

Philosophical Understanding the Framework of Profession

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Abstract

Many professions have come into existence where the service of the respective professional seems highly in demand. An occupation to be a profession since all occupations may not be professions. A profession is characterized by three necessary features Managers, doctors, and lawyers are all professionals because they enter into a relationship with people who are not professionals. Professional services have important implications for professional ethics. The services provided by the professional are not ordinarily available in the same way in which degree that certifies their expertise is available Professionals have a right to practice if their services are approved by the government. There are professional assignments which can only be discharged by a team which is far beyond the scope of an individual. The particular value that is crucial to this relationship is trust. Daryl Koehn said, "Professional is an agent who freely makes a public promise to serve persons who are distinguished by a specific desire for a particular good. As Michael David says, "What essentially defines a profession is the mutual commitment of the group of persons to some moral ideal, persons who work for that ideal benefit from their group membership.

Key Words: Ethics, trustworthy, profession, responsibility, practice, services, mutual commitment...etc.

Introduction:

In the contemporary society, many professions have come into existence where the service of the respective propositional seems highly in demand The purpose of this study is to consider common ethical problems found across professions. In this respect we bring in the notion of occupation and profession as they have similar nature on the ground that they share the same ethical problems. This becomes evident if we delineate the characteristics common to occupation and profession. There exists variety of professions which are significant in their own ways The particular value that is crucial to this relationship is trust. Having trust in the

professional service in which you are employed is to achieve the purpose. Daryl Koehn said, “Professional is an agent who freely makes a public promise to serve persons who are distinguished by a specific desire for a particular good.”¹ From the observation it is evident that the professionals have desire to do good for the customer where the notion of the good is defined in terms of particular needs of a person. Here, good is viewed as an ethical concept where goodwill is the key to establish a relation between the manager and the customer.

In this article I would like to elaborate the conceptual understanding of profession which we have discussed about the framework of profession.² In the contemporary society, many professions have come into existence where the service of the respective professional seems highly in demand. The purpose of this study is to consider common ethical problems found across professions. In this respect we bring in the notion of occupation and profession as they have similar nature on the ground that they share the same ethical problems. However, some features can be taken as necessary for an occupation to be a profession since all occupations may not be professions. Then we tried to explain about the relation and differences of profession and management. Management may be seen as getting things done by the people. Management as discipline is comparatively new and it has a great diversity. Now coming to profession, management plays an important role in carrying out a profession successfully. The organizations or profession must fulfill the employer’s objectives. If the main task of professionals is to ensure customers well being then something more is needed.³

1. Framework of Professions

In the contemporary society, many professions have come into existence where the service of the respective professional seems highly in demand. A professional being is a person who provides service to a required customer because the customer seeks to achieve certain end which he cannot achieve on his own. It is through their expert services that the professionals help their customer to attain their desired ends. Managers, doctors, and lawyers are all professionals because they enter into a relationship with people who are not professionals. The particular value that is crucial to this relationship is trust. Having trust in the professional service in which you are employed is for achieving the purpose. Daryl Koehn said, “Professional is an agent who freely makes a public promise to serve persons who are distinguished by a specific desire for a particular good.”⁴ From the observation it is evident that the professionals have desire to do good for the customer where the notion of the good is defined in terms of particular needs of a person. Here, good is viewed as an ethical concept where goodwill is the key to establish a relation between the manager and the customer.

The purpose of this study is to consider common ethical problems found across professions. In this respect I bring in the notion of occupation and profession as they have similar nature on the ground that they share the same ethical problems. This becomes evident if we delineate the characteristics common to occupation and profession. There exists variety of professions which are significant in their own ways. However, some features can be taken as necessary for an occupation to be a profession since all occupations may not be professions. A profession is characterized by three necessary features.

1. Educational qualification with an advanced academic degree is necessary to be a professional.

2. Specialized education involves a significant intellectual ability to become a good human being as well as a professional. To be a professional primarily is to have physical skills and intellectual ability. They help the professionals to carry out their task successfully.

3. The trained ability provides an important service in the demanding society.⁵ Teachers, accountants, managers, and leaders of the organization contribute services to the organization in this way. Their services are meant for functioning of society by assuming their role as management experts with having adequate moral responsibilities. It has been observed that there is a tendency in modern society which seeks to make use of specialized knowledge for short term profit without having any concern for society or the well-being of human beings. In this connection, we hold that getting permission is not sufficient because one may have license but may not have the proper ethical values. License gives us the official sanction but it does not ensure the moral standard as involved in all professions. In any profession license is not sufficient to constitute an occupation and profession. Many professionals need not be officially licensed. For example, accountants are not required to be certified public accountants but they must usually possess an advanced university degree.⁶

An important distinction in professional ethics is made between consulting and scholarly professions. Consulting as a profession is a free service which is mostly controlled by the government and non-governmental organizations. The examples of such professions are law, medicine or architecture which has traditionally been practiced on a free-service basis within the framework of personal relationship between the customer and professional. Scholarly professionals on the other hand, usually work for a salary. It is by virtue of technical expertise that these professionals attract entrepreneurs in order to render better service to individual customers.⁷ The difference between these two kinds of professionals, as we will argue later, reveals different kinds of ethical problems faced by both customers and professionals. There are ethical laps commonly observed in these practices.

Professional services have important implications for professional ethics. Professionals have a right to practice if their services are approved by the government. In a strict sense professionals do not have privilege to practice. It is essentially a privilege conferred by the government. In this context one must carefully distinguish between the concepts of right and privilege. A right is a fundamental claim which allows our act without interference.⁸ A privilege is a permission to perform certain acts provided certain conditions are fulfilled. A person having privilege can take the customer's burden provided he has the necessary qualification. For example, one must pass a management degree in order to get the privilege of managing the organization. In the case of right, the responsibility is upon the individual. However, in view of the constraints put in the government it may not be possible for an individual as a professional to fulfill his rights. The reason is, profession as a whole is a privileged activity created by the state to further certain social needs or values. The word "profession" has been secularized whose meaning thus implies: "That which professes duty or it is the one which is qualified by duty". "Profession", originally meant the act or fact of professing.⁹ It may also be defined as, "A vocation in which professed knowledge of some branch of learning is used in its application to the affairs of others, or it is a practice based on certain skills." It is a proper body which is concerned with some aspect of society, life, or nature. It sets the terms within which the domain of its concern is specified and defines rules that are associated with it. Professions are mostly practiced in organizations. Modern professionals are willing to do their work within certain required institutional settings, and even, to an extent be defined by these settings. As professions become more organized, business organizations have become more professionalized. The result is the development of new patterns of organization which they undertake with a purpose of attaining the maximum benefits for a maximum number of people.¹⁰

2. What is Profession?

I have so far elucidated the concept of profession only from a philosophical point of view, highlighting some of the general aspects of profession. I shall now address the question: What is profession? It can be answered with a specific distinction that will define profession. In this pursuit, I shall particularly refer to sociological and organizational standpoints for the purpose of defining profession. The members of the professions have been bearers of public trust and their conduct must be publicly acceptable.

Michael Davis believes the provisional status of a public service is relatively contingent. As he says, "What essentially defines a profession is the mutual commitment of the group of persons to some moral ideal, persons who work for that ideal benefit from their group membership."¹¹ Though this ideal is commonly meant for the benefit that it offers to a

wider public services nevertheless accidental. Members of professions, since they provide highly valuable public services, should be devoted to these ideals and express it in public. But professional status is not simply judged by the fact that a public service is provided. In addition to this fact a professional must be trustworthy. Bank manager and loan providing officers perform important public services with trust and at the same time require preserving customer's detailed documents which are confidential. This is the reason why their service is appreciated. The services provided by the professional are not ordinarily available in the same way in which degree that certifies their expertise is available. Only then the etymology of the word is constituted. The word 'professionals' mean they are special by virtue of what they profess.¹² Since a profession is constituted by a group of persons who are dedicated to some practical ideal they will devote special attention to that ideal. On the contrary, there are professions which do not have any such practical ideals. They are based on social recognition and reconviction. This is possible only if the occupation's implicit ideal is pursued in the right manner which is believed to serve an important social interest in a unique manner.¹³

Generally accepted, the definition of the term 'profession' exists as a working concept which is needed for our study of professional ethics. One need not characterize profession by a set of necessary and sufficient features being uniformly possessed by all professions. Instead, one has to look at different professions within a single framework which is defining by common ethical concerns. Another common feature to profession is that it is an organization consisting of members. Accordingly all major professions have organizations through which they represent themselves.¹⁴ The respective organizations with different professions are open to the members of those professions. The goal of an organization is to protect health, justice, and to promote the economic well being. The members of these organizations have corroborated this. A various survey conducted by prestigious organizations which says that the ethical problem of a profession is to fulfill as completely as possible the primary service for which it stands while securing the legitimate economic interest of its members. If this claim is approximately correct, one must expect professional organizations to be deeply involved in securing the economic interests of their members. Such organizations do generally differ from trade unions which are almost exclusively devoted to the economic interests of their members. In this respect it may be observed that those who occupy responsible positions in the organization, such as managers or doctors should not be faced towards the agitation for their economic well being. They themselves don't involve in agitation because of their status in society.¹⁵ Whereas school teachers do not mind to do the same to improve the conditions for their well being due to various, such as, poor pay package, lacking responsible position...etc.

In professional ethics, we use normative features to define or characterize professionals. Professionals are those who are primarily devoted to provide service and secondarily they are interested to make money. In this connection, the normative feature to define profession has been presented by Maynard Parson who says: 'On the basis of the following consideration the responsibility for effectuating the rendition of these services to all that need them and in such a manner that the public interest will be best served is left to the profession itself.'¹⁶ The condition that he spelt out has been further elaborated in terms of three different normative principles. An efficient manager, as he claims, will work according to the following three principles:

1. Customer Services should be provided to all those who are in need of it.
2. Their quality services should be provided to promote the public interest in a better way.
3. The profession itself should be the sole judge of the method for achieving the first two principles. Even if these normative principles are correct, they should not be elevated into the defining features of a profession.¹⁷

Those who are having the knowledge of these principles will be different from others because those principles will set them apart from the rest. The reason is that they will be considered as professionals on the ground that they will move forward. They will go forward because these professionals will have specialized rather than generalized knowledge and will thus acquire expertise in their respective profession. However, this will lead to a consequence which is not so desirable. The idea of acquiring professional expertise leads to the division between theory and practice.¹⁸ The more specialized a professional becomes the smaller the portion of human life falls within the ambit of his or her attention. Thus the holistic human dimensions of service are often lost.

Managers who are professionals often meet customers at critical points in their lives and help them in possible ways to deal with difficult situations in lives. This is where the expertise that managers acquire becomes useful and commendable. However, this is not fully appreciated because it does not adequately serve the public.¹⁹ Their skills are being so good that they must be appropriate to the context. Hence, it is not only professional skills but also relevant contexts which are extremely important for rendering significant public service. As managers begin to see themselves as professionals in such situation they may lose to meet the people's needs, and instead focus more narrowly on "scientific" solutions to situations.²⁰ Now I will elucidate philosophical and sociological definitions of profession. Sociological definition is concerned with social behavior of professional whereas philosophical definition

is concerned with the role of moral values in professional behavior such as style of life, corporate solidarity and social equality, etc.

There is no absolute difference between professional and other kinds of occupational behavior which I have earlier explained. In my presentation, I was mainly concerned to show that there are certain attributes which are common to all occupational behavior. On the basis of these common attributes it has been shown that some occupational behavior can be qualified to be called fully professional whereas other behavior is partly professional and some can be thought of as not at all professional. The point made above can be clarified by referring to some actual professions. Business behavior, for examples, is not fully professional. However, some elements of professionalism might be found in business behavior. Similarly, on the same consideration a management professional is more professional than a nursing professional, and a nursing professional who involve global activity, is more professional than a medical doctor who provides minor medical services in an organization. Professionalism is a matter of degree.

Professional behavior may be defined in terms of four essential attributes:

1. A high degree of generalized and systematic knowledge.
2. A Primary concern to the community interest rather than to individual self-interest.
3. A high degree of self-control of behavior through codes of ethics internalized in the process of work performed socially and through voluntary associations organized and operated by the specialists themselves
4. A system of rewards, which is primarily a set of symbols of work achievements that constitute ends in them, rather than means to some individual self-interest. An elaboration of these four attributes may be helpful to put the discussion in proper perspective.²¹

These essential attributes define a scale of professionalism, the way of measuring the extent to which it is presented in different forms of occupational performance. The best professional behavior would be that which realize all attributes in the clear possible manner. Public relations managers are employed by modern business organizations to build a friendly network that can help business interests. There is, however, a growing feeling that public relations executives can never be accepted at their face value as they only build up facades for their organizations. In view of this it is now felt that each Profession should develop a code of ethics for its professionals that would re-establish their credibility.²²

3. Profession and Management

There is no universally accepted definition of management. But the commonly accepted view is that management may be seen as getting things done by the people. This view is held because it is thought that it correctly presents the nature of management. Management as

discipline is comparatively new and it has a great diversity. Now coming to profession, management plays an important role in carrying out a profession successfully. The success of a profession, to a great extent, depends on managerial skills. And if following conditions are satisfied, demand for management ability may arise in a number of ways:

1. A managerial practice must be guided by ethics and values.
2. All management skills require that they must meet the customer satisfaction. Professional assignments involve the application of knowledge of skill and this requires good planning, systematic coordination and dynamic control.
3. The organization or profession must fulfill the employer's objectives and thus managerial skills and abilities are goal oriented.²³

As professional practice grows in size an increasing proportion of the equity partners' income may be derived from the profits of the organization rather than their individual work. Thus a professional may slowly shift from the total development of his personal skill to a position in which he may be more concerned with the procurement and management so that there will be continuous growth of organization. In this administrative role the selection of personnel and quality control of mechanism of organization may be matters of greater preoccupation with administration than the details of the professional work itself.²⁴

The growth rate and ultimate stand of an organization is probably influenced as much by the proprietor's ability to develop management skills as it is by his ambition. Outside their practice many professionals assume considerable management responsibilities for organizing their customer's affairs or at least for advising to an extent that will be heavily relied upon.²⁵ But it is realized that to find out the best way of getting things done is not sufficient. If the main task of professionals is to ensure customers well being then something more is needed. The emphasis is thus laid on such qualities like: positive outlook, satisfaction, character, sincerity, pragmatic work style of people within an organization, etc. But these qualities to a considerable extent depend on the structure of the organization. The structure that defines the organization is customer affairs, customer behavior guided by certain code of conduct, planning, etc. In this concept several of organizations will be assigned to its members to carry out the function.²⁶ For example, there are professional assignments which can only be discharged by a team which is far beyond the scope of an individual. In view of this new thinking professionals now feel that there should be different systems of code to be developed for the greater interest of respective organizations and if all these systems should conform to international code of ethics than adopt them and make them useful to the organization.

Conclusion:

As Michael David says, "What essentially defines a profession is the mutual commitment of the group of persons to some moral ideal, persons who work for that ideal benefit from their group membership. Members of professions, since they provide highly valuable public services, should be devoted to these ideals and express it in public. In addition to this fact a professional must be trustworthy. Professional are those who are primarily devoted to provide service and secondarily they are interested to make money. In this pursuit, we shall particularly refer to sociological and organizational standpoints for the purpose of defining profession. The members of the professions have been bearers of public trust and their conduct must be publicly acceptable. Sociological definition is concerned with social behaviour of professional whereas philosophical definition is concerned with the role of moral values in professional behaviour such as style of life, corporate solidarity and social equality, etc. Professional behaviour may be defined in terms of four essential attributes, a high degree of generalized and systematic knowledge, a primary concern to the community interest rather than to individual self-interest, a high degree of self-control of behaviour through codes of ethics internalized in the process of work performed socially and through voluntary associations organized and operated by the specialists themselves, and a system of rewards, which is primarily a set of symbols of work achievements that constitute ends in them, rather than means to some individual self-interest. Now coming to profession, management plays an important role in carrying out a profession successfully. The success of a profession, to a great extent, depends on managerial skills. Demand for management ability may arise in a number of ways. A managerial practice must be guided by ethics and values, all management skills require that they must meet the customer satisfaction. Professional assignments involve the application of knowledge of skill and this requires good planning, systematic coordination and dynamic control, and the organization or profession must fulfill the employer's objectives and thus managerial skills and abilities are goal oriented.²⁷

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