Social Science Investigations

Ethical Competence for Teachers:
A Possible Model*

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Abstract: In Education Sciences, the notion of 'competence' is widely used, both as an aim to be reached with students and as performance in teachers' education. This article advances a type of competence that is highly relevant for teachers' work, namely the 'ethical competence.' Ethical competence enables teachers to responsibly deal with the daily challenges arising from their professional roles. In this study, I put forward a definition of ethical competence and I propose a conceptual structure, both meant to support the illustration, description, and development of ethical competence for teachers.

Keywords*: ethical competence, ethical knowledge, ethical skills, ethical values

Introduction

'Ethical competence' is not a notion commonly used in everyday language, but mostly in academic and professional contexts. My decision to write on this topic was motivated by several reasons. The first reason is that although ethical competence is an attractive, powerful, and promising concept, with several advantages for research and practice (De Schrijver and Maesschalck 2013), scholars have often neglected it. So far, most studies on ethical competence have arisen from fields such as Medical Ethics and Business Ethics. In some countries, Romania included, it does not even appear in national educational documents such as *The Ethical Code for Teachers* or *The National Professional Standards for Teachers,* documents supporting the consolidation of professional identity. The second reason is that education has a strong normative dimension (Berlak and Berlak 1981; Buzzelli and Johnston 2001) and an axiological one (Cucoş 1995; Gardner 2005, 2007).

Education is fundamentally and primarily about values. Educators have the fundamental role in transmitting the Greek triad of values (Goodness – Truth – Beauty). Among these, the moral values are essential. Teaching is a 'moral endeavour' (Hansen 1998) and the teacher plays the role of a 'moral agent'

(Buzzelli and Johnston 2001). He or she enters into relationships with several actors: children, colleagues, parents, and he/she does that during long intervals. These relationships are complex, unpredictable and involve many decisions. They constitute the background for the educational process. Before being a teaching-learning relationship, it is a moral relationship involving people and their values. As Campbell (2008) has argued, the ways in which teachers respond to the daily events related to teaching-learning-evaluation should pass through a selection process in which moral dimension is important: "Ethics and teaching seem inherently compatible and unavoidably intertwined" (Campbell 2008, 358).

A teacher lacking ethical competence commits, no doubt, certain mistakes in relating to students, and the pedagogical relationship is the background of teaching. In this activity, the priority is not the technical, but the human aspect, that is, to show equal treatment, empathy. Before being a relationship aiming to build the student's personality, it is a relationship between two persons, who have to agree and understand each other as people. McPherson, Kearney and Plax (2003) claim that two thirds of teachers engage in behaviors that demoralize students. Among the destructive and offensive aspects of communication, we may mention anger, disappointment, jealousy, and embarrassment (Boice 1996). The poor development of ethical competence has multiple harmful influences on students. It may affect the short-, average and long-term process of learning (Braxton, Bayer and Noseworthy 2004), by slowing or impeding the development of cognitive and emotional skills. The student's overall psychological balance can be affected, as well as his/her healthy insertion in the social environment and his/her chances of building the desired career. Poenaru and Sava (1998) and Popovici (2000) use the concept of didactogeny to designate the negative impact certain undesired behaviours of teachers can have on students. Neglecting the moral dimension of the pedagogical relationship may lead to dysfunctions such as anxiety, lack of self-confidence, fear of school, and/or opposition to school requirements.

Ethical competence can be understood as the psychological skill that supports teachers to find morally adequate solutions to daily professional problems. Given the major impact of the teaching profession on children's lives, the research on the educators' ethical competence is necessary and undoubtedly connected to the professional component. We argue that ethical competence is not just a simple professional skill, but rather it is fundamental and constitutive for the teaching role.

The central concept of this study is *competence*. We shall rely on it in order to understand the meaning of the teachers' ethical competence. The assumption is that ethical competence is an indispensable condition for the proper exercise of professional roles in education. In this study, I will propose a definition for the concept of ethical competence of teachers, which I shall explain by the means of a conceptual structure. The classic elements of competence (knowledge, skills,

and values) are the basic landmarks for the presentation of the ethical competence of teachers. Ethical knowledge, ethical skills, and ethical values will be analyzed in relation to the context of the teachers' work, accentuating specific traits.

Defining Ethical Competence

Defining competence is not easy, as it implies epistemological, ethical, and political controversies (Tarrant 2000). As a highly complex finality, competence has been at the centre of debates and research in various fields, such as Psychology, the Management of Human Resources, Social Sciences, Science Education, etc. Most commonly, competence is described as an ensemble of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values that enable the efficient carrying out of an activity. The more diverse the experiences accumulated, the finer is the regulation of thought and action, resources and strategies (Perrrenoud 1998). In a very general sense, competence includes dynamic knowledge, which is activated in a number of situations, involving *savoir-dire*, *savoir-faire,* and *savoir-être* (Minder 2003).

There have been several attempts at theoretically outlining the concept of ethical competence. De Schrijver and Maesschalck (2013) synthesize three types of definitions: general definitions, definitions based on James Rest's (1986) theory, and definitions based on the *KSAs* structure (*Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes*). The first type of definitions tries to capture a general point of view on ethical behaviour. What does ethical behaviour mean? For Gardner (2007), for instance, an ethical relationship is of the type: *Person → Role.* By assuming an ethical position, the individual regards himself or herself as a member of a profession and ask himself/herself how he/she should behave in order to fulfil this role successfully. In order to illustrate the second type of definitions, I shall resort directly to Rest's (1986) *Four-Component Model*. Rest's research has led to the conclusion that moral action is the result of four psychological sub-processes: moral awareness, moral judgment or reasoning, moral motivation, and moral character. Illustrations for the third type of definitions are provided by Kavathatzopoulos (2002), who considers that ethical competence for business includes: high ethical awareness, individual skills to handle ethical issues, functional organizational structure and routines, communication and argumentation skills, confidence, and emotional strength.

In this study, competence will be approached at an individual level, not at a distributed level. It will be understood as a personal and not as a task-related characteristic (Stoof et al. 2002). I have, thus, constructed a definition from a more general perspective, one that reads as follows: ethical competence is a complex structure of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that offer support for the complex constitutive ethical role of the teacher, as a moral model for students. Developing ethical competence for teachers includes a set of elements, such as: 1. knowledge of and respect for moral values and norms; 2. the ability to

sensitively recognize moral situations; 3. the ability to correctly assess solutions from a moral perspective; 4. the ability to overcome inner obstacles in order to pursue moral goals.

I would also like to highlight the close connection between ethical competence and professional freedom. Ethical competence enables teachers to freely and autonomously relate to their tasks. It does not mean obedience to institutional rules, superficial adaptation or circumventing the rules, but freely reflecting on the space of professional freedom. Ethical competence enables teachers to reflect on professional practices and pedagogical relationships. It renders professional autonomy possible, as well as a genuine approach to freedom.

Ethical competence is not limited to the relational aspects of the teacher's work, but also relates to the whole set of a teacher's professional responsibilities: curricular design, lesson achievement, selection of teaching, and evaluation methods.

Components of Ethical Competence for Teachers

The above definition of ethical competence demands clarifications. We shall further rely on four elements of competence: ethical knowledge, ethical skills, ethical values, and ethical attitudes.

Let us start with knowledge. The literature on the types of knowledge related to teaching is vast (Cochran 1993; Grossman 1990; Shulman 1999; Wilson et al. 1987). Different approaches have been applied to understand teacher's knowledge (political, economic, axiological, etc). It is obvious that teacher's relation with knowledge is essential, and that knowledge relates to teaching in different forms.

Ethical knowledge is explained by Cambell (2010, 33):

> Ethical knowledge is the term I have given to the heightened awareness that teachers – some more than others – develop in response to their recognition of their role as moral agents. As a kind of virtue-in-action, ethical knowledge enables teachers to make conceptual and practical links between core moral and ethical values such as honesty, compassion, fairness, and respect for others and their own daily choices and actions. It moves teachers beyond viewing teaching solely in technical, pedagogical, curricular, disciplinary, and evaluative terms to appreciating the potentially moral and ethical impact their practice has, both formally and informally, on students.

This approach equals ethical knowledge with the entire ethical competence, as it includes knowledge, skills characteristic of ethical action (sensitivity, motivation), values, and attitudes.

Ethical knowledge can be conceived as an intuitive, tacit, and experiential type of knowledge. For instance, some psychologists claim that moral judgment is fully nourished by intuition and tacit knowledge. Although psychological research has long emphasized the role of conscious and rational reasoning

processes, recent models focus on the role of the unconscious and intuitive processes in moral judgment (Haidt 2007; Bortolotti 2011). Moral decision-making frequently occurs in complex situations that cannot be addressed by standard inferential reasoning. Therefore, we must reconsider the role of non-inferential forms of cognition, including moral intuition (Vokey and Kerr 2011). Although it has been traditionally acknowledged that reflection is the best way to make the best choices, it seems that this is not quite so (Bortolotti 2011). Thinking about reasons does not improve the choices people make. In many cases, reflection is compromising rather than promoting good decision-making.

Husu (2003) argues about the use of common sense in teaching. In his study on building ethical representations in teachers' pedagogical practices, Husu (2003) claims that "...the social processes involved in the teacher's school settings were not based to any great extent upon pre-established ethical reasoning, but on 'socially shared *identities of feeling*' (Shotter 1993, 54) that teachers create in the flow of activity between them. [...] Teachers feel not only entitled, but also forced to use their common sense in teaching" (Husu 2003, 17).

According to Dreyfus (1997), competence implies an unconscious, intuitive and spontaneous functioning, but decision-making is rational. Only at the level expert, decision-making is intuitive. Therefore, we may speak of several types of intuitions: intuitions in the absence of theoretical knowledge and informed intuitions. "At one extreme is the instantaneous, purely emotional, often irrational reaction to a situation. At the other is intuition that complements and augments fairly thorough analytical reasoning about the options available to the decision maker" (Patton 2003, 989). Ideally, in education, we should reach ethically informed intuitions, but given the precariousness of the teachers' initial training in ethics (Campbell 2011), this stage remains a desideratum. In this paper, I argue that both types of intuition provide material for ethical judgment and decision-making.

Experiential knowledge also plays a relevant role in pedagogical practice, since each educator is formed over time and gradually learns his or her teaching roles. Among the elements of experiential learning, I need to mention here the retention of valuable practices, assimilation of a useful daily routine, constant redefinition of situations, and introduction of one's own frame of analysis of the educational environment. Building and exercising moral competence also demands experience accumulated over time, as well as construction of the teacher's character. The teacher's response to critical incidents depends on the relationships with parents, students, and colleagues. It implies courage, communication, empathy, honesty, and balance.

What types of theoretical knowledge does the development of ethical competences support? It is mostly about the knowledge of ethical theories (Utilitarianism, Deontologism, and The Ethics of Virtues). Ethical competence should not be equated to its strict application. Ethical erudition in the absence of ethical vocation is ridiculous (Pleşu 2008). From a business ethics perspective,

Kavathatzopoulos (2002) identifies several elements of theoretical knowledge as components of ethical competence: knowledge of the normative foundations of the field; knowledge of the laws, legal rules, and professional ethical codes; knowledge of the structure and culture of organizations, along with an understanding of human behaviour in organizations; knowledge of organization development and the design approach. All these elements can also be seen as part of the teachers' ethical competence. In conclusion, one can argue that ethical erudition is not sufficient, but necessary, as it nourishes intuitive knowledge.

Ethical skills support the teacher as 'reflexive practitioner' (Schön 1983), involved in exerting occupational roles on a daily basis. In this research paper, I have chosen to present these skills by taking into consideration four elements of moral conduct identified by James Rest (1994):

1. *The receptiveness component.* Ethical sensitivity (Endicott 2001) or moral awareness (Rest 1994) refers to recognizing a particular situation as a morally relevant issue. The empathic interpretation of a situation helping to establish who is implicated, what actions to take, and the possible reactions and outcomes that might result is involved here (Endicott 2001). Most generally, it means being aware of one's self and other people, of one's environment, with everything implied by this attitude. For Gardner (2007), receptiveness may be equated to a respectful mind.

2. *The reasoning component* refers to ethical judgment (Bock 2001) or moral judgment (Rest 1994). Goodlad and colleagues (1993) argue that teachers' judgments are generally more important than the technical elements of their work. The judgments are nourished by the teacher's socio-cultural, moral and political beliefs. It is not enough to recognize that teachers constantly have to be in the middle of conflicting forces. They also have to cope with this difficult matter, and this depends on their ethical judgment (Colnerud 2006). This component refers to formulating and evaluating morally justified solutions to the issue at stake. This step requires reasoning through the possible choices to determine which of them are ethically sound (Rest 1994).

3. *The moral motivation component* or ethical motivation (Lies and Narvaez 2001)*.* The relevant question is "Why be moral?" The answer refers to giving priority to ethical action over other goals and needs. The subjects should find internal resources to help them follow the moral course of the action instead of transitory interests. For Oser (2013) moral motivation is "an inner state, a mechanism leading to act or not to act morally" (Oser 2013, 14).

4. *The component of implementation* or moral action (Narvaez, Schiller, Gardner, Staples 2001). It refers to putting into practice the morally correct decision. In order to complete the moral process, character traits such as perseverance, integrity, and courage are required.

Certainly, these four components are closely related and their separation is purely theoretical. In order to achieve a moral act, receptiveness, judgment, motivation, and action should function altogether.

Ethical Values and Ethical Attitudes

Macaulay and Lawton (2006) have argued that the transition from virtue to competence is a principle of public service, noticing that, despite various perspectives, the concepts of *virtue* and *competence* are, in practice, very similar. The author who most accurately expresses the connection between values and competence is Georg Lind (2004). For Lind, moral competence cannot be defined and measured without reference to an individual's moral ideals or principles. He has elaborated 'the dual aspect model of moral behaviour,' according to which moral competence is determined, on one hand, by the ideal values and moral principles of the individual and, on the other hand, by moral actions. We cannot speak of a morally competent person without reference to moral principles and values.

One question to ask at this point is what are the ethical values of the teaching profession mentioned by different authors? The list is very long. I have identified arguments for including in this list the following concepts: *the value of care* (Noddings 1984; Goldstein and Lake 2000), the *best interest of the student* (Stefkovich and O'Brien 2004), *responsibility, honesty, tolerance, loyalty, courtesy, compassion, integrity, fairness, care, and respect* (Starrat 1994), and *responsibility, justice, care, truthfulness, and commitment* (Oser 1991).

Ethical values are related to the belief in moral good as a universal value. Based on the suggestions provided by the authors mentioned above, I propose in this paper seven core values of teachers' ethical competence. These values are *care, freedom, autonomy, justice, respect, responsibility, and integrity.* The motivation for selecting these values is the following: the values that characterize the teachers' professional work are not determined by personal choice. In any profession, the orientation is towards achievement of social, altruistic goals and the teaching profession is no exception to this rule. I have selected these values because they meet the children's needs – as 'clients' of the teaching profession – as well as the educators' needs. The basic needs of school-age children are met by building a positive frame for learning. The concept that guides and measures the goodness, rightness and appropriateness of educational policies and practices is the 'best interest of the student' (Stefkovich 2014, citing Walker 1995). For Stefkovich (2014), 'the students' best interests' are at the center of the ethics of the profession which encompasses the ethics of justice, the ethics of care, and the ethics of critique. The educators' needs as professionals support the teacher's dignity as the person who cannot conduct his/ her activity in any material and spiritual circumstances. In a draft of the *Ethical code for Teachers* from France, Gilbert Longhi (2000) argued that teachers might refuse

to conduct educational activities when the material prerequisites for exercising are not ensured.

These seven ethical values are relevant for the teacher's work and, hence, they are present in the vast majority of ethical codes of the teaching profession around the world. The same values are required in other professions as well, but they are eventually understood in a different manner or even slightly modified depending on the nature of professional duties specific for each profession.

In my previous research, I have focussed on a general frame for understanding these values, with more details in Ghiaţău (2013), but we go with a brief presentation of those in here, too:

1. *Freedom.* The usual meaning of 'freedom' sends to the ability to make decisions according to one's own will, in the absence of any constraints. When we say 'freedom,' we think of endless possibilities. However, real freedom is based on respect of and for the rules. Absolute freedom, beyond all interferences, is nothing but an illusion. It also implies limits, since it relies on other people's moral duties and judgement. Being free does not mean to defy somebody or something, does not mean to ignore moral values. Devoid of ethical reasons, freedom is associated with human decay. Authentic freedom is correlated with positive axiological orientations.

One should further identify several marks of freedom in the school environment: the possibility to create a space free communication; the absence of obstacles in expressing opinions and the colleagues' respect for one's decisions; the absence of external constraints in teaching and evaluation (no interference practices); the freedom in the pursuit, development and transmission of knowledge. Teachers' professional freedom is not without limitations. One cannot deviate from the content of the curriculum or ignore specified aims of education. Situations such as as indoctrination, aggression, and obscenity should not occur. Concerning teacher's freedom of expression, Sadker and Sadker (1988) highlighted clear boundaries, such as disclosure of confidential materials, malicious, and/or false public statements about school. Obscene and blasphemous forms of expression are not protected by academic freedom.

2. *Autonomy.* Authentic morality relies on autonomy. Jean Piaget (1968) regarded moral autonomy as an individual's stage of full moral development, opposing it to moral heteronomy. Autonomous people have their own motivation and are governed by their own reasoning. They recognize the presence of limits and constraints, but reflect upon these restrictions and what happens around them. Pedagogical autonomy means that the school system does not intervene in the teachers' work, assuming that they are fully competent in their work (Eden 2001). Pedagogical autonomy is much more relevant than physical autonomy – the latter may admit certain exceptions.

3. *Justice / Fairness.* The concept of justice is not at all obsolete or abstract in relation to education. School has overcome the stage of being perceived as the

place where 'teachers command and students obey' and justice is no longer the perquisite of people whose power is given by status. Justice, as a social value, is a universal aspiration. When they designed the institutional code of university ethics, Miroiu et al. (2005) identified the following themes for 'justice and equity' (Miroiu et al. 2005, 20-23): non-discrimination and equality of opportunity, the elimination of conflicts of interest, prevention, and control of corruption. Justice in education may signify very different, apparently contradictory things, depending on the context. In certain situations, fairness requires that all students have the same opportunities. In other situations, fairness means treating students differently because they have different educational needs.

Related to the issue of justice in school there are three other issues that need to be discussed (Lovat et al. 2002): the distribution of time and attention to students, establishing rewards and punishments for students, and the monitoring of granting professional opportunities to teachers.

4. *Respect* implies, most generally, "a relation between a subject and an object in which the subject responds to the object from a certain perspective in some appropriate way" (Dillon 2014, 4). The respectful subject is always a person, a human being able to express gratitude. Respect implies concession, overcoming one's egocentrism, without however annulling one's self. Mutuality of respect is the basis for interpersonal morality. Risking appearing obsolete, we emphasize that the teaching activity cannot be conducted in the absence of an atmosphere of respect, be it even formal. Respect provides the basis for the assertion of other values. There are several hypostases of respect in the school environment:

- Respect for students' culture (ethnicity, race, gender, economic status); this form of respect implies designing and implementing the curriculum appropriately, in accordance with the students' background and cultural differences.
- Respect for the students' psychological characteristics (cognitive skills, social skills, language abilities etc.); any student deserves the teacher's attention in order to develop his/her potential, as allowed by his/her individual psychological profile.
- Respect for people who support education (teachers, counsellors, principal(s), etc.)

5. *Responsibility.* Establishing responsibilities by setting the rights and duties for each category of teachers will lead to a clear delineation of this professional group. Directly or indirectly, school 'is held accountable' for the 'students' performances.' A high level of performance is reflected, on the long term, in the students' professional success.

Some categories of professional responsibilities are:

a. Responsibilities in relation to the teaching process (related to the teaching-learning-evaluation process and the elements they imply: objectives, contents, methods, teaching relations etc.) - are the most important, because they describe the essence of the profession. An educator should, first of all,

develop quality lessons. Generally speaking, teachers are acting responsibly in school when: the teaching design is carefully conducted (the relation between objectives, contents, methods and evaluation is ensured); the teaching principles are complied with; the teaching and evaluation methodologies are appropriate for the context. Outside the school, teachers show responsibility when they display the values of healthy and civilized living.

b. Responsibilities in relation to the school institution – they constitute the duties comprised by laws, statutes, and regulations;

c. Responsibilities in relation to parents and the (local, regional) community.

6. *Care.* Generally, care is defined as "a species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, us, and our environment, all of which seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web" (Tronto 1993, 103*).* Noddings (1984) drew the distinction between natural caring and ethical caring. When I care for someone because 'I want' to care, I am engaged in natural caring. When I care for someone because 'I must' care, I am engaged in ethical caring. Natural caring applies at the family level, whereas ethical caring applies at the level of occupations.

Caring is not just smiles and hugs (Goldstein 1998). This is a superficial approach. Caring is a way of being connected with someone, not a set of specific behaviours (Noddings 1992). It involves a complex relationship, both intellectual and emotional, which helps children to develop harmoniously.

Straits (2007, 174) has named the indicators of caring for college instruction: being available to students, respecting students as individuals, willing to give extra effort, welcoming questions in class, inviting discussion outside of class, getting to know students, wanting students to learn / succeed. Isenbarger and Zembylas (2006, 132) have established a taxonomy of caring in education: 1. pedagogical caring – caring about children's academic expectations; 2. moral caring – caring about the values communicated in learning; 3. cultural caring – responsiveness related to children's culture.

The research focused on teacher's care is related to the following problems: relations between teachers and students (Doyle and Doyle 2003; Guzman et al. 2008), selection of teaching strategies (Gardner 2007), class management (Watson 2010), and curriculum (Apple 1979).

Caring is important not only at elementary and secondary levels, but at the university level as well (Guzman et al. 2008; Sumsion 2000; Straits 2007). In fact, a concern for caring in teachers' education system has long-term effects, because the future teachers will replicate the caring conduct in their professional activities.

Along with care, generosity is another notion invoked in describing an authentic educational relationship. Generosity is the very meaning of the teaching profession. It rejects corporatism and reveals the authentic relationship with the other, as Etchegoyen argues (1991).

7. *Integrity*. Being upright means being moral *par excellence*, admitting no compromises in applying moral principles. Consistency between words and actions is essential. Integrity is the quintessence of moral values, because it implies a synthesis of virtues: honesty, courage, respect. It is, at the same time, attitude, goal, and means. Tirri (2001) shows that teachers are not always aware of their integrity. But, when faced with a situation that involves feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, they ask themselves whether they are acting with integrity. Klaassen (2012, 14) presents the moral courage of teachers as a combination of three aspects: 1. daring to present their own principles and defend them against students, parents, colleagues, and school leaders; 2. the 'fortitude' of having the student's best interest in mind under all circumstances, the patience and the wakefulness involved in this constant process; 3. the courage to be a moral role model for students and others.

These values refer, first of all, to the teaching profession and their representatives, teachers. Teachers should display in their activities as ethical principles, this set of values, values that guide all the interactions between teachers and their students, parents, and colleagues.

Some values gain increased relevance depending on the students' development stage. For example, for educators who work with smaller children, up to ten years old, the main value should be care, followed by the others. The reason is the fact that younger children need positive emotional support before other things. They need to build affection towards their colleagues and educators. Many studies bring evidence for the hypothesis of the prevalence of the emotional support in the development of personality (Goldstein and Lake 2000; Raver 2002; Goleman 2008).

The internalization of this set of ethical values contributes to the building of a *personal ethos*, one that actively supports the teaching roles. Obviously, the list is open to include other virtues, as well. Mitrofan (1988, 41) presents a series of traits which are essential for the development of pedagogical skills. These are emotional traits (kindness, cheerfulness, generosity, passion, enthusiasm), volitional traits (firmness, courage, perseverance, intransigency, patience, self-control) and moral traits (consonance between word and action, sense of measure, balance between exigency and tolerance, honesty, modesty, equity). These traits could be part of the teachers' ethical competence.

Conclusions

In this study, I have chosen to focus mostly on the teachers' ethical competence as presented in my definition and based on such a frame or structure as Knowledge – Skills – Values and Attitudes. Thus, I have by and large highlighted the following central ideas: a) Ethical competence deserves special attention in the field of pedagogical research, since it is a fundamental feature teachers need in order to fully fulfil their roles. Neglecting the moral dimension of the relationship between teachers and students may lead to dysfunctions, such as

anxiety, lack of self-confidence, persistent fear towards school, opposition to school requirements etc.; b) Ethical competence includes knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that support the teacher as a reflexive actor and moral model for the students. The teaching profession means, therefore, not just the successful transmission of information from a sender to a group of receivers, but a constant intellectual and moral effort, a decision-making process, and a struggle to follow an axiological path. c) The appropriate approach to ethical competence for teachers should resort both in theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge; d) Ethical skills for teachers include references to four main components of the ethical behaviour which are receptiveness, reasoning, motivation, and implementation; e) Although the essence of ethical values remains the same, regardless of the profession, their contextualization in education adds certain specific features, enhancing, thus, the knowledge in the field of professional judgment.

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