

Ethical Freedom for the Teacher in the Teaching Professionalism

Zabin Laishram

Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda College (Autonomous), Mylapore, Chennai – 600 004, India

Abstract: *In many places today we do not find educational tradition giving teachers ethical freedom that could protect them as well as students from arbitrary educational action is in fact to be regretted. The teacher demands ethical freedom, is now an essential advance for the further development for their rights and professional carrier. Carried out consistently, such demands could bring about significant changes inside the educational activities, especially in connection to the role of the educators and the faculty. As many philosophers said that, liberty or freedom is power – effective power to do specific things. Now the possession of such power is always a matter of the distribution of power that exists at the time. In this manner, the issues raised here is with the appropriation and matter of education. It is important, moreover, to note that this paper is an attempt to analyze the important of teachers who take a memorable role in the student community which is the feedback of them.*

Keywords: Education, Ethical Freedom, Pupils, Rights, Teachers, and Truth

1. Introduction

In philosophy, freedom¹ generally associated with having free will, which means that free to do what we will to do, without any compulsion, or restraint. In this manner, a man is free just when his will mirrors the law of his self-ruling self. He isn't dictated by anything outer to himself. As indicated by certain arrangement of Indian way of thinking, it is this freedom from all limitations that is conceived as the objective of life. Here, I would like to quote Kant's thought as follow: *"thou oughtest, therefore thou canst."*² He points out that the freedom of the will is a postulate of morality. In moral judgment, there is a feeling of "oughtness" or moral commitment; this ethical commitment suggests the opportunity of the will. Besides, in the event that you should make the wisest decision, you are free not to do it. Similarly, if you ought not to do what is wrong, you are free not to do it. It is clear that "Oughtness" implies freedom. This means that he or she is free in his or her voluntary and responsible actions. In this way, Kant contended that if there were no freedom of the will, obligation, duty, virtue and vice, would be very aimless. Subsequently we can note here that morality infers freedom of the will and it is the essential thing premise of ethical quality.

With respect to the role conceptions of freedom play in organizing our human aspirations, Isaiah Berlin accept that "freedom" can be altogether attributed either to human people or to groups, and he also distinguishes what he calls "negative conceptions" of freedom from "positive conceptions." Here, I would like to quote Berlin's thought about the four kinds of freedom:³

- a) Negative freedom of an individual: if my hand are untied, I am to that extent freer than I was;
- b) Positive freedom of an individual: a Roman slave who was emancipated became free "in a positive sense;"
- c) Negative freedom of a group: a certain nomadic group might not be free to move in a certain direction because of frontier arrangements; and
- d) Positive freedom of a group: if a colony successfully revolts against the metropolitan area and establishes itself as a separate political entity, it may sometimes be said to

have attained a kind of (positive) freedom it lacked before the revolt.

He claims that the positive concept of freedom by which he seems to mean in this case the positive freedom of a human individual is equivocal. Sometimes positive freedom of a human individual means "autonomy" or ability to give oneself the rule or principle of one's own behaviour, but sometimes positive freedom means "self-realization", that is the individual's true or real self come to expression in action. Then again, he declares that the idea of negative freedom of an individual is in some sense the most fundamental idea of freedom. Thus, without any doubt, we can assume from the above quote that if "freedom" is same as "pleasure" then it is same as "morality" too, so one can make progress in the right direction in understanding freedom as an ethical ideal.

As I am going to dissecting freedom for educators in this paper, as a matter of first importance we have to comprehend about the clear role of the teachers and students in education the fact that without them there is no significance of freedom for teachers by any means. In this context, I would like quote the words of Tagore: *"Education is a bi-polar process where students and teachers play their respective roles."*⁴ In education, teacher occupies a major position to be of service to mankind. It obviously implies that they has the rich chance of creating in the mind and heart of every boy and girl the beliefs and models of conduct that will provide guidance to their life. According to Swami Vivekananda:⁵

The teacher must throw his whole force into the tendency of the taught. Without real sympathy we can never teach well. The only true teacher is he who can convert himself, as it were, into a thousand persons at a moment's notice. The true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the student and see through and understand through his mind.

Thus, the concept of true teacher for Swami Vivekananda is very clear. Hence, we can assume from the above that a true teacher should observe the students minds and treat the student with a proper guidance, love, sympathy, equality and freedom. In this context, I would like to remember Rousseau's thought:⁶

In teaching-learning situation, a teacher not only works as an observer but also as a setter of the stage, a supplier of materials and opportunities, a provider of an ideal environment, a creator of conditions under which natural development takes place.

Consequently, the nature of any educational framework depends to an enormous measure on verifying accomplished and well prepared teachers. So it is very clear that teacher plays the role of leader, guide, facilitator and manager of the entire process of teaching-learning in classroom.

No doubt, students' also took a major role in education, which means that without students there is no point of having a teacher and also no meaning of education. As someone is almost certain to say that students' are the responsible person for the future generation of the society it clearly means that they are the pillar of the society.

Aristotle defined man or women as a thinking being, and reflective thinking or critical intelligence has usually been listed among the unique qualities of persons. In every age, however, there have been attempts by influential persons or established institutions to limit or to control man's thinking and the expression of his opinion. In fact, the struggle for freedom still continues to all over the profession in the world.

Man struggle for freedom goes back for some thousands of years, but widespread belief in the Right to express one's ideas freely and faith in intelligence as a means of bettering man's condition are comparatively recent. From the close to the Greek era until modern times, faith in intellectual freedom was eclipsed by faith in revelation and emphasis on obedience to some established order. Thinking was kept within tight restraints. There has been a creating conviction that huge numbers of the evils of man's personal and social life can be discarded through innovative insight. This conviction has expressed itself in the rise of public education, the growth of democracy, and many types of voluntary associations that are characteristic of free societies. In this regards, education has an important ethical function to fulfill virtuous thought in the mind of many youth. It must teach youths and adults to think and then to apply intelligence to social purposes. Yet this by itself is not enough. Therefore, I would like to quote the words of Gilbert Ryle that: "Education is an 'achievement word'." He distinguishes what he call 'task' words from 'achievement' words. 'Hunting' an animal denotes a 'task', 'finding' an animal an 'achievement'. Thus, education without a determining centre or apart from some commitment may lead to confusion. Hence, I would like to quote Titus and Keeton thought here:⁸

Education and democracy mean little unless they are accompanied by freedom of the mind and the right to give expression to the best that every man has in him.

They point out that each person has an obligation to use his freedom and his intelligence in way in which further his own development and the welfare of the group. Thus, the point to note here is that, if there is no democracy in education then there is no meaning of education at all. It clearly implies that in democracy, the freedom or right to speak freely of discourse and articulation are one of the fundamental things. In this manner, both the teachers and students should have the academic freedom or right to speak freely of discourse and articulation in instruction. Surely, we would need to ask a question: Do teachers have right to teach what is needed for the student society? Let us see it in a detailed manner.

This paper is an attempt to take the initial step that might lead to a suitable answer to the above question. And also, I shall elaborate on and assess from the ethical point of view in order to attempt to bring off the teachers ethical freedom in teaching professionalism.

2. Freedom for the Teacher

Strictly speaking, no teacher has any freedom at all but, conventionally, we may say that a teacher has some freedom in teaching professionalism. According to Peters:⁹

A teacher, as a rational being, must have an abiding concern about the sort of attitude that should be passed on to others. For without it the basic motivation will be lacking for teaching, in a proper sense, to be effective.

He accepts that, the future ages of the individuals are in the hand of the educator; in this manner, instructor is a good example for them. Thus, to be viable in teaching, teacher must have a withstanding worry about the kind of frame of mind that ought to be passed on to students and other people. For without it the essential inspiration will need for teaching.

Presumably, teachers have been occupied almost exclusively with imparting a particular body of facts in a specialized field, and they have prepared their students to be great contenders and to fit in with the current situation. Today it is increasingly evident that young person's being trained to live in society as it is now may graduate in a few years into a society changed enough to require a quite different kind of training. The rapidly changing social environment is making new demands on education and placing new responsibilities on teachers. In this situation, I would like to quote J.S. Mill as follows:¹⁰

If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person was of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing mankind. The one opinion may be right, but even if it is clearly wrong society gains by the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth produces by its collision with error.

Mill contended is that truth is possibly advanced if individuals are permitted to voice their very own opinions. If the universal opinions are true their truth will be strengthened by being challenged by conflicting opinions. If, they are false, their misrepresentation cannot be introduced except if challenge to them is permitted. To prevent freedom from claiming thought is to accept dependability. In this way, the pursuit of truth grows just by the progressive falsification or universal opinions. Such conflicts are basically unanswerable in the circle of what Locke had as of late called 'speculative opinions' in his 'A Letter Concerning Toleration'. The matter, however, is not exactly so straight forward in the sphere of what he called 'practical opinions'.

Mill distinguished in his essay between "freedom of thought" and "freedom of action". So according to Mill, the right to the freedom of thought is absolute and the right to the freedom of action conditional upon the possible harm done to others. A difficulty, however, arises with opinions which Locke called 'practical' which have a very close association with action on account of the mischief that they may do to public order and to the delight of rights by others peoples. Mill's failure to consider carefully the status of such opinions rather weakened his case for toleration. So, there are laws forbidding the expression of extreme forms of such practical opinions like law against libel, slander, obscenity, and sedition. Therefore, from the above we can note that the expression of opinions has to be checked, and what has to be used, is a matter of judgment.

No doubt, there is a need to apprehend clearly that Why is freedom important in teaching? We may answer to the question in three ways. Firstly, right of expression is a fundamental condition for the advancement of an individual and the creation and benefit of human esteems. Therefore, no doubt, teacher as an individual person living in the society must also have the same facility of freedom of expression. Furthermore, if the teacher cannot think and express their thought freely then it automatically becomes less something than well-developed person. Secondly, it is a fundamental condition for the revelation of truth, new thoughts, and creativity. No doubt, if the teachers cannot think and express themselves on controversial issues then that is, how can teacher discover the truth? So if they cannot discover what is truth or right, how can they live, wholesome moral lives? And finally, Freedom of expression is the basis of democracy. Consequently, there is no significance of democracy except if one cannot perceive or express the privilege or truth.

Clearly, the teacher's position in regard to the expression of opinion is complicated both by his educational role and by the fact that he is dealing with people whose minds are immature, which imposes special responsibilities on him or her. At this point, we can look the matter in two levels of freedom of the teaching: University Level and School Level. In this context, I would like to quote the words of Peters as follows: ¹¹

The discussion to date has only been concerned with speculative opinions that are handed on in the various school subjects. The responsibilities of a university teacher do not extend much

beyond these, though there are some who think it also to be the function of a university to induce some kind of moral commitment in his students. At the school level, however, the matter is again very different; for moral education is certainly a very important aspect of education at school.

From the above thought, we can note that, at the university level the teacher confusions of expression of opinion are of less significance, university teachers have in the principle a firm devotion to the quest for truth, in its different structures, and for the most part feel some obligation to start others into it. They are bound, of course, somewhat by syllabus and assessments which they help to build; however their right to translate such syllabus in their own particular manner is unquestioned. Their principle concern is with the pursuit of truth and what Mill says about 'speculative' sentiments applies pre-prominently to them. They feel little doubtful, as well, about presenting their own perspective emphatically about controversial matter in their subject to students. For they realize very well indeed that there are others with various perspectives to whom students can listen if they wish. They likewise realize that a significant number of their students have started to acquire the way of reasoning which will empower them to sift, assess, and criticize their very own perspectives. Indeed, if their students do not start producing attempted refutations of what they say they should consider that they are falling down on their job. There are, of course, as well, some university teachers who have little enthusiasm for the more extensive, instructive or moral setting of their exercises; they are required to give lectures and as accordingly direct their private thoughts out in the public. But no one will deny their contribution and dedication to the students who are going to be the citizen of the future generation.

Then again, the teacher circumstance in school level is to some degree differ. Like university educator, school teachers ought to have a solid loyalty to the order in which they have been prepared, they are concerned even more unequivocally with preparing and less with pushing the edges of data than that of the university teachers. They are dependent upon closer open supervision than college teachers and furthermore a large number of the teachers need to plan pupils for different open assessments as per syllabi over which they have little control. In this way, there is no uncertainty that an impressive part of the limitations set on their freedom by such unavoidable issues facing everyone are completely bothersome. But school teachers just shape the young students physically and rationally with the goal that they can go into the higher studies which reinforce their life.

3. A Case to Consider

In what follows, I have considered a fact which is related to academic freedom for the teacher. And, to analyze the fact, I have to consider the two ethical theories, those that decide the rightness and wrongness of an action.

During the sixties and early seventies the struggle for freedom of thought and expression continued unabated in many areas. Let us see them here: ¹²

In the field of education, teachers have been dismissed for discussing such topics as civil liberties, race relations, labor relations, the war in Southeast Asia, the United Nations and other international organizations. In some localities teachers fear to discuss such questions and so free inquiry and free discussion become impossible. Furthermore, a teacher at a junior college was dismissed for writing a letter to a local newspaper in which he was critical of the educational standards of the country public school system.

Let us look at two major types of ethical theories that are used to justify freedom for teacher and are relevant to this case: Firstly, I would like to examine the views of John Stuart Mill as expressed in "On Liberty" that he summarizes his argument as follows:¹³

First, if any opinion is compelled to silence, that opinion may, for ought we can certainly know, be true. To deny this is to assume our own infallibility.

Second, though the silenced opinion may be an error, it may, and very often does, contain a portion of the truth; and since the general or prevailing opinion on any subject is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has chance of being supplied.

Thirdly, even if the received opinion be not only true, but the whole truth, unless it is suffered to be, and actually is rigorously and earnestly contested, it will, by most of those who receive it, be held in the manner of a prejudice, with little comprehension or feeling of its rational grounds. And not only this, but fourthly, the meaning of the doctrine itself will be in danger of being lost or enfeebled, and deprives of its virtual effect on the character and conduct; the dogma becoming a mere formal profession, inefficacious for good, but cumbering the ground and preventing the growth of any real and heartfelt conviction from reason or personal experience.

In this passage Mill constructed an argument for what is sometimes referred to as "the market place of ideas". The central contention is that truth is achieved or pursued by means of open criticism and public debate. Institutions such as free speech and freedom of the press are necessary if truth is to be sought and ideas improved. To censor an idea is to deny people the opportunity to consider it, to test their own views against it, and thus, to learn.

It may be worth noting that here Mills is speaking primarily about a social process whereby a society's ideas are examined, refined and added to. Nevertheless, he likewise contends that opportunity is significant for self-improvement. The significant point to be noted is that, self-awareness requires opportunity. Hence, from the above contention it is exceptionally evident that, instructor who does not have the chance to settle on their own choices

likewise come up short on the chance to build up the ability to settle on their own choice capability. Therefore, teacher instructor competency requires practice. At the point when the general public or specialists deny educator to settle on their own choices, presumably, they deny not instructor's development yet understudies' development. To agree that contention is to acknowledge the rule that "liberty serves the greatest good for the greatest number". Most likely, we can assume from his contention that, the greatest degree of freedom consistent with an equal amount of freedom for others. Therefore, "free speech and free choice" are thus essential components of a teaching society that regards teachers as responsible moral agents.

Secondly, most familiar version is the concept of Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative is: "Act as if the maxim of thy action were to become by thy will a universal law of nature."¹⁴ By a maxim Kant simply implies a moral principle. Further, he holds the view that if you are about to apply some moral principle to someone else, are you willing that it be applied to you in the same way. According to him, we act in ways that respect the equal worth of moral agents. No doubt, we can assume his idea as the 'principle of equal respect for persons'. Thus, accordingly to the principle of equal respect said that, we must regard all people who are free, rational and responsible moral agents. In this regards, we must respect their freedom of choice. Moreover, it means that we must attach higher priority to enabling people to decide responsibly. Thus, it is important to be clear about what really does follow from Kant concept is that, teacher, as a rational being, must have their own rights and responsibility of freedom of choice, freedom of speech, and freedom to teach. Not only that, we have to thank Kant who gave the following ideas which only build or mould human beings as an moral agent who has to be means and ends. From which we may derive the principle that teachers have to be means to students in order to attain their ends. This is the duty for duty sake. One who is in particular profession in which he or she has to do his or her duty in dedicated sense. Indeed, we may say that Kant's "duty for duty" is the freedom for teachers who are always to work for student community. Then only "an ethical freedom for teachers" is meaningful, useful, fruitful, beautiful, lawful, colourful, joyful, merciful, helpful and wonderful.

Now, we can clearly assume from the above that there are three respects regarding the denial of freedom of expression, particularly in the teaching profession. They are as follows:

Firstly, some special interest group is normally endeavoring to protect its benefits by keeping certain realities or thoughts from people in general. Secondly, concealment takes place regardless of the truth or falsity of the ideas. Usually there is no endeavor to discover the truth or the effect of the thought on open public welfare. Thirdly, there is as often as possible an endeavor to divert attention to some other issue by introducing some term of rebuke, for example, fundamentalist or fascist, subversive, or dangerous person.

4. Conclusion

It is evident that the role of teachers in professionalism is surely undergoing fast change both in their rights and

responsibilities. This meant that it was found that none of the variable regarding the promotion of teachers' professionalism was there, like, training, accountability, professional codes of ethics and professional development. However, recent years have witnessed the growth of the professional ideal and professional development, but, effective and creative system to upgrade teacher professionalism and freedom for them from its low academic status have yet to be generated. Thus, there is need for providing better professional code of ethics in the field of teaching profession.

In this article we have argued that teachers have same right like other professional groups. In addition, instructors reserve their option to encourage what they like and set forward their own perspectives on questionable issues. No doubt, expanding freedom for the teachers means their capacity to settle on choices about their expert condition and to be secured against institutional coercion and injustice. But, last not the least, there is certain limitation on their right to freedom that is:¹⁵

while teachers are the best judges of truth in the fields in which they have special training, though they have no right to use the power inherent in their classroom position to pass judgment on controversial topics that have no relation to their field of special competence.

Really, students may say that their teachers are giving more ideas with regard to their future life and the environment around them. In fact, teachers are more energy for students. No doubt, all people came up as professionalism in their life from their teachers' guidance, help and advice which are the means or way for them. All teachers are the light house for their students. That is why people say that one (teacher) who teaches subjects to someone (student) is equal to God. That is why we may say that "a Train driver minds a train whereas a Teacher trains many minds." Now we may say that we are in a particular profession and are living healthy and wealthy life because of our teachers only. Really, teachers are living God who lives or spends the most of the time for their students only. If we give more freedom for them, really student life will have more freedom and development in their life so that students will come up in their life. Indeed, we may say that teachers are only for student welfare.

References

- [1] The notions freedom, liberty, liberation, release, deliverance, independence, self-government, self-determination, self-rule, home rule, autonomy, democracy, exemption, immunity, dispensation, impunity, right, entitlement, privilege, prerogative, discretion, latitude, elbow room, free rein, a free hand and carte blanche are interchangeably used.
- [2] Cf. Sinha, Jadunath. (1962). *A Manual of Ethics*. Calcutta: Sinha Publishing House, p. 279.
- [3] Cf. Geuss, Raymond. (2005). *Outside Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 67.
- [4] Cf. Dash, B.N. (2013). *A New Approach to Teachers & Education in the Emerging Indian Society*. New Delhi: Neelkamal Publications, p. 332.
- [5] Cf. Avinashilingam, T. S. (1964). *Educational Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda*. Coimbatore Dist.: Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, p. 53.
- [6] Dash, B.N., op. cit., p. 268.
- [7] Ryle, G. (1949). *The Concept of Mind*. London: Hutchinson, pp. 149-153.
- [8] Titus, Harold, and Keeton, Morris. (1973) *Ethics for Today*. New York: D Van Nostrand Company, p.299.
- [9] Peters, R. S. (1966). *Ethics and Education*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p. 165.
- [10] Mill, Stuart. (1910). *Utilitarianism, Liberty, and Representative Government*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., p. 79.
- [11] Peters, R. S. op. cit., p. 202.
- [12] Titus, Harold, and Keeton, Morris op. cit., p. 304.
- [13] Mill, Stuart. (1956). *On Liberty*. Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, p. 64.
- [14] Cf. Titus, Harold, and Keeton op. cit., p. 136.
- [15] Ibid., p. 365.