

International Codes of Ethics for K-12 Educators: A Hermeneutic Analysis

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My Background

- Retired middle school principal
- Doctorate in Educational Leadership
- Interests
 - Reflexive methodologies
 - Ethics as lenses to examine our own prejudices and values
 - Pragmatic projects that can effect positive change (per Ken Gergen)
- Saldana: “If reflection doesn’t lead to action, what good is it?”

Background of Study

- Developing – emerging – study
- Began with *The Model Code of Ethics for Educators*, National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC, 2015)
- AERA focus on LGBTQ awareness
- Expanded to inquiry into codes of ethics of other countries re- treatment of marginalized groups

Purpose

- Explore discussion of marginalized groups in national educator codes of ethics of five English-speaking countries:
 - The United States
 - Australia
 - India
 - Ireland
 - New Zealand
- Create recursive, reflexive dialectics between the individual and the various codes
- See as means for preparing future educators, current educators, and policy makers

Purpose

- By examining the codes of other cultures, we may become more sensitive to and aware of our own prejudices and values
- These codes represent profound concepts that reach to the core of what we believe
- We must understand our own values and intuitions in order to internalize those of these codes.

Purpose

- The hope is that revealing overarching patterns and themes reflected at these broadest philosophical levels will heighten awareness of these concepts for those who shape policy and develop ethical guidelines affecting k-12 education.
- It may also offer suggestions for improved ethical training and awareness of prospective educators.

Starratt's Ethical Frameworks

- *Ethic of Critique* deals with questions of social justice and human dignity.
- *Ethic of Justice* implies more specific responses to unethical practices identified through the lens of critique. It is often connected with legal or codified procedures.
- *Ethic of Care* focuses on relationships from a personal rather than legalistic regard.

Ethical Frameworks



Ethical Frameworks

- These are general conceptual views
- National codes are also conceptual but more specific and applied
- These differ from legal codes, with which we in the U.S. are most familiar

Limitations

- This study in progress examines the published educator codes of ethics of countries in which English is the predominant language, e.g., the U.S., India, New Zealand, Australia, and Ireland.
- Some codes were written several years ago. A current revision might reflect LGBTQ awareness.
- Saldana: “What is not said is often as important as what is said.”

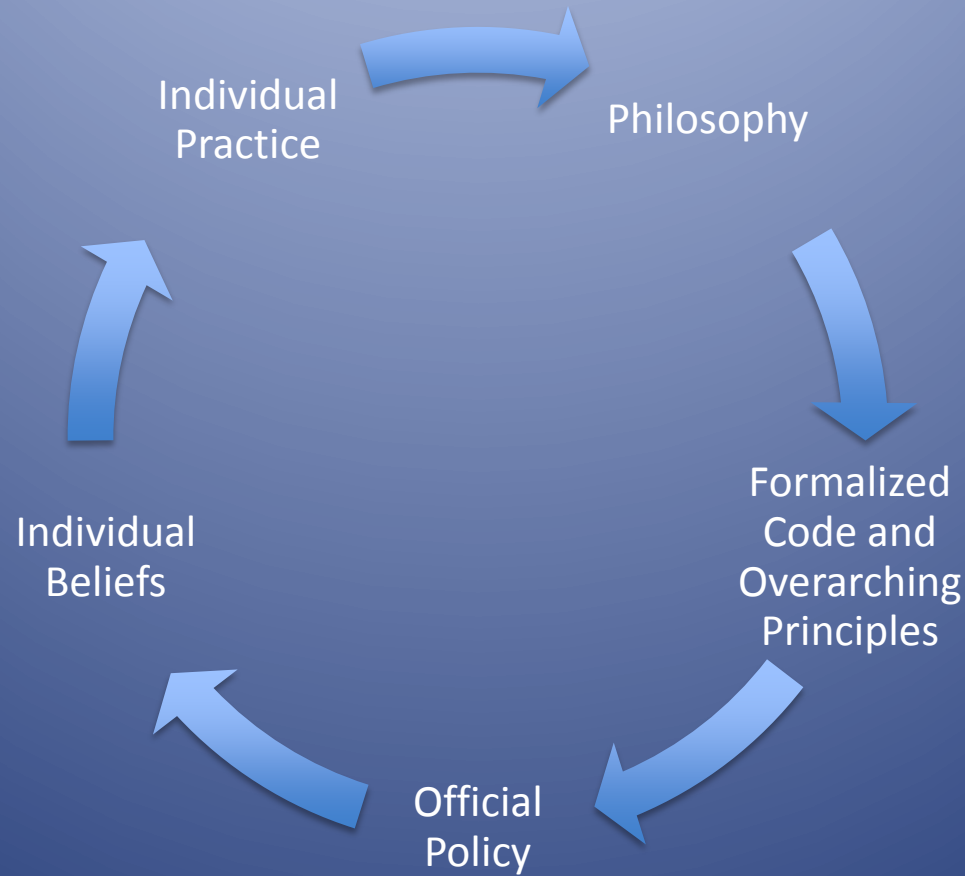
Methodology

- This discussion applies the methodology of hermeneutics, which undertakes “a dialogue with the text” to reveal a “deeper and richer meaning in light of an overarching pattern of interpretation (Ivesson & Skoldberg, 2009, pp. 100-101).

Hermeneutic Lens

- It suggests those seeking a deeper understanding of the educator codes of ethics of these countries approach the process through a dialectic, a recursive reflection of one's experiences and insights within the context of the text and the culture in which it was created.
- Only through recursive dialectics can we internalize, understand, and apply to our existence.

Recursive Code of Ethics Hermeneutic Cycle



The *Model Code of Ethics for Educators*, National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC, 2015)

The most recent code drafted by any American educational organization and the only one to address “actual and perceived gender, gender expression, gender identity” and “sexual orientation.” This is one of the few educator English language codes to address these specific issues.

The *Model Code of Ethics for Educators* (NASDTEC, 2015)

Calls for American educators to

- “Establish and maintain an environment that promotes the emotional, intellectual, physical, and sexual safety of all students.”
- Respect “students by taking into account their age, gender, culture, setting and socioeconomic context”
- Communicate with students “in a clear, respectful, and culturally sensitive manner.”

Australian Ethical Codes for Teachers (2014)

- Commitment to “students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds.”
- Specifically students with “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds,” utilizing “effective teaching strategies that are responsive to the local community and cultural setting, linguistic background, and history.”

Australian Ethical Codes for Teachers

- Calls for teachers to “understand and respect” these groups in order to “promote reconciliation between Indigenous and nonindigenous Australians.”
- Appeals through the ethic of critique to groups indigenous to the Australian culture.
- The code does not specifically reference LGBTQ groups.

India Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers (2010)

- Reflects the country's multicultural population.
- References an ethic of care, calling for teachers to treat “all students with love and affection.”
- Calls for educators to remain just and “impartial to all students irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, sex, economic status, disability, language, and place of birth.”

India Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers

- “School is a place where social justice and equity have to be practiced and valued.”
- References teachers’ “democratic principles, tolerance, social justice, and equity.”
- Teachers must avoid their “**personal belief pattern** on caste, religion, sex, economic status, language, and place of birth. ...

India Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers (2010)

- “A teacher should understand the difference between education and propaganda and in no case use the platform of the school for the propagation of his/her personal views about different religions, regions, or castes.”

India Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers (2010)

- While not specifically mentioning LGBTQ groups, the code makes specific references to ethics of care and social justice.
- “School is a place where social justice and equity have to be practised and valued by the teachers.”
- The Indian model reflects characteristics specific to the culture with references to castes and multiple religions and languages.

Ireland Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (2007)

- Specifically references social justice. According to its Preamble
- Imbedded values throughout
- “Student-centred learning
- Responding to change, cultural values, social justice, equality, and inclusion.”
- Be “mindful of Irish, European, and more global contexts,” as well as the “Travelling Community.”

Ireland Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (2007)

- Commitment to “democracy, social justice, equality and inclusion”
- “Support students in thinking critically about significant social issues,
- Value and accommodate diversity and respond appropriately.”

Ireland Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (2007)

- An inclusive sweep of marginalized groups viewed through the ethic of critique.
- “Respect, value, and accommodate diversity, including
 - gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, ethnicity, membership in the Travelling Community, and socio-economic status.

The New Zealand Code of Ethics for Certified Teachers

Four overarching principles:

- “Autonomy to treat people with rights that are to be honored and defended;
- Justice to share power and prevent the abuse of power;
- Responsible care to do good and minimize harm to others; and
- Truth to be honest with oneself and others.”

The New Zealand Code of Ethics for Certified Teachers

- Recognizes the obligation that teachers “honour the Treaty of Waitangi by paying particular attention to the rights and aspirations of Māori as tangata whenua, another reference to an indigenous group

The New Zealand Code of Ethics for Certified Teachers

- While not as specific in references to ethics of care and critique, the New Zealand code references the same issues in its concern for indigenous groups.

Conclusion

“We need to continue and extend rigorous research efforts to include intersectional identities, such as the ways that race, class, religion, nationality, and geography intersect with gender and sexuality. We need to know how to make schools better for LGBTQ students” (Blackburn and Pascoe, 2015, p. 99). Perhaps a greater awareness of codes of ethics that address these issues can help fuel this drive to action.