

## A Study on the Indices of Professional Ethics the Martyr Teacher Morteza Motahari's Point of View

Malihe moslehi Noshabadi<sup>1\*</sup> Mohammad Hossein Heidari<sup>2</sup> Mohammad Najafi<sup>3</sup> Afsaneh Faramarzi<sup>4</sup>

1. MA in History and Philosophy of Education, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran
  2. Assistant Professor of Educational Sciences Group, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran
  3. Assistant Professor of Educational Sciences Group, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran
  4. MA in History and Philosophy of Education, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran
- \* E-mail of the corresponding author: mmalihe98@yahoo.com

### Abstract

The present study aims to elaborate on the parameters of ethics of professional teaching from the point of view of Martyr Motahari. This qualitative study was conducted analytically and descriptively so as some parameters of ethics in professional teaching were extracted from ethical and educational views of Martyr Motahari. These parameters could be listed as follows: training intellection as the first step of ethics; encouraging intellection and avoiding radical transmission of knowledge to students; augmenting senses in order to reach rational independence; attending to differences in thinking levels of students; trying to modify learning spirit; creating an inquisitive spirit in students; respecting and appreciating the educator; teaching useful knowledge and avoiding wasting time of the trainees; providing the basis for freedom of speech in class; ethical philosophy of the trainees; scientific modesty and improving the sense of religiosity.

**Keywords:** Ethics; Muslim thinkers; Ethics of professional teaching; Martyr Motahari

### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, professional ethics, as a novel subdivision of ethics, have drawn a great deal of attention in different fields of human sciences. The term professional ethics is defined as the ethical responsibility an individual takes in their position. A physician has to accept a set of ethical responsibilities along with professional and organizational duties of a doctor so as the change in his career would end in the change in ethical responsibilities. Any occupation necessitates various ethical responsibilities based on its position and the status. Ethics in this sense is dependent on the job: ethics of physicians, ethics of teachers, ethics of managers, ethics of supervisors, ethics of attorneys, ethics of judges, ethics of journalists, ethics of merchants etc (Ghara-Maleki, 2006: 102).

Professional ethics are now generalized to almost all professions and careers; however, the ethics of professional teaching is of utmost importance for the teacher plays an integral role in the educational system of any country (Rouhani & Goodarzi, 2002). Moreover, since experts in the field have some high hopes for education, the teacher is the centre for any change (Mehr Mohammadi, 2000). A child in his early years is influenced by his parents, acquaintances, peers and friends and as he grows older, the role of friends and cultural figures becomes bolder. Therefore, the most effective education is the one having practical and clear models to follow. This method is accepted by the student fully and influences him greatly; thus, parents, teachers, instructors and authorities ought to bring proper models of ethics and behavior into his consideration and make decent examples for him.

Theoretical discussions on professional ethics of teachers are now in the focus of authorities in different countries and they have tried to consider teaching ethics in recent decades (Kashani & Bagheri, 2008: 2) and various attempts have been made to compile a theoretical framework. Accordingly, founding Islamic thoughts and ethics with Islamic approach are among the novel discussions made by thinkers in the field of education.

Therefore, the necessity for recognition of principles and basics of ethics of teaching relative to the Iranian-Islamic values urges taking primary steps in this venture. To reach this goal, one major way is to refer to the thoughts of the philosophers and thinkers. Therefore, the present study refers to the views of Morteza Motahari as a prominent contemporary thinker of the Islamic world. In fact, the outstanding characteristic of Martyr Motahari compared to other thinkers is that along with his studies in the field of Islamic thinking, had vast contemplation in education and spoke about it from different points of view. Thus, this descriptive-analytical study attempts to investigate his views through his own books and the papers written to review his works to find a framework for the compilation of the charter for teaching ethics.

### 2. Martyr Motahari's Life

Martyr Ayat-ollah Motahari was born on February 3, 1920 in Fariman to a noble family. He went to traditional schools in his town and at the age of 12, joined the religious school of Mashhad to study the basics of Islamic sciences. At the time he began his studies, he was known as a bright young student with a high level of perception. His other important feature was that his curiosity made him follow what he had learned in order to

present it in a better way. His professor Allame Tabatabaei had a famous praising quote about him. He said "Whatever I told him about human sciences and philosophy was sure to be understood fully and not to be wasted". Words are like seeds planted. In case the seeds are planted in a nice environment, they will grow and finally yield; but, if they are planted in an indecent place, they will fail to grow and will perish or at least grow a little at the end. Martyr Mohari's thought was so vast that he fully understood what he was taught and was able to present it (Some of his fellow scholars and friends, 1995: Vol. 2: 12)

In the year 1937, in spite of all the oppression from Reza Pahlavi on the clergy and the dissention from his friends, he went to Qom to continue his studies to higher levels. In his 15 year stay in Qom, he attended classes lectured by Ayatollah Boroojerdi (Fiqh and religious principles), Imam Khomeini (Mulla Sadra's philosophy, mysticism, ethics and principles for 12 years) and the late Allameh Tabatabaei. Ayatollah Sayid Mohammad Hojat in principles and the late Ayatollah Sayid Mohammad Mohaqiq Damad were among other lecturers he attended their classes. During his stay in Qom, besides studying, he actively participated in social and political affairs as well and he had connections with Fadayian e Islam group. In the year 1952, he moved to Tehran despite his promising future in Hawza. In Tehran, he started teaching in Marvi School, writing books and giving speeches (Ashoori, 2012).

Eventually, after nearly 40 years of studying, teaching, speaking and discussing in various fields of philosophy, discourse, society, economy, etc. , he was assassinated by the Forqan group, AKA Khavarij, while returning a meeting of the Revolution Council, on May 2, 1980. Iranian supreme leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, once said about his role in the victory of Islamic Revolution: "Motahari was a great architect for the Islamic Republic. He was one of the main figures in designing Islamic Republic with his bright mind and strong heart. Thus, his existence is a continuous one. Although he lived less than sixty years, his many works including the Elevated Knowledge of Mulla Sadra, ethics and other human sciences concerning Islamic and revolutionary society like women, Hijab are indispensable (As'adi, 2008: 13).

### **3. The Parameters of Professional Ethics in Martyr Motahari's Point of View**

**3.1. Training intellection:** Martyr Motahari refers to Quran and Islamic traditions and necessitates training intellection to reach moral merits and real perfection. For him, intellect is an essential factor in guiding an individual to the position of a perfect human. In fact, Martyr Motahari believes that reaching perfection is only possible through intellection and proper use of the power of intellect (Motahari, 2010, Vol. 23: 206). However, Martyr Motahari proposes two ways to be important in training intellection: the first one is the divine piety. In his point of view, mundane affairs along with losing piety darkens the soul and extinguishing the light of intellect; therefore, Motahari corroborates the effect of piety on the enlightenment of intellect and believes that humans' move toward purifying the soul will open up the gates of knowledge, perception and insight. The second one is learning sciences. He believes that God gave intellect to the human to think with and find the undiscovered. Humans are born ignorant and have to learn sciences (Motahari, 2011, Vol. 24: 369). Intellects are fed with science and science is the fuel of the lightener of intellect (Motahari, Vol. 24: 524). For Martyr Motahari, Thinking and learning are two separate concepts and at the same time neither can separately take humans to perfection. For him, science cannot do screening and analyzing easily for thinking human with low level of knowledge is like a factory with no or little material and it can operate. In case the factory has abundant material and not operate will be nothing as well (Motahari, 2010, Vol. 22: 699). Therefore, intellection is a power through which humans can figure out the dos and don'ts of ethics; thus, teachers ought to be careful to take themselves and their students up to a level at which they appreciate the importance of obeying ethics and distinguish ethical occasions correctly.

### **3.2. Encouraging intellection and avoiding radical and one-sided transmission of knowledge to the student:**

in previous part the point was emphasized that correct intellection is a primary key for ethics. Martyr Motahari expresses the need for institutionalizing intellection in educational contexts and believes that encouraging intellection is a professional duty for a teacher. For him, a teacher is ethically responsible to encourage students' intellection and help them reach their goals. Martyr Motahari believes that the teacher has the responsibility of providing the ground for thinking in students for thinking not only yields a result, but also trains the intellect as well (Motahari, 1991: 27). Human brain is just like the human stomach. Stomach should receive food in decent portions from outside and using some secretions make it usable. Stomach should have enough space in which food is turned over and secrete the acids and chemicals needed. However, the stomach receiving large portions continuously will not get the chance to move the foods properly and digest them. At this moment, digestion interrupts and eventually the final steps in the intestines are not fully done. Human brain is just like this. If the chance for thinking and intellection is given to a child, he will be encouraged (Motahari, 2010, Vol. 22: 528) to do his best in analyzing the data he received. Then, the opportunity for creativity emerges. In fact, a good teacher in Martyr Motahari 's view is the one who provides students with the chance to think.

**3.3. Improving sensual powers to reach intellectual independence:** another important responsibility of a teacher is to provide the grounds for intellectual independence of students. In order to do so, Martyr Motahari suggests we use senses more frequently and more accurately and not trust written materials radically. He says "the system of intellect in humans is empowered by senses. The way to rationality is through senses. Quran invites people to contemplate as well for these senses ought to end in rationality and ought not to stop at senses (Motahari, 2011, Vol. 3: 373). An individual who reaches perfection in science and knowledge will have his intellect independent of senses and imaginations. Religious orders do not confuse them at all. This person at this stage is called "Labib" i.e. the person who has regained his intellectual independence (Motahari, 2010, Vol. 3: 239). After all an important responsibility of a teacher as part of his professional ethics is to activate sensual powers in students and encourage the student to contemplate on the sensible in the universe. The student ought to be trained in a way that he does not depend merely on the thoughts and ideas of other people and depend on his own intellects. This will gradually lead him to intellectual independence. An important point to be considered is that professional teachers have to provide the opportunity for his students to use their various sensual powers and learn how to use them for, as it was already said, the channel for humans' connection with the outside world is through his senses.

**3.4. Considering intellectual level of students:** one of the major natural phenomena seen in the structure of human societies is differences. A sound educational system perceives these differences as aptitudes and abilities. Motahari relates a tradition from the holy prophet of Islam recorded in Kafi and elaborates on the differences in intellectual power of humans as an inherent affair. "We are to speak with people according to their intellect. In other words, the capacity of perception is considered for everybody in order to speak with him understandably. Anyone with higher level of intellect will listen to high level speech and the one with lower level of intellect will have low level of guidance. God in his divine position has given us various powers the difference among which is one of the most prominent ones. The difference in intellects is a natural phenomenon and this difference is the most logical reason for applying various styles and techniques in the educational system (Ashoori, 2012: 53). Martyr Motahari criticizes indirect education methods and proposes an important point. The point that is neglected frequently and does not get to the desired purposes is that too much expectation from the students' ears and tongue is wrong (Motahari, 1987: 86). Therefore, individual differences among students are important issues to which teachers have to consider at schools for teachers know that different students need different styles of teaching. Humans have various abilities and interests; thus, teachers and instructors should identify their students' interests and abilities and talk to them based on their findings. Teaching and homework assignments ought to be set based on these differences.

**3.5. Trying to realize the aptitudes of trainees:** considering the differences in intellectual and scientific level of students is an introduction for the key role a teacher plays in realizing the god-given aptitudes of the students. This task is one of the most important responsibilities of the teaching profession. Martyr Motahari defines evolution of society as realizing inherent aptitudes in the society and discovering these abilities will help the society reach a perfection it deserves. Yet, understanding these perfection aptitudes are sometimes discovered and the teachers' responsibility is to identify and train these aptitudes. Martyr Motahari emphasizes on a model like Imam Ali and defines the perfect human as: the person whose human values must grow to their end. The values grow to their maximum and their growth has a balanced trend (Motahari, 2001: 28). He says "the perfect human is the one who considers all his abilities while focusing on one of them. He trains all his aptitudes together in a balanced way (ibid). Therefore, the teacher can identify the weak points in his students and guide him to have proper techniques of empowering or eliminating them. The teacher on the other hand has to know that the lack of an aptitude is because of negligence from the student himself and this lack does not mean that he does not possess it. Proper education and training can bring the aptitude up.

**3.6. Trying to purify the student's soul:** Martyr Motahari believes in the spiritual and physical dimensions of humans and thinks physical health is guaranteed if he nourishes in a way that illness and weakness does not occur to him. Humans are always looking for food and drinks in their best in order to avoid any health problems. Just like the physical aspect, human soul needs its food of science and thought. The science and thought have to be worthy of life and represents the creation as lovely and likable. This could be achieved if humans learn religious teachings well and choose the tools for perfection or deterioration of his soul carefully. Some books and papers along with speeches and media have such a bad effect that the life changes and this undoubtedly is the effect of those bad ideas. They mislead the human and he loses the ability to distinguish right from wrong. In order to clarify these, Martyr Motahari refers to a tradition from Imam Hassan: "I wonder why people worry about their foods and drinks and pursue people who try to poison them but do not concern about the knowledge and science they give to their minds. They sometimes love the people who try to poison their minds even until their lives end" (Motahari, 2010, Vol. 22: 195). Considering these, the religious teacher attempting to follow the

codes of ethics in his profession must try to prevent negative thoughts from entering students' minds. He must design his curriculum so that cultural aspects and spiritual health be considered accurately.

**3.7. Creating inquisitiveness in students:** when Martyr Motahari clarifies the professional responsibility of a teacher, he emphasizes on the creation of inquisitiveness in students as a major ethical responsibility. He believes that scientific spirit is the spirit of impartiality, fact-finding, objectivity, and the spirit away from dogma, pride and ego. If the human is on his way to find the truth without this spirit, no truth will be found. In other words, with a misled mind, truth will show itself in a distorted way, especially when on the road to the truth; he falls in the trap of pride and could not go through the three stages of science. At first, he imagines he knows everything in the universe, in the second stage he knows that he is not that knowledgeable and in the third stage he concludes that he knows nothing about what he needs to know. Any individual challenging to reach the truth will find the gates of truth opened by God and will reach the extreme intellectual levels. Therefore, the extreme intellectual growth could only be possible by the aid from God and this happens only to those who try to find the truth and purify his soul from any evil. In a decent educational system, the teacher helps the student obtain the scientific spirit. If the teacher reminds his students of the importance of truth finding in his scientific views both theoretically and practically, and if he presents the material without any bias, ego and dogma, the truth finding spirit will be institutionalized in students. If he keeps his objectivity which is extremely difficult, God will help him. God has guaranteed that he will guide the objective truth finders (Motahari, 2011, Vol. 22: 548). The scientific spirit is just like this. Scientific spirit is the spirit of truth finding, objectivity, impartiality away from any form of dogma and ego. And this has to be institutionalized in students by their teacher.

**3.8. Respecting and appreciating the teacher:** Another important ethical responsibility of the teacher is to create the spirit of respect and appreciation for the teacher and science. There is however a delicate point to be considered here. Firstly, the respect to the teacher is different from the respect to the teacher as a human kind. Since human societies consider the teacher to be the symbol of science and its promotion, respecting the teacher is in fact respecting the science and is not in any way considered as flattery. Secondly, the teacher could not directly encourage the students to do this for it may have negative effects on students' minds and they may think the teacher is asking the respect for himself. This ought to be done indirectly and the best method is to show respect to his teachers and professors at school or university. These two points were clearly seen in Martyr Motahari's lifestyle. He was always thankful for his teachers and respected them. Allameh Tabatabaei for example was always mentioned with the expressions of love (The Organization for Research and Planning in Education, 1997: 56). Thus, teaching students to be respectful and appreciating is among the most important ethical responsibilities of a teacher for he is the symbol of science in any society.

**3.9. Teaching useful knowledge and avoiding wasting students' time:** Martyr Motahari does not consider things whose knowing and not knowing of any help to humans to be science. He refers to Quran and clarifies that it does not emphasize on historical facts like names for they have no effect on guiding people and their souls. The holy prophet of Islam did not consider these things science but for him, they were merits i.e. knowing them is not a sin but are not necessarily urgent to be known for knowing historical facts only fills up the mind and evades the individual from knowing the truth (Motahari, 2011, Vol. 27: 760). Shahid Motahari considers reaching useful knowledge to be as a purpose for education. He refers to Nahj Ul-Balagha in which Imam Ali uses the terms Heard Intellect for knowledge and Favorable Knowledge for the Intellect. In fact, education could have a bipolar relationship between knowledge and intellect neither of which could exist separately. In fact, knowledge is the material without which intellect factory will break down i.e. Intellect even in its highest levels is useless without knowledge. Knowledge helps discover cause-effect relationships and their relationships are better understood (Motahari, 2010, Vol. 22: 700- 701). In other words, for Martyr Motahari, education can operate the factory of intellect through nice materials of useful knowledge and applying this knowledge, values and merits of true nature are discovered. Attempts must be made to reach the ultimate goal of God's vicinity. Accordingly, the teachers has the ethical responsibility of using the best out of his short opportunity and teach the most useful knowledge to his students and avoid wasting time via marginal useless knowledge.

**3.10. Providing the ground for freedom of speech in the class:** Martyr Motahari believes in an utmost value for freedom of speech and thinks in an Islamic society freedom of speech and thought should not be in anyway disturbed. He believes, freedom is sometimes discarded by individual himself. In other words, he may stick to some superstitions, bias, dogma and personal thoughts and in other cases; the society may impose restrictions on freedom of thought in humans (Motahari, 2010, Vol. 25: 171). Martyr Motahari considers the freedom of thought and intellect as an essential means to help humans reach the perfection<sup>1</sup> (Motahari 2010, Vol. 25: 176).

<sup>1</sup> Martyr Motahari has discussed the means for reaching this goal in the book "Spiritual Freedom"



He says educational contexts must include freedom of speech for free discussions. For him, the teacher has the professional responsibility to provide such atmosphere. He states "I sent a message to someone who had materialistic views directly and indirectly through some other professors. I told him, you speak your thoughts and I will do the same. You be frank in your speaking and I will be frank as well. This is called freedom (Motahari, 2011, Vol. 24: 124)". In fact, the society that lacks freedom of speech will not experience creativity and novel ideas and the teacher has to create such condition for this freedom.

**3.11. Ethical philosophy of the teacher (Practical ethics):** many of the prominent figures in the field of education believe that one major key for institutionalizing ethics in educational contexts is the ethical philosophy of the teacher and his moral behavior. Martyr Motahari was a symbol of ethical and practical piety. He had practical piety and he believed if the teachings are to be of any effect, the teacher must act ethically; then what he says, will be accepted by the listeners. Martyr Motahari had gone through the route to perfection after long haul practices and training. In case someone had a little contact with Martyr Motahari, he would be attracted to him (The Organization for Research and Planning in Education, 1995, Vol. 2: 97). Lectures of Martyr Motahari were not only places for education but also they served as places for purifying the soul. The relationship between Martyr Motahari and his students was not a simple teacher student relationship. He was a teacher sitting and lecturing and his students would gather around him like a candle to use his light (The Organization for Research and Planning in Education, 1995, Vol. 2: 113- 114). Therefore, the point should be considered by the teachers and through that they should realize time concepts in their best way to show them in his practice. Professional ethics of teaching, indeed, is to transfer the knowledge and concepts through his acts.

**3.12. Scientific modesty:** One of the main setbacks of teaching ethics is the teacher's ego and pride. An important ethical characteristic of Martyr Motahari was his scientific modesty. Since all he did was because of God and for God, no mundane aim was not found in his deeds. His son expresses this as: "the only name he let be written on the cover of his books was Morteza Motahari and he did not let us use titles like professor or doctor before the name. He strongly avoided fame. He was a prominent philosopher and thinker; yet, he wrote story books and when his friends denounced this he said showing off is not an art, trying to reach goals is". He was a key figure in the Revolutionary Council but papers did not mention his name very often. When we asked him for the reason he responded "I do what I have to do. The less mentioning of my name the more relaxed I will be. I try not to appear in public gatherings as much as possible." he was a collection of merits but he behaved so modestly that anyone not knowing his scientific status would consider him as a lower than normal person. His great soul was so modest before God and his elegance that he never was influenced by what he knew (Some of his friends and scholars, 1995, Vol. 2: 97). People considering themselves to be great act as a communication barrier. Many great teachers and professors are dispersing their students. Thus, these kinds of behavior will not have any effect on students even if they are novel and modern.

**3.13. Nurturing the religious sense:** In Martyr Motahari's point of view, science cannot lead the society to redemption solely and there must be religion. On the other hand, faith without science will not be of any benefit. Islam does not need the faithless scientist or the faithful ignorant (Motahari, 2001: 51). The science in a faithful mind is effective and can prevent distractions (Gol-Mohammadi, 2007: 19). In the field of educational principles, Martyr Motahari takes faith as the root and states that "the root that is to be strengthened in educational principles is the faith in God. Under the cover of this faith, humanistic feelings must be augmented and the aesthetic sense should be empowered along with the belief in mind apart from the body. If humanity is to be founded, the foundation should be as strong as the belief in the unity of God for humanity is nothing without knowing God. Humanity without believing in God is nothing but bestiality (Motahari, 2011, Vol. 2: 136). Since Islam does not accept mere learning of religion and emphasizes on its practice, thus, the major condition for practicing religion is to learn it (Motahari, 1991: 34).

According to Martyr Motahari, knowledge gives us enlightenment and power. Faith on the other hand gives us warmth, love and hope. Knowledge builds the tools and faith makes the target. Knowledge increases the velocity and faith gives direction. Knowledge is power and faith is asking for good. Knowledge shows what there is and faith inspires what to do. Knowledge is the revolution outside, and faith is the revolution inside. Knowledge builds the universe and faith builds human mind. Knowledge expands human existence horizontally and faith expands it vertically. Knowledge makes the nature and faith makes the humans. Both knowledge and faith give power to humans; yet, knowledge gives detached power and faith gives continuous power. Knowledge is beauty and faith is beauty as well. Knowledge is the beauty of mind and faith is the beauty of soul. Knowledge is the beauty of thought and faith is the beauty of sense. Both of them give security to humans; yet, knowledge gives external security and faith gives internal security. Knowledge gives security against illnesses, floods, quakes and storms and faith gives security against anxiety, loneliness nihilism and helplessness. Knowledge concords the world with humans and faith concords the human with himself (Motahari, 2011, Vol. 2: 32).

Therefore, teachers who play the biggest roles in nurturing their students' mind and soul must consider the point that they should have a strong and stable soul and have an unshakable faith. Considering faith and spirituality, educational methods must be in a way that spirituality is formed in the depth of the heart and protect the human against non-spiritual factors.

#### 4. Conclusion

Considering what is said, the conclusions reveal that humans are the most fascinating creature created by God. Humans are of a spiritual truth and the only way for it to show its real nature is through education. This could only be done by the teachers with professional ethics. The vital role of a teacher in guiding the new generation is extremely important in the society. Therefore, scientific and moral characteristics of a teacher are necessary for each other. Teachers must do their best to fulfill the responsibility they have taken and feel the duty in the bottom of their heart.

Teachers must have professional ethics and consider the high level of Islam and its educational goals. They should be extreme models of humanity for their students and must know that they are following the route messengers of God had followed. They should pay attention to all internal aptitudes of the students and try to realize these god-given talents in order to fulfill their responsibility. Thus, a teacher must be distinguished with whatever that can make him liked by people. These characteristics can be professional ethics, for with the ethics, a society with high level of health and a dynamic education with rational, spiritually and physically healthy students will be created.

The ultimate goal in Martyr Motahari's point of view is reaching human perfection and in order to reach this goal, teachers must have the parameters of professional ethics accepted by Islam. Then, all aspects of human life will be taken into account and aspects like education will be conducted along with purification. Teachers must be careful to take their own and their students' level of intellectual education so high that they distinguish the importance of observing ethical rules and differentiate between ethical dilemmas through their intellects. A good teacher in Martyr Motahari's view is the one who gives thinking opportunity to his students and strengthens their senses to encourage them contemplate in the sensible. This teacher trains his students so that he does not depend merely on opinions from other people and depends on his mind and trying that will lead him to intellectual independence eventually.

Moreover, the faithful teacher who tries to observe the rules of professional ethics must prevent negative ideas from entering the minds of his students by any mean. He must select the syllabus for his class so that cultural programs are considered. Extracurricular books and similar activities must be selected with utmost discretion. Another important parameter is institutionalizing truth finding spirit and the objective unbiased impartial spirit in students. Students must also learn to respect their teachers and appreciate their presence, as they are symbols of science in the community.

A teacher has the professional responsibility to use his limited time in the best and teach the most useful knowledge to his students. He also must avoid teaching marginal useless knowledge to students and waste some of their most precious times. Creating the freedom of speech is another important characteristic for a teacher for the society without freedom of speech will not experience creativity and novel ideas. Finally, teachers as the ones having the highest effects on students must nurture them in a way that they have stable souls with unshakable original faith.

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