. A collaborative attitude also promotes a culture of mutual respect, emotional support, and shared responsibility, all of which improve both teacher wellbeing and student achievement.

4.5. STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACH

A hallmark of professional attitude is a student-centered approach, where teaching practices are guided by the needs, interests, strengths, and learning styles of individual students. This involves creating inclusive, supportive, and equitable learning environments that recognize student diversity as an asset rather than a barrier Tomlinson (2001). Teacher trainees with a student-centered mindset are committed to differentiated instruction, active learning, formative assessment, and student voice in the classroom. They also prioritize emotional safety, cultural responsiveness, and social-emotional learning, ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to succeed. Such an approach shifts the teacher's role from knowledge transmitter to facilitator, mentor, and co-learner, which strengthens classroom engagement and ownership of learning.

Together, these five components—ethical commitment, reflective practice, lifelong learning, collaborative disposition, and student-centeredness—form the foundational pillars of a robust professional attitude. Embedding these elements in teacher education ensures that future educators not only meet technical teaching standards but also embody the moral and relational values essential to the profession.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

1) **Embed values education and professional ethics in the curriculum:** Teacher education programs should systematically include courses or modules that focus on core values such as integrity, responsibility, empathy, and respect. Discussions, case studies, and scenarios should be used to help trainees understand ethical dilemmas they may face in real classroom situations, preparing them to make morally sound decisions.

2) **Provide opportunities for critical reflection through journals, portfolios, and discussions:** Encouraging teacher trainees to maintain reflective journals or portfolios helps them to think deeply about their teaching practices, beliefs, and interactions with students. Group discussions or peer-sharing sessions can stimulate thoughtful dialogue, allowing trainees to refine their professional attitudes by learning from multiple perspectives.

3) **Encourage experiential learning through practicum, simulations, and collaborative projects:** Hands-on learning experiences allow teacher trainees to bridge the gap between theory and practice. During school-based practicum or teaching internships, trainees face real classroom situations. Simulations and collaborative tasks mimic the complexities of school environments, helping them build confidence, empathy, and a practical sense of professionalism.

4) **Offer mentorship programs involving experienced teachers:** Mentorship provides an essential support system. When trainees are guided by experienced and professionally mature teachers, they observe and internalize effective teaching practices, ethical conduct,

and classroom management techniques. This relationship promotes learning through modeling, feedback, and reflective dialogue.

5) **Regularly assess and provide feedback on trainees' dispositions and attitudes:** Institutions should not focus solely on academic or skill-based evaluations. Assessing personal qualities such as empathy, patience, teamwork, and commitment to learning is equally important. Regular feedback sessions can help trainees become more self-aware, identify areas for growth, and cultivate a responsible, student-centered attitude.

6. FACTORS INFLUENCING PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE

1) **Teacher Education Curriculum:** The content and structure of the teacher education curriculum play a major role in shaping a trainee's professional attitude. When ethics, reflective teaching, and practicum-based learning are embedded in the curriculum, it helps trainees understand the responsibilities and values expected of a teacher. Ethical education develops moral reasoning, reflective teaching promotes self-awareness and continuous improvement, while practicum allows real-world teaching experience. These elements help build a solid foundation for a responsible, thoughtful, and committed teacher.

2) **Mentorship and Supervision:** Exposure to experienced mentors and guided supervision supports the professional growth of teacher trainees. When trainees observe role models who demonstrate positive behavior, ethical teaching, and effective classroom practices, they are more likely to emulate these qualities. Constructive feedback from mentors helps trainees identify their strengths and areas for improvement. This mentoring relationship encourages self-confidence, responsibility, and a respectful attitude toward the profession.

3) **Cultural and Social Values:** The cultural background of a trainee and the values upheld by their community and educational institution also shape professional attitudes. Community expectations regarding respect, discipline, collaboration, and service can influence how teachers perceive their roles. Similarly, the institutional culture—whether it promotes cooperation, inclusivity, or ethical behavior—can deeply impact how trainees behave and interact in professional settings.

4) **Personal Dispositions:** A trainee's own personality, emotional intelligence, and motivation significantly affect their professional attitude. Traits such as patience, empathy, honesty, and resilience help build strong teacher-student relationships and foster a caring learning environment. Emotional intelligence enables teachers to manage stress, resolve conflicts, and respond thoughtfully to students' needs. Motivation and passion for teaching keep the teacher committed, enthusiastic, and open to learning and growth.

5) **Educational Policies and Standards:** National education policies and professional standards guide what is expected from teachers. These include codes of conduct, performance benchmarks, and guidelines for professional development. When teacher education institutions align their training with these standards, it ensures that trainees understand

the legal, ethical, and instructional expectations of the profession. Such alignment helps promote accountability, quality teaching, and a sense of duty among future teachers.

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8. CONCLUSION

Developing a professional attitude in teacher trainees is a continuous and dynamic journey that goes beyond a one-time training effort. It encompasses the holistic shaping of a trainee's character, mindset, and moral compass, in addition to their pedagogical skills. This process is not solely the responsibility of the individual trainee but requires the active involvement of the entire teacher education ecosystem—including curriculum designers, teacher educators, mentors, and policymakers. Each plays a crucial role in creating an environment that fosters ethical values, emotional balance, and professional competence. When teachers are nurtured to be emotionally stable, ethically responsible, and professionally sound,

they become powerful role models capable of inspiring learners and uplifting educational standards. Such educators contribute positively to society by fostering not only academic achievement but also value-based development in students. Ultimately, preparing teacher trainees with a strong professional attitude ensures that future generations benefit from an education that is intellectually stimulating, morally grounded, and socially responsible.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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