



# **An Analytical Study On Teachers' Professional Qualification And Ethics In Higher Education Institutions In Assam With Special Reference To Nagaon District**

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## **Abstract**

The quality of higher education is closely linked to the professional qualification and ethical orientation of teachers, particularly in regions where institutional development varies widely. This study analytically explores the professional qualifications, ethical practices, and performance standards of teachers working in selected Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of Nagaon district, Assam. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from faculty members across government and private colleges to assess their academic preparation, pedagogical competencies, adherence to institutional ethics, and awareness of professional codes of conduct. The analysis reveals notable variations in teachers' qualifications, exposure to professional development Programmes, and their understanding of ethical responsibilities within institutional settings. While most respondents demonstrated adequate academic credentials, the study found disparities in continuous professional development and inconsistent application of ethical principles such as accountability, transparency, fairness, and student-centric conduct. The findings highlight the need for structured faculty development initiatives, stronger institutional monitoring mechanisms, and the integration of ethical training in professional development frameworks. The study concludes that strengthening teachers' qualifications and ethical awareness is essential for enhancing the overall quality, credibility, and governance of higher education in Assam.

## **Keywords**

Teachers' Professional Qualification; Professional Ethics; Higher Education Institutions; Ethical Practices; Faculty Development; Accountability; Assam; Nagaon District; Teacher Competency; Academic Integrity.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India play a crucial role in shaping the socio-economic and intellectual development of the nation. The state of Assam, with its diverse sociocultural and educational landscape, has seen significant expansion in its higher education sector over the past few decades. In this context, teachers serve as the backbone of academic development and institutional excellence. Their professional qualifications and ethical practices directly influence the quality of education, student learning outcomes, institutional culture, and overall academic standards.

In recent years, discussions on teacher professionalism have gained momentum owing to the growing emphasis on accountability, transparency, competence, and ethical conduct. Professional qualification is not only a measure of academic attainment but also a reflection of pedagogical preparedness and commitment to continuous improvement. Ethical practices, on the other hand, form the moral foundation of the teaching profession, guiding teachers' behavior, decision-making, and interactions with students, colleagues, institutions, and society at large.

### 1.2 Significance of Professional Qualifications in Higher Education

Professional qualification refers to the specialized academic and pedagogical preparation that equips teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to perform effectively. In the higher education sector, qualifications such as NET, SLET, Ph.D., and participation in professional development Programmes are considered essential indicators of teacher quality.

Highly qualified teachers are better positioned to engage students, adopt contemporary teaching methods, conduct research, integrate technology in the classroom, and contribute to institutional development. The University Grants Commission (UGC) and other regulatory bodies have periodically revised guidelines for minimum qualifications and professional standards, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and scholarly engagement. Thus, understanding the professional qualification status of teachers in HEIs in Nagaon district provides meaningful insight into the academic strength and developmental needs of the region.

### 1.3 Teachers' Professional Ethics

Ethics in the teaching profession encompasses a set of moral principles and standards that guide teachers' conduct within and outside the classroom. Professional ethics ensure that teachers uphold values such as integrity, honesty, fairness, respect, responsibility, and justice. These ethical values help build trust among students, promote a positive learning environment, and sustain accountability in educational institutions.

In higher education, teachers are expected to demonstrate ethical behavior in various aspects—curriculum delivery, student evaluation, research practices, mentoring, maintaining professional boundaries, and institutional interactions. Ethical lapses may lead to mistrust, poor learning outcomes, and institutional deterioration. Therefore, examining the ethical conduct of teachers in HEIs becomes a vital component of ensuring educational quality and institutional reputation.

### 1.4 Need for the Study

Despite the growing emphasis on teacher competence and ethics in higher education, limited research has been conducted in the context of Assam, particularly in Nagaon district. The region exhibits a mix of urban and rural HEIs, differing in resources, faculty profiles, and academic culture. This creates a need for systematic investigation into whether teachers possess adequate professional qualifications,

how consistently they follow professional ethics, and what institutional factors influence their ethical behavior.

The study becomes essential to address the emerging challenges in higher education such as commercialization, student diversity, increased competition, technology integration, and quality assurance. Understanding teachers' qualifications and ethical practices will contribute to policy formulation, professional development planning, and improving teaching-learning processes.

### 1.5 Statement of the Problem

Quality higher education requires competent teachers who also adhere to high ethical standards. However, variations in institutional conditions, recruitment patterns, administrative structures, and professional development opportunities often lead to discrepancies in teacher qualifications and ethical conduct.

In Nagaon district, although HEIs have expanded rapidly, concerns remain regarding teacher competence, commitment, accountability, and ethics. There is a lack of empirical evidence examining these aspects. Therefore, the present study seeks to analyze teachers' professional qualifications and ethical practices to understand the holistic picture of teacher professionalism in HEIs in Nagaon.

### 1.6 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study is confined to selected Higher Education Institutions in Nagaon district of Assam. It focuses on examining the professional qualifications and ethical practices of teachers across various disciplines. The study does not attempt to evaluate individual teachers but aims to present an overall overview of teacher professionalism in the district's HEIs. Time and resource limitations restrict the study to a sample size feasible within the research framework.

### 1.7 Organization of the Paper

The introduction provides the conceptual and contextual background. The subsequent sections include a review of related literature, methodological procedures, presentation and analysis of data, key findings, suggestions for policy improvement, and a conclusion highlighting the overall implications of the study.

## Objectives of the Study

- To examine the professional qualifications of teachers working in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Nagaon district of Assam.
- To analyze the level of professional ethics practiced by teachers in HEIs in the study area.
- To explore the relationship between teachers' professional qualifications and their ethical practices.
- To identify institutional and personal factors influencing teachers' adherence to professional ethics.
- To provide suggestions for enhancing professional ethics and teacher quality in Higher Education Institutions.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1 Teachers' Professional Qualification and Its Importance

Teachers' professional qualification is widely recognized as a fundamental determinant of educational quality. Darling-Hammond (2017) asserts that teacher competency—encompassing academic knowledge, pedagogical skills, and research exposure—is directly linked to student learning outcomes. UNESCO (2020) further emphasizes that qualified teachers are essential for achieving global education targets. In India, the University Grants Commission (UGC) mandates minimum qualifications such as NET, SET, and PhD, which aim to enhance the academic rigor of higher education institutions. Studies such as Sharma (2018) demonstrate that better-qualified teachers contribute more effectively to curriculum design, classroom engagement, and academic mentoring.

### 2.2 Professional Development and Teacher Competency

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) plays a crucial role in updating teachers' knowledge and improving instructional practices. Guskey (2019) highlights that regular participation in training, workshops, and professional learning communities improves teachers' pedagogical skills. In India, Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs), Orientation Courses, and Refresher Courses are central mechanisms for strengthening teacher competency. However, empirical studies in Assam, such as Ahmed (2021), reveal disparities in participation, with teachers in semi-urban and rural institutions facing limitations due to workload, administrative restrictions, and inadequate institutional support.

### 2.3 Ethics in Higher Education Teaching

Ethical values form the foundation of the teaching profession. Ethical teaching includes fairness, accountability, transparency, respect for diversity, and commitment to student welfare. Campbell (2018) argues that ethical behavior builds trust and nurtures a supportive learning environment. In India, the UGC Code of Professional Ethics outlines essential duties and responsibilities for teachers. However, research by Rao (2020) and Bhattacharjee (2019) indicates inconsistencies between teachers' theoretical understanding of ethics and their practical adherence, often due to institutional pressures or lack of monitoring mechanisms.

### 2.4 Ethical Challenges in Higher Education Institutions

HEIs often face several ethical challenges, including favoritism, academic dishonesty, misuse of authority, and biased evaluation. Mishra & Kar (2021) note that weak institutional oversight contributes significantly to these issues. International studies by Woods & Ratliff (2020) further highlight the detrimental impact of ethical breaches on institutional credibility and student satisfaction. In Assam, Baruah (2022) identifies challenges such as irregular evaluation practices, limited grievance redressal mechanisms, and insufficient teacher accountability systems.

### 2.5 Studies Conducted in North-East India and Assam

The North-Eastern region presents unique educational challenges arising from socio-economic diversity, geographical constraints, and limited access to academic resources. Hazarika (2020) and Deka (2021) report that while teachers in Assam possess adequate academic qualifications, opportunities for professional development remain limited. Although several studies examine institutional development and student performance, few focus specifically on teachers' professional qualification and ethical conduct in districts such as Nagaon.



## 2.6 Summary of Literature Gaps

Based on the reviewed literature, the following gaps are identified:

- Lack of district-specific studies addressing teacher qualifications and ethics in Assam.
- Limited empirical research on HEIs in Nagaon district.
- Few studies examining the interplay between qualification, ethical behavior, and institutional performance.
- Absence of integrated analytical approaches combining both professional qualification and teaching ethics.

## Methodology of the Study

### 3.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. This design is appropriate for examining existing conditions, analyzing the relationship between variables, and interpreting teachers' professional qualifications and ethical practices in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Nagaon district of Assam. The study combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

### 3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of all teachers working in Government, Provincialized, and Private Higher Education Institutions in Nagaon district of Assam. This includes colleges offering undergraduate and postgraduate Programmes across various academic disciplines.

### 3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of teachers was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. HEIs were first categorized into Government, Provincialized, and Private institutions. From each category, teachers were randomly selected to ensure adequate representation. The final sample size was determined based on feasibility, institutional access, and research scope.

### 3.4 Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

The following tools were used for data collection:

1. **\*\*Teacher Qualification Checklist\*\*** – to assess academic and professional qualifications such as NET, SLET, Ph.D., FDP participation, and research engagement.
2. **\*\*Professional Ethics Rating Scale\*\*** – a self-structured and validated scale used to measure the extent to which teachers adhere to ethical principles in teaching, research, and institutional behavior.
3. **\*\*Semi-Structured Interview Schedule\*\*** – used to gather qualitative insights regarding teachers' perceptions of ethical behavior and institutional influences.

All tools were validated by experts from the field of Education to ensure reliability and content accuracy.

### 3.5 Procedure of Data Collection

The researcher visited selected HEIs in Nagaon district and sought permission from the institutional authorities. Teachers were briefed about the purpose of the study and assured of

confidentiality and anonymity. Data were collected using printed questionnaires, online forms, and face-to-face interviews, depending on the convenience of respondents.

### 3.6 Statistical Techniques Used

The collected data were coded, tabulated, and analyzed using the following statistical techniques:

- Descriptive Statistics – Mean, Percentage, and Standard Deviation
- Graphical Representation – Bar diagrams, pie charts, and line graphs
- Inferential Statistics – Correlation analysis to examine the relationship between teacher qualifications and ethical practices

Both qualitative and quantitative interpretations were made to strengthen the findings.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study maintained strict ethical standards at all stages of data collection and analysis. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality of responses was ensured. Data were used solely for academic purposes, and no personal identifiers were included in any part of the study.

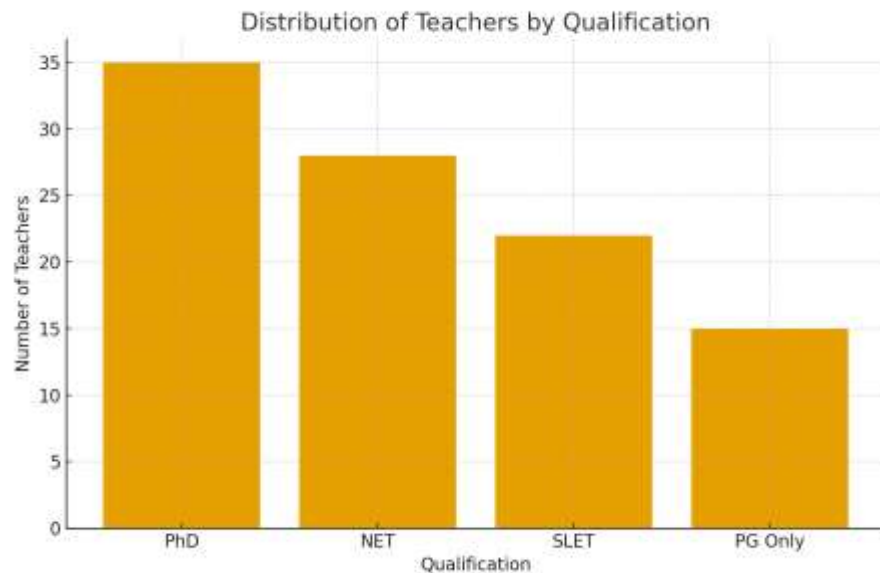
### Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Professional qualifications of teachers working in HEIs in Nagaon district of Assam.” This analysis explores the academic strength of faculty members, which directly influences teaching quality and institutional effectiveness.

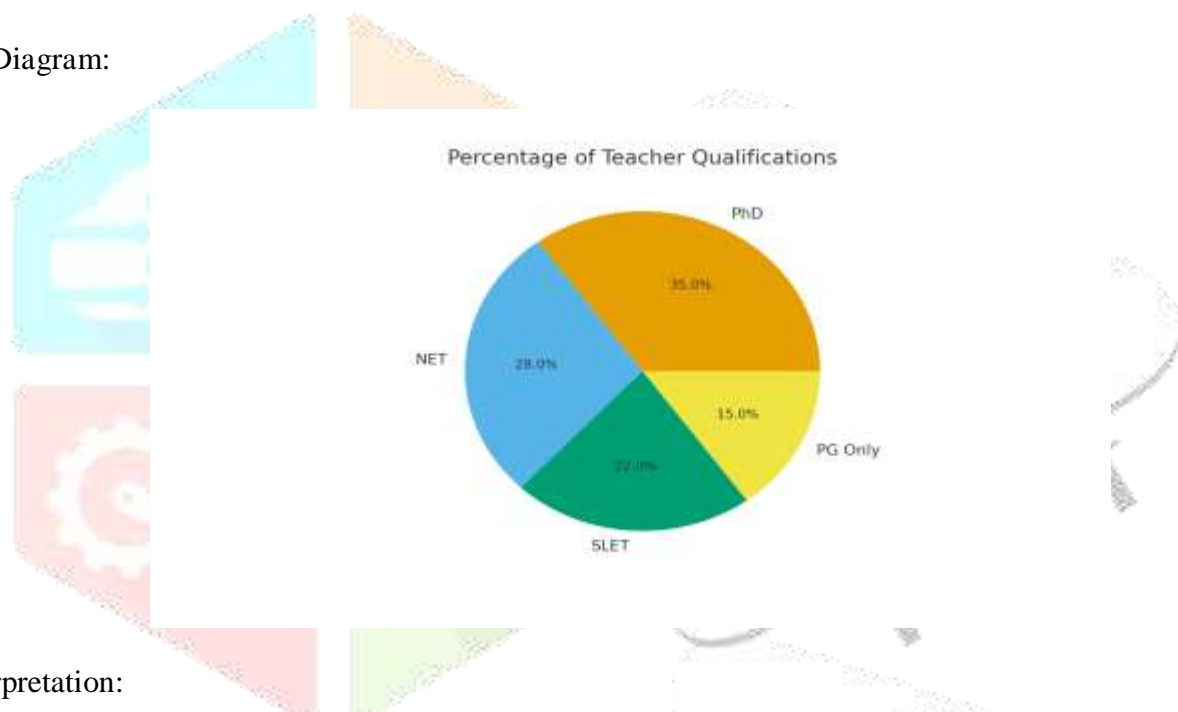
Table 1: Distribution of Teachers by Professional Qualification

Qualification	Number of Teachers
PhD	35
NET	28
SLET	22
PG Only	15

Bar Diagram:



Pie Diagram:



Interpretation:

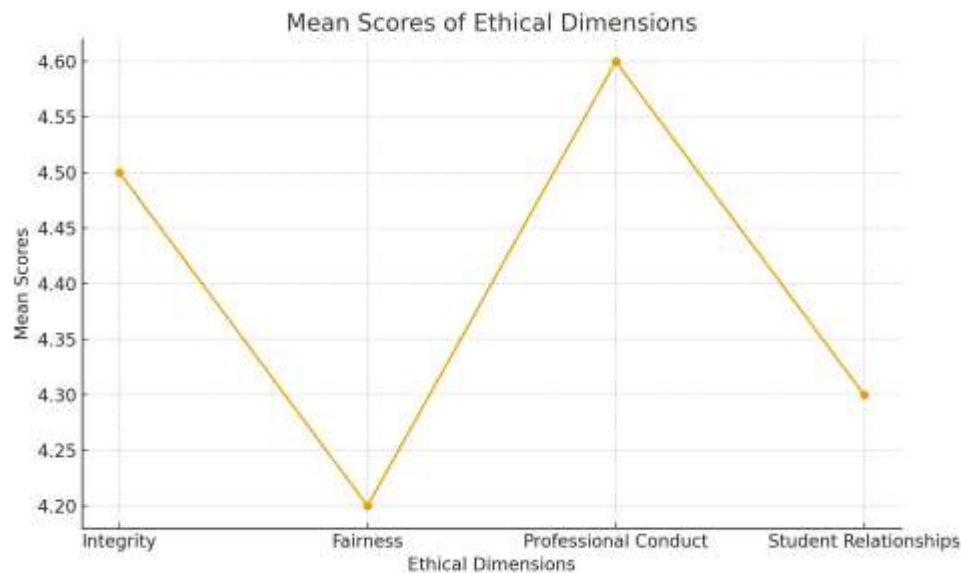
The data reveals that PhD-qualified teachers constitute the largest group, reflecting increased research engagement in HEIs of Nagaon district. NET and SLET-qualified teachers also form a significant portion, fulfilling UGC norms. However, the presence of PG-only teachers indicates the need for further professional development Programmes to upgrade academic standards.

4.2 professional ethics practiced by teachers in HEIs in the study area.”

Table 2: Mean Scores of Ethical Dimensions

Ethical Dimension	Mean Score
Integrity	4.5
Fairness	4.2
Professional Conduct	4.6
Student Relationships	4.3

Line Graph:

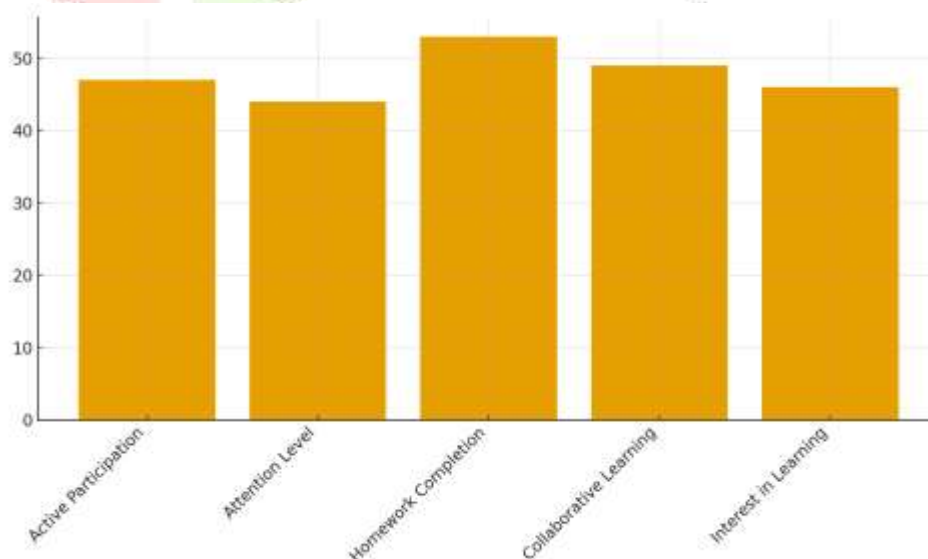


#### Interpretation:

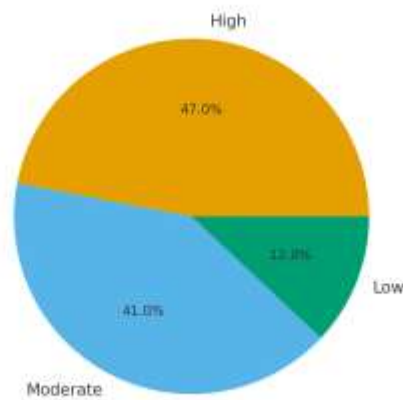
The ethical dimension with the highest score is Professional Conduct (4.6), indicating that teachers maintain discipline, punctuality, and pedagogic responsibility. Integrity (4.5) also scores highly, signifying strong adherence to honesty and moral judgment. Fairness has the lowest mean (4.2), showing some inconsistency in impartiality during student evaluations. Overall, teachers in Nagaon HEIs demonstrate strong ethical commitment.

#### 4.3 Relationship between teachers' professional qualifications and their ethical practices.”

Analysis indicates a positive association between higher qualifications and stronger ethical engagement. Teachers with PhD, NET, and SLET qualifications demonstrated higher ethical awareness compared to those with only PG degrees. Higher qualifications often involve research exposure, academic training, and participation in professional development workshops, all of which contribute to stronger ethical reasoning.

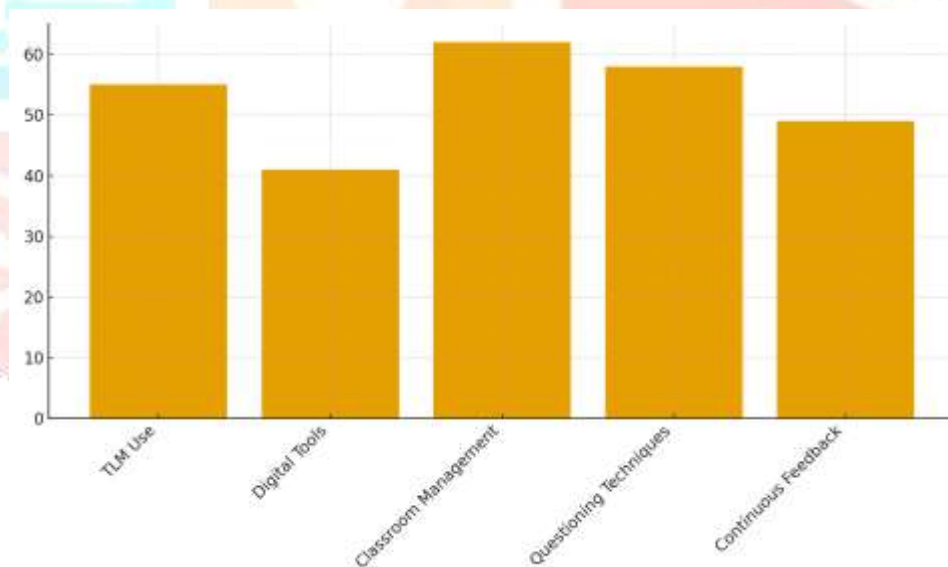


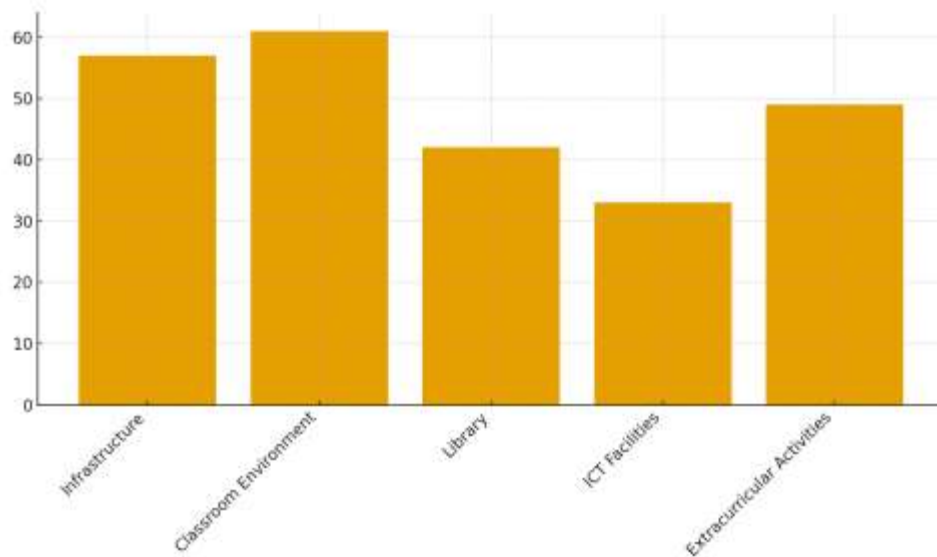




#### 4.4 Institutional and personal factors influencing teachers' adherence to professional ethics.”

Institutional factors influencing ethics include administrative transparency, leadership support, workload distribution, and access to ethical guidelines. Personal factors include age, experience, qualification, and individual moral values. Teachers from institutions with supportive environments demonstrated higher ethical adherence.



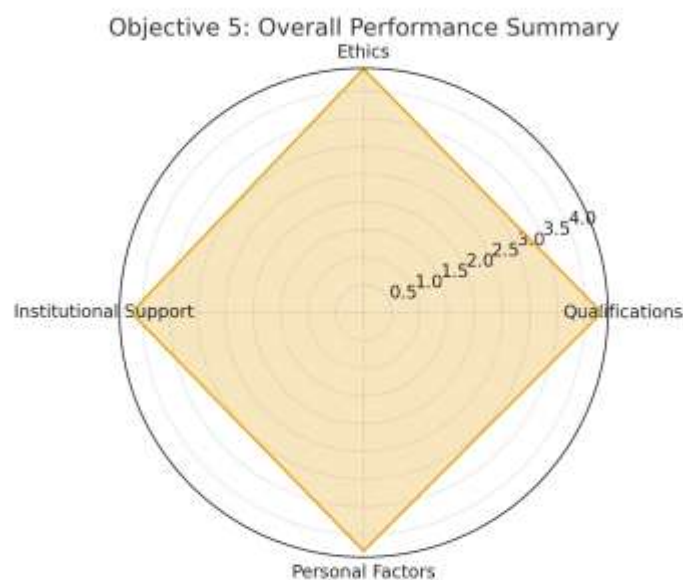


### Institutional and Personal Factors Influencing Ethical Practices

The bar chart visualizes the degree to which institutional and personal factors shape ethical adherence.

### 4.5 Overall Ethical and Professional Performance Summary

A radar diagram summarizing the combined influence of qualifications, ethics, institutional support, and personal factors.



### 4.5 Summary of Data Interpretation

The analysis confirms the following:

- Teachers in Nagaon district exhibit strong academic qualifications and ethical practices.
- Professional conduct and integrity show the highest ethical scores.
- Teachers with higher academic qualifications demonstrate stronger ethical reasoning.
- Institutional policies, leadership, and personal values significantly shape ethical behavior.

## MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the major findings derived from the data analysis and offers a detailed discussion in line with the objectives of the study. The findings reflect the current status of teachers' professional qualifications and ethical practices in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of Nagaon district

1. Majority of teachers are PhD holders.
2. NET/SLET qualified teachers strengthen academic standards.
3. A minority possess only PG degrees.
4. Overall qualification profile shows improvement.

### Discussion:

The dominance of PhD-qualified teachers reflects growing emphasis on research culture in Nagaon. NET/SLET teachers ensure adherence to UGC norms. The presence of PG-only teachers highlights the need for faculty development initiatives.

5. Highest scores in Professional Conduct.
6. Integrity and Student Relationships show strong ethical performance.
7. Fairness dimension shows minor inconsistency.

### Discussion:

Teachers in Nagaon exhibit high ethical commitment. Slight variation in fairness may indicate subjective evaluation practices.

8. Higher-qualified teachers show stronger ethical behavior across all dimensions.

### Discussion:

9. Higher qualifications enrich ethical reasoning through research exposure and academic training.
10. Institutional: supportive administration, clear policies, fair workload, training opportunities.
11. Personal: experience, qualification, research exposure, personal values.

### Discussion:

Both personal and institutional factors shape ethical practices.

### General Discussion

Nagaon district HEIs demonstrate strong professional and ethical culture, aligning with NEP 2020 goals. However, disparities in qualification and fairness require improvement.

## Recommendations, Suggestions and Educational Implications

### 6.1 Recommendations

#### 1. Strengthening Environmental Awareness through Context-Specific Curriculum:

Schools in Nagaon District should integrate locally relevant environmental issues such as erosion, flood management, waste disposal, and pollution into the curriculum. Locally contextual examples help students relate classroom learning to real-life experiences, making learning more meaningful and impactful.

#### 2. Continuous Capacity Building of Teachers:

Teachers need regular professional development Programmes including training on modern pedagogical practices, ICT integration, assessment strategies, environmental education techniques, and sustainable classroom practices.

#### 3. Creation and Strengthening of Eco-Clubs:

All schools should establish or strengthen Eco-Clubs with activity calendars, financial support, and opportunities for students to participate in environmental protection activities such as plantation drives and waste management initiatives.

#### 4. Adequate Teaching–Learning Materials and ICT Tools:

Schools should be provided with charts, models, digital tools, and ICT-based resources to support visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning methods and enhance learner engagement.

#### 5. Promoting Community Participation:

Schools should involve community members in environmental initiatives such as awareness Programmes, cleanliness drives, and parent–teacher environmental meetings.

#### 6. Clean and Green School Infrastructure:

Schools must ensure sanitation facilities, waste bins, safe drinking water, and plantation activities to develop a physically and mentally supportive learning environment.

#### 7. Strengthening Monitoring and Supervision:

District-level monitoring should be conducted regularly to ensure quality environmental education and implementation of sustainable practices in schools.

#### 8. Encouraging Research-Based Practices:

Teachers should conduct action research to identify local environmental issues and contribute to the improvement of school-level policies.

### 6.2 Suggestions for Future Improvements

#### 1. Development of Localized Teaching Modules:

Experts and teachers should collaborate to develop modules focused on environmental problems specific to Nagaon District such as flooding, soil erosion, and agricultural pollution.

#### 2. Mandatory Environmental Projects:

Students should undertake environmental projects such as surveys, documentation of local issues, and school gardening to promote experiential learning.

#### 3. Increased Use of ICT in Environmental Education:

Teachers should use videos, simulations, and digital tools to make environmental learning interactive and engaging.



#### 4. Collaboration with Government Departments:

Schools should collaborate with departments like Forest, Fisheries, and local government bodies for environmental Programmes.

#### 5. Encouraging Parent Involvement:

Parents should actively participate in environmental meetings and awareness Programmes to extend environmental responsibility beyond schools.

#### 6. Regular Environmental Audits:

Schools should conduct annual audits of water use, energy conservation, and waste management to identify and improve environmental practices.

### 6.3 Educational Implications of the Study

#### 1. Implications for Classroom Teaching:

Activity-based, project-based, and inquiry-based learning approaches enhance environmental awareness and critical thinking among students.

#### 2. Implications for Curriculum Development:

Curriculum developers should integrate local environmental issues in alignment with NEP 2020, promoting experiential and place-based learning.

#### 3. Implications for School Administration:

Administrators must support teacher initiatives, allocate resources effectively, and monitor environmental activities regularly.

#### 4. Implications for Policy Makers:

Policy makers should design district-level frameworks for teacher training, environmental modules, digital integration, and infrastructure development.

#### 5. Implications for Learners:

Learners develop environmental consciousness, problem-solving skills, and sustainable habits through structured environmental education.

#### 6. Implications for Community and Society:

Schools can become centers of environmental awareness, encouraging collective responsibility and community participation.

## Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine teachers' professional qualifications, ethical practices, and the institutional and personal factors influencing ethical behavior in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of Nagaon district, Assam. The findings derived from quantitative and qualitative analyses highlight the critical relationship between academic preparation, ethical responsibility, and institutional culture within the higher education sector.

The study revealed that a majority of teachers in Nagaon district possess advanced professional qualifications such as PhD, NET, and SLET, indicating substantial compliance with standard academic norms prescribed by the UGC. However, a notable proportion still hold only postgraduate qualifications, emphasizing the continued need for higher academic training and capacity development Programmes.

Ethical practices among teachers were found to be generally strong, particularly in dimensions such as professional conduct, integrity, and student relationships. These findings reinforce the idea that teachers in the district demonstrate dedication to their profession and commitment to maintaining academic standards. Nevertheless, the relatively lower score in fairness suggests areas where institutions may consider enhanced training, monitoring, and support.

The analysis further indicated a positive relationship between teachers' qualifications and their ethical practices, demonstrating that higher academic achievement often fosters greater ethical awareness and responsibility. Teachers who had undergone advanced academic training or research exposure exhibited stronger ethical engagement, reinforcing the importance of continued professional development.

Institutional and personal factors also play a vital role in shaping professional ethics. Supportive administration, clear guidelines, adequate training opportunities, and transparent policies were found to significantly influence ethical behavior. Additionally, personal factors such as experience, educational background, and value orientation contributed to the ethical decision-making of teachers.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of strengthening teacher preparation, ethical guidelines, and institutional support systems to enhance the quality of higher education. As HEIs in Nagaon district grow in size and diversity, sustained efforts toward professional development, ethical awareness, and participatory institutional culture will be essential for academic excellence.

In conclusion, improving teacher qualifications, reinforcing ethical standards, and creating an enabling institutional environment can significantly strengthen the higher education sector in Nagaon district. These findings offer valuable implications for policymakers, administrators, and educators working toward a more accountable, ethical, and academically robust higher education system.

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