

CODE OF ETHICS FOR TEACHERS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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Abstract: Currently, there are many problems of an ethical nature, so it is necessary to look for possible solutions. One of them is the code of ethics, which forces people to reflect on their mission and the duties they have towards the environment that surrounds them. The code of ethics of a Catholic school teacher is specific in comparison with other professional codes, because in the behavior and actions of a Christian teacher, everyone should see an evangelical person.

Keywords: code of ethics, morality, ethics, catholic school teacher

1 Professional code of ethics

In recent decades, there has been a literal explosion in the creation of new ethical codes for educators, managers, scientists, engineers, interpreters, translators, university professors, and the like.¹ The professional code of ethics acts as an indicator for a person's professional activity. It is a certain norm of behavior among individuals of a given profession, but it also serves as a protection against unauthorized outside attacks.² It defines the moral space in which members of the profession move in accordance with notions of right and wrong, responsibility and justice. It reflects the interest of a group of individuals to regulate the actions of its members, based on certain rules that express the specific position and interest of the given group.³ "It functions as a self-regulator of the behavior of members of the given profession."⁴

The code of ethics of a Catholic school teacher could also be included among professional codes, because the code of ethics affects the professional activity, that is, the work of a Catholic school teacher. Finding an appropriate definition of a Catholic school teacher's code of ethics is not so easy. Perhaps the most suitable one is the definition of the school of St. Benedict from the United States of America: "The Catholic school teacher's code of ethics is a brief description of a person who grows in the faith, hope and love of Christ. This determines the attitude and practice of the Catholic primary school teacher in relation to the student, parents, society, and the profession. This code provides guidance on how a teacher should live, what goal he should strive for."⁵ In our opinion, the characteristic in question describes the essence of the ethical code of a Catholic school teacher and his way of life. As prof. Duda notes: "The way of life of a teacher at a Catholic school, both in private life and at school, must be in accordance with the morals of the Catholic Church."⁶ By the term "Catholic morals" we understand the science that, from the revelation of God, from the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church, determines the rules of morality for a person, which he should follow in order to achieve his goal, i.e. eternal salvation.⁷ On the basis of the above, we could conclude that the ethical code of the teacher of the Catholic school of St. Benedict provides instructions for the teacher on how to achieve salvation, and as we can see, this is also the case in the statement of prof. Duda that in which he tells us that a Catholic school teacher should strive for eternal salvation. Both cases can be summarized in one sentence, and thus the ethical code of a Catholic school teacher presents us

with the requirements for a Catholic school teacher, according to which the teacher is called by the Creator to live and direct his actions in order to achieve eternal salvation.

The ethical code of a Catholic school teacher should be distinct from other professional codes, because in the behavior and actions of a Christian teacher, everyone should see a person who is armed with love and kindness, gives a living witness of a Christian and, as part of a Catholic school, performs a real civil and apostolic service.

2 Significance of the code of ethics in organizations

The importance of the code of ethics lies in the fact that it clarifies what behavior is expected from an individual in various situations, and at the same time its intention is to make/help individuals inculcate the ethical dimensions of their activities. The code of ethics is based on voluntary compliance with the required standard.⁸ The Code of Ethics does not regulate all variants of different situations that may arise, but its norms are often helpful in forming the judgments of individuals.⁹ The Code of ethics presents certain group, collective ethical standards and principles that should guide the activities of each individual in the organization. Each member is then under the influence not only of his own moral convictions, but also under the influence of social moral rules. His actions are regulated through various moral systems and ethical theories.¹⁰

From the point of view of the organization, the code of ethics is important in that it can eliminate undesirable practices that cause the organization to lose favor with employees, society and others and could lead to long-term economic losses, simplify the introduction of new procedures, clarify the organization's policy on certain moral issues such as employee testing, privacy, and the like, help directors resolve ethical issues for the best benefit of the organization, relieve directors of the burden of making a complex decision when there is little time to consider other possible aspects.¹¹

A good code of ethics can help the organization's leadership and management to solve specific problems. From the point of view of the organization's management, it can help to eliminate inappropriate practices that are the cause of a decrease in the interest of employees and the public and which can lead to economic losses, it may help to clarify the organization's policy on morally problematic issues, such as confidential information, accepting donations from other entities. Subsequently, it can facilitate innovation, help with the restructuring of the organization, strengthen the internal discipline of the organization, reduce the need for measures to detect immoral behavior and actions, prevent the management of the organization from abusing their position towards other employees and positively motivate the employees of the organization by strengthening the awareness that they work in an ethical environment, where certain rules apply to everyone. From the point of view of organizational management, the code of ethics can help to solve moral dilemmas and problems that occur in the management of the organization, it helps to face the immoral demands of superiors, subordinates in the organization and the public, it helps to defend one's decisions inside the organization, but also outside it, it simplifies intra-organizational communication and helps to speed up the detection of problems and detect potential fraud.¹²

¹ Paraph. REMIŠOVÁ, A., Profesijsné etické kódexy. In: *Filozofia*. no. 3 (2000), vol. 55, p. 218.

² Paraph. LACA, P., LACA, S. *Etika v kontexte sociálnych vied*. Brno : Institut medzioborových štúdií, 2013, p. 143.

³ Paraph. REMIŠOVÁ, A., Profesijsné etické kódexy. In: *Filozofia*. no. 3 (2000), vol. 55, p. 218.

⁴ REMIŠOVÁ, A., Profesijsné etické kódexy. In: *Filozofia*. no. 3 (2000), vol. 55, p. 218.

⁵ MEYERS, R. J. F., *Code of Ethics for the Catholic School Teacher*. In: www.cbsju.edu/education/student-resources/handbook/code-of-ethics (01.10.2023).

⁶ DUDA, J. *Učiteľ katolíckej školy*. In: *Právnické rozhovory*. Ružomberok : Pedagogická fakulta Katolíckej univerzity v Ružomberku, 2004, p. 40.

⁷ Paraph. PETRÁŠ, L., *Mravouka. Učebnica katolíckeho náboženstva pre vyššie triedy stredných škôl*. Trnava : SSV, 1948, p. 3.

⁸ Paraph. ČERNÁ, E., *Etika a zodpovednosť v podnikateľskej praxi*. Trnava : Bprint, 2007, p. 25.

⁹ Paraph. LUKNIČ, A. S., *Štvrtý rozmer podnikania - etika*. Bratislava : Slovak akademik press s.r.o., 1994, p. 196.

¹⁰ Paraph. REMIŠOVÁ, A., Profesijsné etické kódexy. In: *Filozofia*. no. 3 (2000), vol. 55, p. 218.

¹¹ Paraph. FERANECOVÁ, G., *Etika a etické kódexy v slovenských podnikoch*. Ružomberok : Verbum – vydavateľstvo KU v Ružomberku, 2014, p. 73.

¹² Paraph. FERANECOVÁ, G., *Etika a etické kódexy v slovenských podnikoch*. Ružomberok : Verbum – publisher KU v Ružomberku, 2014, p. 72.

Codes of ethics are also important because they cultivate the habit of evaluating various situations in the organization from a moral point of view, thus they help with the development of moral awareness. The American authors Bowie and Duska see the importance of the code of ethics in the following areas: the code of ethics motivates people to act in the same moral way, the code permanently and steadily guides what is right and what is wrong, the code is a guide, especially in unclear situations, it not only shows the right direction within behavior of employees, but it also eliminates possible transgressions of their superiors, the rules within ethical codes should help the social responsibility of the organization, the development of ethical codes is in the interest of the organizations themselves.¹³

The teacher's code of ethics is also of great importance for an organization such as a Catholic school. In addition to the mentioned advantages, we will also mention others that are important for the Catholic school. It happens that some teachers lack awareness of the essence of a Catholic school, in some cases the teaching of the church alone is not enough. It is insufficient not because of imperfection, but because of wrong or no understanding on the part of Catholic school teachers. Sometimes it is simply laxity. It is the code of ethics that helps them to realize that the Catholic school is imbued with the Christian spirit and its main goal is to raise a Christian. If a Catholic school teacher failed in his actions, he could damage the name of the Catholic school. The teacher has considerable authority in society, but in the case of a Catholic school teacher, it is an authority that everyone associates with the teachings of the church and the church itself. Thus, every transgression of a Catholic school teacher is even more serious, and somehow subconsciously we all put more emphasis and demands on observing his morals. It can be said that his less serious actions will be condemned by society more seriously than the more serious offense of an "ordinary" teacher. The code of ethics helps many Catholic school teachers to understand that the center of their profession is Christ, the model according to which a Christian should act and give a living witness to God's love through his actions. Through their behavior and actions, teachers contribute the most to the special character of a Catholic school.

The ethical code of a Catholic school teacher is a "compass that shows the right direction", therefore a good ethical code should contain moral obligations and patterns of behavior in the teacher's relationship with God, the teacher's relationship with himself, the teacher's relationship with students, the school and colleagues, the teacher's relationship with parents and society. We could say that a code of ethics is of great importance for an organization such as a Catholic school as it helps to create a spiritual community in which all those involved live not next to each other but together, not against each other but with each other, not for themselves, but for each other.

3 Employee code of ethics and legal aspects

Currently, a lot of attention is paid to issues of a moral-legal type. We often encounter moral transgressions of employees, and the fact that the employee is not actually subject to official punishment. Therefore, we consider it important to pay attention to the code of ethics and legal aspects. Many people nowadays confuse legal standards with ethical standards. We find it necessary to specify them in more detail.

Legal norms are rules of behavior determined in a special, state-recognized form, the observance of which can be enforced by the state power and are the only ones binding for the entire society. They refer to a precisely defined area of human activity.¹⁴ Legal norms bind every member of society. In case of their violation, the degree of offense and punishment are considered.¹⁵

Standards of ethical behavior serve as guidelines for the professional behavior of employees and they are determined by the code of ethics. These standards represent rules that members of a certain profession abide by and that are binding in nature. They are not codified, so they can react more quickly to possible changes.¹⁶ They represent an obligation to which a person submits voluntarily, thanks to free will. A person is able to freely decide how to act.¹⁷ Violation of moral standards is subject to official punishment only if it is also a violation of legal laws.¹⁸

The question arises, if a Catholic school teacher violates ethical standards that cannot be defined from a legal aspect, can he be sanctioned or perhaps dismissed from his job? Example: Currently, gender theology is heavily promoted in the liberal world and even some teachers at a Catholic school can relate to it to a certain extent. For example, the attitude towards gay marriage. If, within the framework of the teaching process, the teacher takes a position on this matter that is not in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church, he has not violated the work regulations or other legal regulations in the field of labor law, but he has violated the code of ethics, which binds him to act in accordance with the morals and ethics of the Catholic Church throughout the educational process. For compliance and a professional approach to solving this problem, it is important to specify the ethical code of the Catholic school teacher so that it is a national document that can be used in managerial decision-making in the context of other labor-legal norms. "Although there is an organization of relationships in society, institutions that are regulated exclusively by law or only by moral standards, this does not mean that the force of morality cannot become a law-making force in a certain social situation. Similarly, law, as a way of fair regulation of social relations, has a positive, moral charge and can manifest itself as a moral force."¹⁹

In conclusion, we can state that the code of ethics has gradually developed in our society. Currently, many authors understand the code of ethics as a set of moral requirements for a certain group of people, in a certain environment. Codes of ethics differ from each other according to individual priorities. The ethical code of the Catholic school teacher offers us the standards according to which this teacher is called by God to guide his actions and behavior in order to achieve eternal salvation. The Catholic school teacher's code of ethics can be used in managerial decision-making, in connection with other labor law standards. A Catholic school is simply a big family, an important part of which are the teachers who are supposed to know and obey the rules.

4 The need for a code of ethics in a Catholic school – research

4.1 Research objectives

The primary objective of the research is to determine whether teaching staff consider the code of ethics necessary and whether they have encountered violations of ethical principles in a Catholic school. The secondary objective is to determine whether, according to educators, violations of ethical principles in the exercise of their profession should be sanctioned.

4.2 Methodology

The research was carried out at 19 Catholic schools of the Spiš Diocese in Slovakia. The research was carried out among primary level teachers of Catholic schools in the form of a questionnaire. The respondents to the survey were of all ages.

¹³ Paraph. REMIŠOVÁ, A., *Podnikateľská etika*. Bratislava: EKONÓM, 1997, p. 200.

¹⁴ Paraph. FERANECOVÁ, G., *Etika a etické kódexy v slovenských podnikoch*. Ružomberok: Verbum – vydavateľstvo KU v Ružomberku, 2014, p. 46.

¹⁵ Paraph. MIEDZGOVÁ, J., *Základy etiky*. Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1994, p. 59.

¹⁶ Paraph. FERANECOVÁ, G., *Etika a etické kódexy v slovenských podnikoch*. Ružomberok: Verbum – vydavateľstvo KU v Ružomberku, 2014, p. 46.

¹⁷ MACHALOVÁ, T., *Vzťah etiky, morálky a práva*. In: *Praktické otázky etiky a morálky*, Bratislava: PVT, 1998, p. 40.

¹⁸ MIEDZGOVÁ, J., *Základy etiky*. Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1994, p. 59.

¹⁹ MACHALOVÁ, T., *Vzťah etiky, morálky a práva*. In: *Praktické otázky etiky a morálky*, Bratislava: PVT, 1998, p. 42.

Altogether, there was a total of 101 primary level teachers participating in the research.

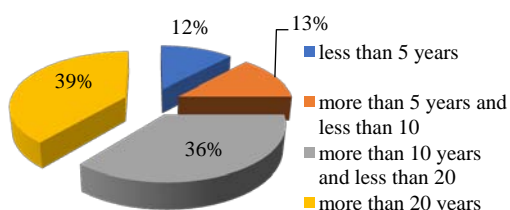
4.3 Analysis of research results

Question no.1 aimed to find out how many years of teaching experience do the respondents have.

Table 1 Length of teaching experience

Length of teaching experience	number of responses	
	abs.	in %
less than 5 years	12	11,9
more than 5 years and less than 10	13	12,9
more than 10 years and less than 20	36	35,6
more than 20 years	40	39,6
TOGETHER	101	100,0

Figure no. 1 Length of teaching experience



From the responses of primary level teachers of Catholic schools, it is clear that those who have been working as teachers for less than 5 years comprise 11.9%, the teachers with more than 5 years and less than 10 years of teaching experience comprise 12.9%, 35.6%, of the respondents are the teachers who have more than 10 and less than 20 years of experience and those with over 20 years of teaching experience comprises 39.6% of all respondents.

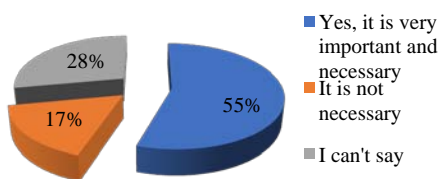
From the above, it is clear that the least of the respondents who work as teachers are those whose length of teaching experience is less than 5 years and the highest number of the respondents are those with over 20 years of teaching experience.

By question no. 2 we wanted to find out whether, according to primary level teachers, it is necessary for a Catholic school as an employer to have a code of ethics for teachers.

Table no. 2 The need for a teacher's code of ethics in a Catholic school

The need for a teacher's code of ethics in a Catholic school	number of responses	
	abs.	in %
Yes, it is very important and necessary	56	55,4
It is not necessary	17	16,8
I can't say	28	27,7
TOGETHER	101	100,0

Figure no. 2 The need for a teacher's code of ethics in a Catholic school

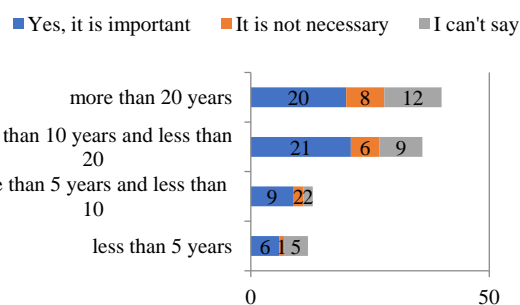


The majority of respondents – 55.4% agree that it is very important and necessary for a Catholic school to have a teacher's code of ethics. Out of all respondents, 16.8% said it was not necessary and 27.7% could not comment on the issue. We find it interesting to point out the relationship between question no. 1 and question no. 2, and thus the need for a teacher's code of ethics and the length of the teaching experience.

Table no. 3 Correlation of question 1 and question 2

The need for a teacher's code of ethics in a Catholic school	Teachers with teaching experience								TOGETHER	
	less than 5 years		more than 5 years and less than 10		more than 10 years and less than 20		more than 20 years			
	abs.	in %	abs.	in %	abs.	in %	abs.	in %	abs.	in %
Yes, it is important	6	50,0	9	69,2	21	58,3	20	50,0	56	55,4
It is not necessary	1	8,3	2	15,4	6	16,7	8	20,0	17	16,8
I can't say	5	41,7	2	15,4	9	25,0	12	30,0	28	27,7
TOGETHER	12	100,0	13	100,0	36	100,0	40	100,0	101	100,0

Figure no. 3 Correlation of question 1 and question 2



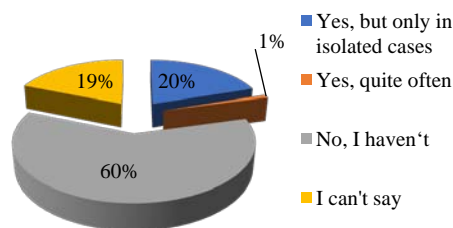
As many as 20 teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience consider the teacher's Code of ethics necessary, 8 teachers think it is not necessary and 12 teachers have not opinion on the issue.

Question no. 4 aimed to find out whether teachers have encountered violations of ethical principles by teachers in the exercise of their profession at schools where they are teaching.

Table no. 4 Violation of ethical principles by professional teachers

Violation of ethical principles by professional teachers	number of responses	
	abs.	in %
Yes, but only in isolated cases	20	19,8
Yes, quite often	1	1,0
No, I haven't	61	60,4
I can't say	19	18,8
TOGETHER	101	100,0

Figure no. 4 Violation of ethical principles by professional teachers



Responses to question 4 have shown that 19.8% of the respondents have encountered violations of ethical principles by teachers in the exercise of their profession, 1% have encountered

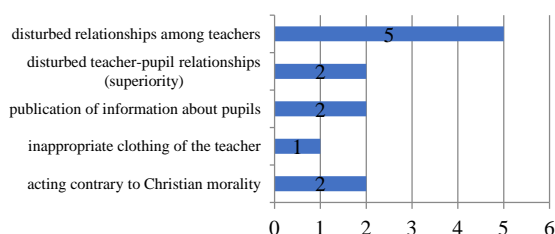
them quite often, 60% have not encountered any violations of ethical principles and 19% could not comment on the matter.

In question no. 5 we wanted to find out, in what situations there was a violation of ethical principles by the teachers.

Table no. 5 Violation of ethical principles by teachers

Violated ethical principles by teachers	number of responses	
	abs.	in %
disturbed relationships among teachers	5	5,0
disturbed teacher-pupil relationships (superiority)	2	2,0
Publication of information about pupils	2	2,0
inappropriate clothing of the teacher	1	1,0
acting contrary to Christian morality	2	2,0
TOGETHER	12	12,0

Figure no. 5 Violation of ethical principles by teachers



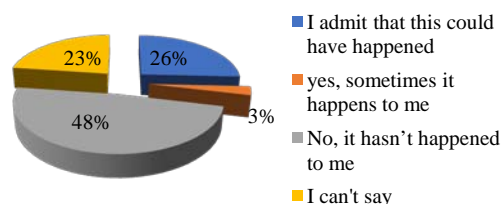
Of the answers of the interviewed teachers who commented on the question, i.e. 12 teachers, 5 said that disturbed relationships between teachers are frequent, 2 teachers observed disturbed teacher-pupil relationships, 2 teachers mentioned inappropriate disclosure of information about pupils, 1 chose the option inappropriate clothing and 2 teachers said that it was acting contrary to Christian morality. Thus, we can observe that even teachers in Catholic schools experience situations that are contrary to ethical principles.

In question no. 6 we asked the respondents whether they have violated some ethical standards in a Catholic school.

Table. no. 6 Personal violation of ethical standards

Personal violation of ethical standards	number of responses	
	abs.	in %
I admit that this could have happened	26	25,7
yes, sometimes it happens to me	3	3,0
No, it hasn't happened to me	49	48,5
I can't say	23	22,8
TOGETHER	101	100,0

Figure no. 6 Personal violation of ethical standards



Answers to the question showed that 25.7% of the respondents admit that this could have happened, 3% of the teacher sometimes violate ethical standards, 48.5% say it hasn't

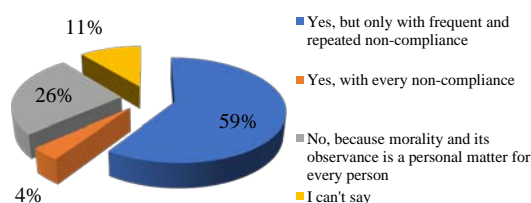
happened to them and 22.8% were unsure whether it has ever happened to them or not.

In question no. 7, we wanted to find out what opinion Catholic school teachers have on whether non-compliance with ethical principles in the exercise of the teaching profession should be sanctioned or not.

Table no. 7 Sanctioning non-compliance with ethical principles in the exercise of the teaching profession

Sanctioning non-compliance with ethical principles in the exercise of the teaching profession	number of responses	
	abs.	in %
Yes, but only with frequent and repeated non-compliance	60	59,4
Yes, with every non-compliance	4	4,0
No, because morality and its observance is a personal matter for every person	26	25,7
I can't say	11	10,9
TOGETHER	101	100,0

Figure no. 7 Sanctioning non-compliance with ethical principles in the exercise of the teaching profession



We could conclude that frequent and repeated non-compliance with ethical principles in the exercise of the profession should be sanctioned, which was agreed with by more than half of the respondents.

4.4 Summary of research results

In conclusion we could say that our research has shown that nowadays teachers in Catholic schools also encounter violations of moral principles and, therefore, consider a code of ethics necessary. Educational staff are also of the opinion that frequent violations of ethical principles should be sanctioned.

5 Conclusion

These studies, combined with research into Catholic school teachers' attitudes towards moral principles, confirm the importance of a code of ethics in Catholic schools. The successful performance of any activity requires a certain motivation, and for a teacher at a Catholic school, faith in God is the strongest source of motivation.

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