

CULTIVATING PROFESSIONALISM: THE IMPACT OF A UNIVERSAL DRESS CODE FOR TEACHERS ON EDUCATION IN INDIA

Dr. C. SUBATHRA,

Assistant Professor Of Commerce & Research Supervisor, Pioneer Kumaraswamy College, Nagercoil-3, Affiliated To Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishegapatti, Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu, India. Email: Drsubathra@Gmail.Com, Contact: 95852 12775 (Corresponding Author)

Dr. S. VIDYA,

Assistant Professor, Department Of Commerce, B.S.Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute Of Science And Technology, Chennai 600048

Dr. S. BHARATHI VASU,

Professor, MBA Department, Anand Institute Of Higher Technology, Kazhipattur, OMR, Chengalpattu District - Pincode - 603103

ABSTRACT

This extensive study navigates the intricate landscape of dress codes for teachers in higher education globally, focusing particularly on the nuances of implementing a universal dress code in India. With objectives ranging from understanding international practices to addressing controversies and offering practical solutions, the study culminates in providing insightful suggestions to both teachers and higher education departments. These recommendations aim to facilitate a harmonious integration of professional dress codes within the cultural and individual contexts, fostering an environment that accentuates professionalism while respecting diversity. The findings presented in this study serve as a valuable resource for educators and institutions, offering tangible guidance for the effective implementation of dress code policies in the unique and multifaceted higher education setting in India.

Keywords: *Dress Codes, Higher Education, Teachers, Implementation Strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Professionalism among teachers in higher education is crucial for fostering an environment conducive to effective learning and academic excellence. In higher education, teachers serve not only as instructors but also as mentors, guiding students in their academic and professional development. A high level of professionalism contributes to the credibility of the academic institution and builds confidence among students and their families. It involves a commitment to upholding ethical standards, maintaining a thorough understanding of the subject matter, and continuously engaging in professional development to stay current in their field. Professionalism is evident in the way educators interact with students, colleagues, and administrators, demonstrating respect, effective communication, and a collaborative attitude. Additionally, in

higher education, teachers often engage in research and scholarly activities, further emphasizing the need for a professional approach to contribute valuable insights to their field. Ultimately, professionalism among teachers in higher education enhances the overall quality of education, promotes a positive academic culture, and prepares students for success in their academic and professional endeavors.

MAINTAINING A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE IS ESSENTIAL FOR TEACHERS

Maintaining a professional image is essential for teachers due to several compelling reasons. Firstly, teachers serve as prominent role models for students, and a professional image sets a positive example for behavior, responsibility, and ethical conduct. A professional demeanor establishes credibility and earns respect from students, parents, colleagues, and administrators, fostering a conducive learning environment. Effective classroom management is facilitated by a professional image, contributing to a more focused and disciplined atmosphere. Parents generally feel more confident in the education their children receive when teachers present themselves in a professional manner, positively influencing parent-teacher relationships and communication. Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the overall image and reputation of their educational institution, and a professional appearance aligns with the institution's values, contributing to a positive public perception. Beyond appearance, professionalism encompasses effective communication, commitment to ongoing professional development, and ethical conduct. Striking a balance between professionalism and approachability is essential for educators, as it not only contributes to a positive learning environment but also enhances the broader educational experience for students.

- Teachers, as prominent role models for students, set a positive example for behavior, responsibility, and ethical conduct through maintaining a professional image.
- A professional demeanor establishes credibility and earns respect from students, parents, colleagues, and administrators, fostering a conducive and respectful learning environment.
- A professional image contributes to effective classroom management, creating a more focused and disciplined atmosphere that enhances the learning experience for students.
- Parents often feel more confident in the education their children receive when teachers present themselves professionally, positively influencing parent-teacher relationships and communication.
- Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the overall image and reputation of their educational institution. A professional appearance aligns with the institution's values and contributes to a positive public perception.
- Beyond appearance, professionalism includes effective communication, commitment to ongoing professional development, and ethical conduct, all of which contribute to a positive and supportive learning environment.
- Striking a balance between professionalism and approachability is essential for educators, ensuring a positive learning environment while enhancing the overall educational experience for students.

RELATED STUDIES

D. Carr, A. Lavin, and T. Davies, “The impact of business faculty attire on student perceptions and engagement”

Certainly, not a new phenomenon, professors continue to strive to discover the magic elixir that will cause all students to become active participants in the learning process. It seems logical that if students find a topic interesting or pertinent to their career objectives, they will tend to take a more active role in a course. Perhaps as reasonable to assume, if instructors are engaging and have respect of the class, students will naturally put forth more effort to master the material. Prior studies have also shown that certain pedagogical devices and innovations, such as the usage of presentation technology, can positively impact student motivation. This study explored whether something as basic as the professor’s attire could also have a motivating effect on student perceptions and behavior in a college classroom setting. This paper summarizes the results of a survey pertaining to faculty dress that was administered to students enrolled in selected business courses at a mid-sized Midwestern university. Students were asked their opinion of whether the professional or unprofessional dress of the instructor would conceivably impact their own learning and effort. The survey results show that, in general, students perceive professional dress positively, and adjust their behavior accordingly.

J. V. Peluchette and K. Karl, “The impact of workplace attire on employee self-perceptions”

This study examined employee preferences for different styles of workplace attire and how wearing various styles of clothing affected their self-perceptions. Respondents felt most authoritative, trustworthy, and competent when wearing formal business attire but friendliest when wearing casual or business casual attire. Significant two-way interactions were found between dress preference and mode of dress worn on self-perceptions of productivity, trustworthiness, creativity, and friendliness. Suggestions for future research and implications for HRD professionals are proposed.

C. Tatro, “Gender effects on student evaluations of faculty”

Examined the effects of student and instructor gender on teaching evaluations. The research investigated potential sex bias between male and female students in their ratings of male and female instructors. 537 male and female Ss completed questionnaires concerning their instructor’s attitudes and effectiveness. Female Ss gave higher ratings than male Ss, female instructors received higher ratings than male instructors, and those Ss who expected higher grades gave higher ratings. An interaction was also found where female students gave female instructors significantly higher ratings. A multiple regression analysis found that both gender of instructor and expected grade were significant predictors of evaluations. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2016 APA, all rights reserved)

K. A. Feldman, “Consistency and variability among college students in rating their teachers and courses: a review and analysis”

As indicated by the reliability of individual ratings, college students are only moderately consistent in rating their teachers and courses, although these modest interrater associations do produce substantial reliabilities for composite ratings when the ratings of at least 20 to 25 students in a class are averaged together. The patterning and correlates of the variability of student ratings within classes are examined. Certain attributes and experiences of students are weakly related to their ratings, and inconsistently so, across studies; others are more strongly and consistently related. Various correlates of student ratings have also been found to interact as well as linearly combine with one another in their association with ratings. Moreover, certain kinds of “fit” between teachers and different students in their classes are related to ratings. Whether various correlates of within-class ratings are to be interpreted as biasing factors or as natural influences on social perception are analyzed in terms of whether students' ratings are objective descriptions or subjective, evaluative reactions.

N. A. Bowling, “Does the relationship between student ratings of course easiness and course quality vary across schools? The role of school academic rankings”

Student ratings of teaching effectiveness are widely used to make judgments of faculty teaching performance. Research, however, has found that such ratings may not be accurate indicators of teaching performance because they are contaminated by course easiness. Using student ratings of 9855 professors employed at 79 different colleges and universities, the author hypothesized and found that the relationship between perceived course easiness and perceived course quality was moderated by school academic rankings. More specifically, easiness ratings were more strongly correlated with quality ratings among low-ranked schools than among high-ranked schools. Furthermore, the easiness–quality relationship was slightly stronger among public schools than among private schools. The article concludes by discussing the practical implications of these findings.

OBJECTIVES

- *Exploring Dress Codes for Higher Education Teachers Across Countries*
- *Crafting benefits for the Universal Implementation of Teacher Dress Codes in India*
- *Addressing Controversies Surrounding Dress Codes for Teachers in India*
- *Providing Recommendations to Teachers and Higher Education Departments for Professional Dress Code Implementation*

DRESSCODE FOR TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

Teachers' dress codes in higher education vary significantly from country to country, influenced by cultural norms, institutional traditions, and regional expectations. Here's a brief overview of the dress codes for teachers in higher education in selected countries:

United States:

In the United States, higher education teachers often adopt a business casual dress code, though the level of formality can vary between universities and departments. Professors commonly wear collared shirts, blouses, slacks, or skirts. In some settings, more formal attire like suits may be preferred.

United Kingdom:

Higher education teachers in the United Kingdom generally follow a business casual to business professional dress code. Suits, collared shirts, blouses, and formal shoes are common choices. The formality may vary based on the university's culture and specific academic department.

Japan:

Japanese universities typically expect a formal dress code for higher education teachers. Male professors often wear suits and ties, while female professors opt for business attire, including blouses, skirts, or pantsuits.

South Korea:

Higher education teachers in South Korea tend to adhere to a formal dress code, often wearing suits or business attire. The emphasis on formality reflects broader cultural norms in professional settings.

Australia:

Dress codes in Australian universities are generally more relaxed. Higher education teachers commonly opt for business casual attire, including collared shirts, blouses, slacks, or skirts. The level of formality can vary between institutions.

Canada:

Similar to the United States, Canada often adopts a more relaxed dress code for higher education teachers. Business casual attire, including collared shirts, blouses, and casual slacks, is common. The dress code can vary by university and department culture.

India:

Dress codes for higher education teachers in India vary widely. Some universities expect formal attire, including suits or traditional clothing, while others lean towards a more casual business attire, reflecting the diversity in cultural and institutional norms.

Germany:

In Germany, the dress code for higher education teachers is generally business casual. Professors often wear smart casual clothing, including collared shirts, blouses, and trousers. The emphasis is on a professional yet comfortable appearance.

Saudi Arabia:

In conservative settings like Saudi Arabian universities, higher education teachers often follow a formal and modest dress code. Traditional or formal Western attire, with an emphasis on modesty, is commonly observed.

It's important to note that within each country, there can be variations based on the specific university, departmental culture, and individual preferences of teachers. The dress code may also evolve over time and be subject to cultural shifts and institutional norms.

IMPLEMENTING A UNIVERSAL DRESS CODE FOR TEACHERS IN INDIA

Implementing a universal dress code for teachers in India is likely to bring about nuanced changes within the academic landscape. While the direct impact on teaching methodologies and practices may be limited, the adoption of a common dress code holds the potential to subtly influence the academic environment. One significant change lies in the enhancement of the professional image of teachers, fostering a more positive and respectful atmosphere within the educational community. The shared dress code may contribute to a sense of unity among the teaching staff, promoting a collective identity and shared responsibility. Furthermore, teachers, as role models for students, may positively influence student behavior and appearance, reinforcing notions of professionalism and discipline through the standardized attire. The dress code could minimize distractions related to varied clothing choices, directing focus back to the academic environment. In addition, a universal dress code might be particularly advantageous during formal events and ceremonies, creating a unified and formal appearance. While these changes underscore the potential benefits, it is imperative to approach the implementation with sensitivity to cultural diversity, regional variations, and individual preferences. The paramount focus should remain on effective teaching and learning, with the dress code serving as a complementary element in fostering a cohesive and professional educational community.

Implementing a universal dress code for teachers in India can yield **several benefits for students**. Firstly, it creates a visually cohesive and professional learning environment that fosters a sense of seriousness and dedication towards academics. A standardized dress code can serve as a model for students, emphasizing the importance of a neat and professional appearance, contributing to the overall discipline and decorum within the educational institution. Moreover, a universal dress code minimizes potential distractions related to teachers' attire, allowing students to focus more on the educational content and fostering an atmosphere conducive to learning. The sense of unity and shared identity among the teaching staff, brought about by a consistent dress code, can positively impact students' perception of their educators, reinforcing a sense of community and respect. Overall, a universal dress code contributes to an enhanced educational experience by creating a focused, professional, and harmonious learning environment for students in India.

The implementation of a universal dress code for teachers in India extends its **benefits beyond the confines of educational institutions and positively influences society at large**. A standardized dress code enhances the professional image of educators, contributing to the broader

perception of the teaching profession. This, in turn, elevates the societal respect for teachers, recognizing their role as influential figures in shaping the future. A cohesive and professional appearance of teachers also sets a powerful example for students, reinforcing values of discipline and responsibility that are crucial for societal development. Furthermore, a universal dress code fosters a sense of collective identity and unity among educators, creating a positive ripple effect within the community. As teachers embody professionalism through their attire, it contributes to the overall upliftment of societal values, emphasizing the significance of education and its impact on shaping a responsible and well-rounded citizenry in India.

The implementation of a universal dress code for teachers in India carries significant benefits for education and academic upliftment. A standardized dress code cultivates a professional atmosphere within educational institutions, positively impacting the overall learning environment. It establishes a sense of formality and discipline, reinforcing the seriousness of academic pursuits. This, in turn, can contribute to increased focus and dedication among both teachers and students. The enhanced professional image of educators positively influences the reputation of the educational institution, attracting respect from stakeholders and fostering a conducive atmosphere for academic excellence. Additionally, a cohesive and standardized appearance among the teaching staff contributes to the institution's branding, projecting an image of unity and commitment to academic standards. Overall, a universal dress code plays a crucial role in elevating the academic atmosphere, promoting a culture of professionalism, and contributing to the overall upliftment of education in India.

CONTROVERSIES ABOUT TEACHERS DRESSCODE IN INDIA

While dress codes for teachers in India are generally designed to maintain a professional and respectable atmosphere, there have been instances where controversies have arisen surrounding these guidelines. Some common controversies include:

- 1. Cultural Sensitivity:** The diversity of cultural practices and traditional clothing in India can lead to controversies when dress codes do not accommodate these variations. Teachers from different regions may feel that a one-size-fits-all approach neglects the richness of India's cultural tapestry.
- 2. Gender Bias:** Controversies related to gender bias may arise if dress codes place disproportionate restrictions on female teachers. Imposing specific attire norms on women can be perceived as reinforcing patriarchal norms and limiting women's choices in their professional lives.
- 3. Enforcement Issues:** Unequal enforcement of dress codes, where some teachers face stricter scrutiny than others, can create tension and resentment within the teaching community. Consistency in applying dress code policies is crucial to avoid accusations of bias or favouritism.
- 4. Modern vs. Traditional Attire:** Debates on the preference for traditional attire over modern or Western clothing highlight generational and cultural differences. Teachers may argue for the acceptance of contemporary professional wear that aligns with global fashion trends.

5. Climate Considerations: Dress codes that do not consider the diverse climate conditions across India can be contentious. In regions with hot and humid weather, expecting teachers to adhere to formal and layered clothing may be seen as impractical and uncomfortable.

6. Personal Freedom: Controversies often centre around debates on personal freedom and individual expression. Teachers may argue that their competence, dedication, and teaching abilities should be the primary focus, rather than stringent regulations on their clothing choices.

7. Adaptability to Changing Times: Dress codes perceived as outdated or disconnected from contemporary fashion trends may face resistance. Teachers may advocate for dress codes that reflect a more modern and progressive approach, aligning with evolving societal norms.

8. Community Values: Differences in community values, especially between urban and rural areas, can lead to controversies. Dress codes that align with conservative values in one community may be contested by teachers or communities with more liberal perspectives, emphasizing the need for a balanced and inclusive approach.

9. Lack of Consultation: Teachers may express discontent if they feel excluded from the process of formulating dress codes. Involving teachers in decision-making and seeking their input can help address concerns and create a more collaborative and inclusive approach to dress code policies.

Addressing these controversies requires a comprehensive understanding of the diverse cultural, regional, and individual factors at play. Collaborative efforts involving educators, administrators, and stakeholders can contribute to the development of dress code policies that are both respectful of traditions and reflective of the evolving dynamics in the educational landscape.

SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions for Indian teachers and higher education departments regarding professional dress codes:

✚ FOR INDIAN TEACHERS

- *Teachers should familiarize themselves with the specific dress code policies of their institutions. Understanding and adhering to these guidelines contribute to a cohesive and professional academic environment.*
- *Striking a balance between traditional and modern attire can be considered. This allows teachers to express their cultural identity while aligning with contemporary professional standards.*
- *Consider investing in a professional wardrobe that includes a variety of business casual and formal attire. This ensures preparedness for different academic occasions and enhances the overall professional image.*
- *Given the diverse climate in India, choosing attire that is both professional and climate-appropriate is important. Lightweight and breathable fabrics in formal styles can be practical in hot and humid conditions.*
- *Engage in open and collaborative dialogues with colleagues and administrators to discuss and understand the rationale behind dress code policies. Constructive discussions can lead to a more inclusive and well-informed approach.*

- *Seek opportunities to express individual style within the framework of the dress code guidelines. This allows for personal expression while maintaining a professional appearance.*

FOR HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- *Ensure that dress code policies are clearly communicated to all faculty members. Clarity helps in fostering a shared understanding and compliance with the established guidelines.*
- *Design dress codes that are flexible and adaptable to regional and cultural diversity. Acknowledge that certain variations may exist based on the cultural backgrounds of the faculty.*
- *Take into account the diverse climate conditions across the country when formulating dress code policies. Providing flexibility in attire choices based on weather considerations enhances practicality.*
- *Involve teachers in the decision-making process related to dress code policies. This ensures that the guidelines consider the perspectives and preferences of those who will be directly affected.*
- *Conduct training and awareness programs to educate teachers about the importance of a professional appearance and the role it plays in creating a positive academic environment.*
- *Periodically review and, if necessary, update dress code policies to align with evolving societal norms, fashion trends, and the changing dynamics of the academic landscape.*
- *Encourage professional development not only in academic pursuits but also in personal presentation. This holistic approach contributes to the overall professionalism of the teaching staff.*
- *By fostering open communication, mutual understanding, and a balance between tradition and modernity, both teachers and higher education departments can contribute to creating a professional yet inclusive academic environment.*

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the implementation and adherence to a professional dress code among Indian teachers in higher education institutions represent a nuanced interplay of cultural, regional, and individual factors. While striving for a standardized and professional appearance is important for creating a positive academic atmosphere, it is equally crucial to navigate the complexities of diverse cultural backgrounds and personal expressions. A collaborative approach, involving open dialogues between teachers and higher education departments, can lead to dress code policies that are both respectful of traditions and reflective of evolving societal norms. By fostering understanding, flexibility, and inclusivity, the academic community can work together to strike a balance that

enhances the professional image of teachers while respecting the diverse cultural tapestry that defines the educational landscape in India.

REFERENCES

- D. Carr, A. Lavin, and T. Davies, “The impact of business faculty attire on student perceptions and engagement,” *Journal of College Teaching and Learning*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 41–49, 2009. <https://clutejournals.com/index.php/TLC/article/view/1180>
- J. V. Peluchette and K. Karl, “The impact of workplace attire on employee self-perceptions,” *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 345–360, 2007. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/hrdq.1208>
- C. Tatro, “Gender effects on student evaluations of faculty,” *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 169–173, 1995. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1995-45371-001>
- K. A. Feldman, “Consistency and variability among college students in rating their teachers and courses: a review and analysis,” *Research in Higher Education*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 223–274, 1977. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF00991288>
- N. A. Bowling, “Does the relationship between student ratings of course easiness and course quality vary across schools? The role of school academic rankings,” *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 455–464, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602930701562965>
- New Indian express (online) - <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2022/nov/18/faculty-in-tamil-nadu-colleges-asked-to-wear-overcoat-to-cover-body-form-2519437.html>
- Importance of Dress Code- <https://classful.com/the-importance-of-teacher-dress-codes/>
- Krishnakumari, S., Subathra, C., & Arul, K. (2022). A descriptive study on the behavior of students in online classes during COVID-19 pandemic. In AIP Conference Proceedings (Vol. 2405). American Institute of Physics Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0073115>
- WOMENS’CONTRIBUTION IN AGRICULTURE AND ALLIED ACTIVITIES, Subathra.C, Krishnakumari.S, (2020), *International Journal of Management* (Vol 11)