Toward Lifelong Learning: A Cross-National Analysis of Codes of Ethics for Educators

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Abstract

The goal of this study was to explore the shared meaning of 'ethics in school practice' based on educators' attitudes. Our analysis focused on a random sample of 30 codes of ethics for educators that were developed by educational leaders in various countries. The data analysis was based on qualitative analysis. The findings generated a multidimensional model of 'ethics in school practice' that included six dimensions: 'caring about students,' 'teachers' professionalism,' 'collegial relationships,' 'parental involvement,' 'community involvement' and 'respecting the law and regulations.' The findings may promote lifelong learning programs toward understanding the multidimensional structure of 'ethics in school practice.'

Keywords: code of ethics; cross-national analysis; educators; organisational ethics; school practice; lifelong learning

Introduction

Ethics today constitutes an inherent component of education throughout the world (Gross & Rutland, 2017; Roche, 2017). As a result, many studies have researched ethics in school practice (e.g., Roche, 2017; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007), including ethical practices that are unique to a specific country (Melé & Sánchez-Runde, 2013) and ethical practices that are shared across countries (Cullen, Parboteeah, & Hoegl, 2004; Donnelly, 2013; Ivison, 2010). Exploring ethical perspectives across countries is important to education since awareness of shared ethical behaviours may better clarify the ethical role that is expected from educators around the world. Therefore, the *main goal* of this study was to explore the shared meaning of "ethics in school practice" based on educators' attitudes.

Today, many countries already have codes of ethics that are constructed by leading educators and reflect their views about educators' ethical conduct. However, while studies have shown that codes of ethics may indeed reflect ethics in organisational practices (Kaptein, 2008a; Kaptein, 2008b; Kaptein, 2011), to the best of our knowledge, no studies have yet explored codes of ethics from different countries to find globally shared aspects of ethics in school practice. Therefore, in this study we explored different countries' codes of ethics for educators, in order to find their shared ethical practices.

Based on existing codes of ethics (e.g., The Educators' Code of Ethics in Texas; The Code of Ethics for Educators in Illinois; New York State Code of Ethics for Educators), we used the term *'educators'* in this study to refer not only to teachers, but also to middle leaders (De Nobile, 2018), those who have an acknowledged position of leadership in their educational institutions, but also have a significant teaching role (e.g., curriculum coordinators, pedagogical coordinators, subject coordinators, year level coordinators, professional staff members), vice principals and school principals.

Theoretical Background

In this section, we describe the theoretical background that supports this study, ethics in national context considering universalism and differences aspects among cultures. Then, we describe the roles of codes of ethics in general and in the context of educational systems.

Ethics and National Culture

Ethics relates to views and behaviours that are associated with human rights, such as evaluating, making decisions and acting according to what we believe is right (Ryan, 2016; Smith, 2016). The literature focuses on two main approaches regarding ethics and culture: one approach focuses on ethical principles that stem from a country's culture and norms (Melé & Sánchez-Runde, 2013), while the other approach focuses on ethical principles that are shared across countries and cultures (Cullen et al., 2004; Donnelly, 2013).

The approach that focuses on ethical perceptions that are unique to a country argues that national culture has an effect on ethical views and behaviours of individuals and organisations (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). House et al., (2004), in their GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behavior Effectiveness) project, define national culture as common experiences and meaningful events that form shared beliefs, values, and policies in a society, and lead to a unique way of perceiving the world.

Cultural differences were found to affect people's ethical reasoning skills (Christians et al., 2015). For example, Forsyth, O'Boyle and Mc-Daniel (2008) found that Western countries are more pragmatic when determining ethical rules, while Eastern and Middle Eastern countries are more subjective and context-driven.

The approach that focuses on shared ethical attitudes and behaviours across countries is based on the claim of the existence of a universal ethics. For example, Cullen et al., (2004) developed hypotheses related to four national variables of culture (achievement, individualism, universalism, and pecuniary materialism) by using institutional anomie theory. They found shared ethical perceptions across countries. Other studies claim that basic universal values, such as social justice, are essential for collective survival (Donnelly, 2013; Ivison, 2010).

In addition, empirical studies have shown that basic values such as equality and equity underlie certain ethical judgments, and that those values exist in several world religions and traditions (Terry, 2011; Tullberg, 2015). Furthermore, the universal approach to ethics may have been a factor in developing universal ethical policies such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Global Compact with its 10 ethical principles (Melé & Sánchez-Runde, 2013).

In education, both approaches to ethics are used. There are studies that examine ethical educational practices in the context of cultural diversity, for example, social justice (Banks, 2015), ethical dilemmas (Taylor et al., 2018) and developing student potential (Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010). On the other hand, there are studies that examine similarity between countries regarding ethical educational practices, for example, human rights in education (Stromquist & Monkman, 2014), closing gaps (Zhao, 2010), and quality education (Wang, Lin, Spalding, Odell, & Klecka 2011).

In this study we chose to focus on shared ethical dimensions across countries. Our aim was to explore codes of ethics that had been developed by educational leaders from different countries in the world to derive a shared meaning of the concept "ethics in school practice" in educational systems

Codes of Ethics in Educational Systems

A code of ethics is a document created by a professional organisation, an occupational regulatory body, or another professional body with the stated aim of guiding practitioner, protecting service users and safeguarding the reputation of the profession (Bullough, 2011; Van Nuland, 2011). There is consensus that codes of ethics generally cover the most

important and relevant ethical standards applicable to organisations (Carasco & Singh, 2003; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Organisations install various checks and balances to ensure that their codes of ethics include the applicable ethical standards, or at least do not include recommendations that conflict with the interests and views of organisational leaders and the community at large. Codes of ethics are often developed on the basis of an intensive consultation process with internal and external leaders and with the support of academic experts and consultants (KPMG, 2008; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Singh, 2006).

In educational systems, the main goal of a code of ethics for educators is to offer self-disciplinary guidelines to educators by formulating ethical norms and standards of professional conduct (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016). More specifically, the codes may guide and support educators' professional ethics; they may protect students from harm and educators from the misconduct of other colleagues; and they may promote public trust and support for the teaching profession (Poisson, 2009). Since codes of ethics are developed by educational leaders, they in fact guide educators in their daily activities and in working with stakeholders and reflect the ethical values of the leaders who created them (Banks, 2003; Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2016).

In most countries, educators' codes of ethics were developed by educational leaders such as government representatives, teachers unions' representatives, school principals, middle-level school leaders (e.g., coordinators) and supervisors (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016). Therefore, we assume that these codes of ethics reflect the ethical values of the leaders who created them and that they are a source of data from which we can extract the shared ethical aspects of school practice across different countries.

Method

Codes of ethics for educators from 30 different countries were examined in order to extract educational leaders' attitudes regarding ethics in school practice. In this section, the methods of data collecting and data analysis are described.

Data collecting

We collected a random sample of 30 codes of ethics for educators, basing the size of our sample on samplings in similar qualitative comparative studies in education (Mertens 2014; Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2014). Our sample included codes from developed countries (Ireland, Canada, Korea, Australia, Hong Kong, England, New Zealand, USA, Singapore, Norway, Italy, Turkey, Israel, Sweden, Japan) as well as from developing countries (South Africa, Slovenia, Georgia, Kaza-

khstan, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, Chile, United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Thailand, Chines Taipei, Malta and Botswana) (Lavy 2015). We searched for the codes in the UNESCO collections, on the Ministry of Education websites, teachers' union websites, through emails to researchers who write about ethics in education, and in international researchers' networks, such as the ISSPP.

For non-English speaking countries, we had their code of ethics translated to English by professional translators. Each translation was then validated by researchers in the field of education from that specific country.

Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted by four readers (together with our research assistants), and was based on qualitative thematic analysis. First, each reader read the codes of ethics to get a general idea as to whether the concept "ethics in school practice" could be gleaned from the codes. Secondly, each reader used inductive reasoning to identify recurring words and phrases in the codes of ethics. This produced a variety of major values. For example, we found the words: respect, care, integrity, trust, quality, and equality (in Ireland); equity, respect, diversity, equity, support (in Australia); care, respect, trust, integrity (in Canada); and honor, dignity, quality, fair, trust (in Hong Kong).

Thirdly, we continued to analyse the codes of ethics via a three-step process that included open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Ruppel and Mey (2015) outlined the process in the following way:

Open Coding. Open coding is the process of breaking down the data into separate units of meaning by analysing, comparing, labeling and categorising the data. Key words and phrases are labeled, compared and then put into clusters to form abstract categories. In this study, the coding began with analysing the sections of each code of ethics. For example, the subcategory 'commitment to ongoing professional learning' was based on several phrases in different codes of ethics, such as "Ongoing professional learning is integral to effective practice and to student learning" (Canada); "We acknowledge teaching as a professional profession that requires continuous education" (Korea); "1.5 … engaging in professional development opportunities and applying new learning in my practice " (New Zealand).

Figure 1 illustrates the following steps:

Axial Coding. The aim of axial coding is to construct a model that details the specific conditions that give rise to the occurrence of a phe-

nomenon. Axial coding is comprised of three analytical processes: (a) continuous grouping of subcategories into categories; (b) comparing categories with the collected data; and (d) exploring variations between categories and between subcategories. In this study, each section of the code of ethics of each country was evaluated as a subcategory, which was then positioned along the axis of a category.

Following are some examples that demonstrate the axial coding process: (a) The subcategory of 'commitment to continuous learning' was placed on the axis of the category 'quality of education'; (b) The subcategory of 'student's mental safety' was placed on the axis of the category 'student well-being'; (c) The category of 'community contribution to school' was placed on the axis of the major category 'community involvement'; (d) The category 'respecting parents' was placed on the axis of the major category 'parental involvement'; (e) The subcategory of 'respecting colleagues' opinions was positioned on the axis of the category, 'caring about colleagues'; (f) The category of 'following the rules' was placed on the axis of the major category, 'respecting the law and regulations'.

Selective Coding. In this stage, we reduced the number of categories and grouped them together, according to more general concepts. These were labeled major categories. Thus, eventually, we had six major categories: 'caring about students', 'educators' professionalism', 'collegial relationships', 'parental involvement', 'community involvement' and 'respecting the laws and regulations'. These major categories generated the central concept, a core category called "ethics in school practice," which includes a variety of interactions: with educational leaders, teachers, students, parents and community.

We found that 20 subcategories were related to 12 categories. These categories were then related to six major categories (Figure 1). More specifically, the categories 'quality of education' and 'raising educators' status' were found to be related to the major category 'educators' professionalism'. The categories 'developing student potential' and 'caring about students' well-being' were found to be related to the major category 'caring about students'. The categories 'collaborative learning' and 'caring about colleagues' were found to be related to the major category 'collegial relationships'. The categories 'informing parents about students' learning and well-being' and 'respecting parents' were found to be related to the major category 'parental involvement'. The categories 'community contribution to the school' and 'school contribution to the community' were found to be related to the major category 'community involvement'. Finally, the categories 'balancing between educators' autonomy and regulations' and 'following the rules' were found to be re-

lated to the major category 'respecting laws and regulations'. All the major categories together encompassed the meaning of the concept "ethics in school practice".
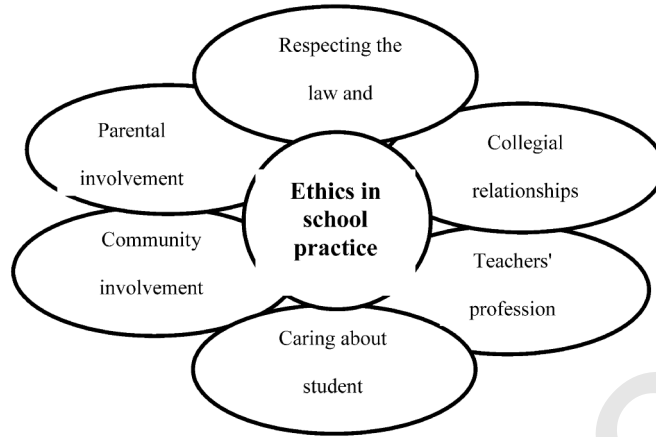

Figure 1. The multidimensional model of an ethics in school practice

To ensure accuracy of analysis, the data were organised using the ATLAS.ti 5.0 software package that supports qualitative analysis of textual data. This software helps to methodically organise themes within data and enables the user to retrieve passages from one or more textual documents (Paulus et al., 2017). We conducted a cross-checking procedure of independently-coded data, and also met in order to discuss the findings (these procedures were done with our research assistants). The data were further authenticated through "member checking," a process of returning the findings to researchers, educational leaders and teachers in each country in order to confirm accuracy (Elo et al., 2014).

Findings
As noted above, we found six major categories: 'caring about students, ' 'educators' professionalism,' 'collegial relationships,' 'parental involvement,' 'community involvement,' and 'respecting the law and regulations,' Regarding 'community involvement', not all countries addressed this category. Details about each major category and its manifestation in various codes of ethics are given below.

Caring about students
The major category 'caring about students' yielded two main categories; the dominant category was 'students' well-being' (28 cases), while the secondary category was 'developing students' potential' (22 cases).

Students' well-being

The category of 'students' well-being' yielded aspects of equality, diversity and discrimination, according to different factors such as gender, religion, disability, age, ethnicity and race. This category also yielded aspects of mental safety, such as ensuring confidentiality, and physical safety, such as creating safe learning environments. Below are examples from the codes of ethics of Ireland, Korea, Israel and Australia:

Ireland

"1.1 Be caring, fair and committed to the best interests of the students entrusted to their care, and seek to motivate, inspire and celebrate effort and success"; "1.3 Be committed to equality and inclusion and to respecting and accommodating diversity" (The Teaching Council, 2016).

Korea

"We protect every student's right to education, where no single student feels discriminated due to gender, religion, disability, age, ethnicity and race" (The Korean Federation of Teachers' Associations, 2014).

Israel

"2.3 Educators should ensure confidentiality and privacy in order to ensure the welfare and safety of all students" (The Council for Promoting Teaching and Education, 1995).

Australia

"Standard 4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments" (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011).

Developing students' potential

The sections in this category yielded findings relating to commitment for lifelong learning, and learning processes such as developing critical thinking. Below are examples from the codes of ethics of Thailand, Canada, New Zealand and Malta:

Thailand

"3.5 Educational professional practitioners shall encourage their students to achieve learning skills and proper conduct to their full potential in accordance with their roles and duties" (The Government Gazette, 2005).

Canada

"Members express their commitment to students' well-being and learning by exerting positive influence, exercising professional judgment and showing empathy in practice" (Ontario College of Teachers, 1996).

New Zealand
" 2.5 We strive to meet the needs of every learner by providing them with the support they need to reach their full potential" (Education Council New Zealand, 2017).

Malta
"1.10 We create learning experiences that motivate and challenge students in an inclusive environment with a commitment for lifelong learning" (The Council for the Teaching Profession in Malta, 2012).

The category of *caring about students* had many sections that related to the sub-category 'caring about students' well-being' compared to the number of sections that related to sub-category of 'developing students' potential'. This result emphasises the importance of caring about the students' well-being.

Educators' professionalism
The major category 'Educators' professionalism' yielded two main categories: the dominant category was 'quality of education' (30 cases), while the secondary category was 'promoting and maintaining educators' status' (24 cases).

Quality of education
The category "quality of education" yielded the aspects of meeting standards and qualifications, being accountable, and committed to on-going professional development. Below are examples from the codes of ethics of Singapore, USA, Russia, Malta, Ireland and Canada:

Singapore
"3.1. Member institutions agree to ensure that employed teachers have the appropriate qualifications and experience that at worst meet the minimum standard"; "3.2. Provide the highest standard of education, using appropriate pedagogical practices that are appropriate to students' level of learning" (Singapore Association for Private Education, 2013).

USA
"2.1 The educator shall not apply for a professional position while deliberately making a false statement or failing to disclose pertinent information relating to competency and qualifications"; "2.2 The educator shall not misrepresent his/her professional qualifications" (National Education Association, 1975).

Russia
"1.1 Teachers should be dedicated, have a sense of accountability, do high quality work, be a role model" (The Council of the OS, 2002).

Malta

"1.8 Members of the teaching profession shall make responsibility for maintaining the quality of their professional practice" (The Council for the Teaching Profession in Malta, 2012).

Ireland

"4.1. Teachers should maintain high standards of teaching, planning, monitoring, assessing, reporting and providing feedback" (The Teaching Council, 2016).

Canada

"A commitment to ongoing professional development is integral to effective practice and to student learning. Professional practice and self-directed learning are achieved through experience, research, collaboration and knowledge" (Ontario College of Teachers, 1996).

Promoting and maintaining educators' status

This category of promoting and maintaining educators' status yielded the categories of maintaining reputation of the teaching profession, which included teachers' professional work at school and their responsibility to act as role models beyond the confines of the school. Below are examples from the codes of ethics of Slovenia, Ireland and China.

Slovenia

"4.1 The teacher strives to maintain the reputation of his profession by ensuring that his work meets professional standards and responsible" (The Association of Catholic Pedagogues of Slovenia, 1997).

Ireland

"2.5. Teachers should avoid conflicts of interest between their professional work and personal interests which may negatively impact students"; "3.7 Teachers should ensure that any communication with pupils, students, colleagues, parents, school management and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as e-mail, text nessages and social network sites" (The Teaching Council, 2016).

China

"I agree to be a positive role model for students by: 2.1 Abstaining completely from alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs; 2.2 Avoiding vulgar, profane and any other form of unclean language; 2.3 Following the China Horizons dress and grooming *standards*" (China Horizons, 2016).

Collegial relationships

This major category yielded two main categories, the dominant category was 'caring about colleagues' (25 cases) and the secondary category was 'collaborative learning' (20 cases).

Caring about colleagues

'Caring about colleagues' demonstrated that schools not only encourage caring about students, but also encourage teachers to care about other teachers. Teachers are expected to treat their colleagues justly and equitably, respect their privacy, and avoid any form of humiliation. Below are examples from the codes of ethics of USA, South Africa and Norway:

USA

"3. The professional educator, in exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues, gives just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession; 3.1 The professional educator does not reveal confidential information about colleagues unless required by law" (Association of American Educators, 1994).

South Africa

"6 . An educator avoids any form of humiliation and refrain from any form of abuse (physical, sexual, or otherwise) towards colleagues" (South Africa Council for Education, 2000).

Norway

"2.8 All teachers and leaders of pedagogical institutions create and participate in a culture of positive cooperation where all opinions are treated with the seriousness they deserve" (Union of Education, 2002).

Collaborative learning among colleagues

The category of 'collaborative learning among colleagues' focuses on educators supporting one another dealing with student diversity. Collaborative learning may take place in different forums and is viewed as a 'win-win' situation for all, as each participant both contributes and benefits from the process. In addition, educators' collegial relationships have informal aspects, such as equitable treatment, confidentiality and respect for differing opinions. Below are examples from the codes of ethics of Italy, Australia and England:

Italy

"3.1 The duty and commitment of each teacher to help build fruitful relationships, rooted in respect as well as a strong spirit of cooperation, exchange of experiences and ideas, in order to create a professional community of teachers"; 3.3 "…..promotes evaluation between teams of colleagues to improve professionalism" (CCNL, 1999).

Australia

"1.3 Support colleagues to develop effective teaching strategies that address the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds"; "6.3. Initiate and engage in professional discussions with colleagues in a range of forums to evaluate and improve professional knowledge and practice, and student achievements" (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011).

England

"Registered teachers reflect on their practice and use feedback from colleagues to help them recognise their own development needs" (General Teaching Council for England, 2009).

Parental involvement

This major category yielded two main categories: the dominant category was 'Informing parents about students' learning and well-being ' (21 cases). The secondary category was 'respecting parents ' (15 cases).

Informing parents

The number of sections that relate to informing parents about students' well-being as opposed to the number of sections that relate to informing parents about students' formal learning demonstrates that the educators' most important role according to the codes of ethics is to inform parents about their child's well-being, rather than inform them of the children's formal learning and knowledge. Below are examples from the codes of ethics of Sweden, Malaysia, Italy and Japan:

Sweden

"4.2 Teachers should work together with parents, and consciously inform parents about the pupil's situation, well-being and acquisition of knowledge" (The National Agency for Education, 2011).

Malaysia

"3.2. Educators should establish cordial relationships and cooperation between the school and pupils' parents, to inform parents about matters that concern the *pupils' welfare*" (Ministry of Education in Malaysia, 2014).

Italy

"5.1 A fundamental duty of the teachers' work is to promote formal and informal *communication* as part of a cooperative atmosphere and trust with families; 5.2 The teacher must explicitly articulate the teaching goals, be attentive to problems posed by parents ….." (CCNL, 1999).

Japan

"We should work together with our parents to protect young people from harm and at the same time create a new healthy culture" (Japan Teachers Union, 1972).

Respecting parents

As in the category 'student well-being', which obligates educators to respect their students, this category encourages educators to respect the wishes and culture of the students' parents as well. Below are examples from the codes of ethics of Norway, Malaysia and Hungary:

Norway

"2.1 All teachers and leaders of pedagogical institutions should build a trusting relationship with those we work for" (Union of Education, 2002).

Malaysia

"3.1 Educators should respect the sole responsibility of parents towards their children"; "3.3 Educators should treat all information supplied by parents as confidential"; "3.5 Educators should avoid using parents' social and economic status for personal gain"; "3.6 Educators should avoid using inappropriate remarks that may affect pupils' confidence in their parents or guardians (Ministry of Education in Malaysia, 2014).

Hungary

"2.3 The teacher's relationship with parents is based on mutual respect, trust and appreciation" (National Education Committee, 2015).

Community involvement

This major category yielded two main categories: the dominant category was 'school contribution to the community' (21 cases), and the secondary category was 'community contribution to the school' (15 cases). This major category of 'community involvement' was bi-directional and included aspects of how a school can contribute to the community and how the community can contribute to the school. Below are examples from the codes of ethics of Hungary, Malaysia, Japan, New Zealand and England:

School contribution to the community
Hungary

"2.1 Educators should work with a more effective and efficient service to public education, with children, students, colleagues, parents, advocacy and professional organisations" (National Education Committee, 2015).

Malaysia

"4.1 Educators should avoid teaching practices that may harm the pupils, society or nation, or that are contradictory to the students' national principles" (Ministry of Education in Malaysia, 2014).

Japan

"It is a task given to teachers to advocate peace, promote independence of ethnic groups, and create a democratic society that adheres to the constitution" (Japan Teachers Union, 1972).

Community contribution to the school
Hungary

"1.2 The obligation of Hungarian community is to encourage our professional knowledge regarding decisions, declarations and actions" (National Education Committee, 2015).

New Zealand

"4.3 Teachers will strive to foster and understand the role of *te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi)* and its implications in the learning environment" (Education Council New Zealand, 2017).

England

"… [the community is] responsible for maintaining its reputation and building trust and confidence in it" (General Teaching Council for England, 2009).

It should be noted that in our findings regarding major categories of "involvement", some countries, such as Sweden and Japan, only focus on parental involvement. However, most of the countries, such as Malaysia and Hungary, relate to both parental and community involvement. No country focuses solely on community involvement. These findings indicate the dominance of 'parental involvement' over 'community involvement' among educational leaders.

Respecting laws and regulations

This major category yielded two main categories: the dominant category, 'following the rules' (20 cases) and the secondary category, 'balancing ethical beliefs and administrative regulations' (12 cases).

Following the rules

The category of following the rules revealed that while most countries explain the rationale behind the importance of obeying the law (e.g., Ireland, to promote students' education, welfare and protection; Hungary, to prevent abuse of students), a few countries do not explain their rationale (e.g., United Arab Emirates). Below are examples from

the codes of ethics of Hungary, Ireland, United Arab Emirates and England:

Ireland

"3.4 Teachers should comply with agreed national and school policies, procedures and guidelines that aim to promote pupil education and welfare and child protection" (The Teaching Council, 2016).

United Arab Emirates

"Educators will abide by government laws and regulations at all times and will be obligated to report violations of these laws to appropriate authorities. Professional conduct includes but is not limited to the following: 5.1 Educators will be honest and maintain integrity in all their official work.

5.2 Educators will be familiar with the provisions of legislation and/or policies relevant to their official responsibilities; Prohibited unprofessional conduct, includes but is not limited to the following: 5.3 Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting professional qualifications or employment history" (The Abu Dhabi Education Council, 2009).

England

"Registered teachers meet the requirements laid down by their professional body, the GTCE, to maintain their registration status" (General Teaching Council for England, 2009).

Balancing between autonomy and regulations

The category of 'balancing between autonomy and administrative regulations' shows that teachers are expected to exercise ethical judgment within the framework of school regulations. Below are examples from the codes of ethics of Chile, Norway and USA.

Chile

"4.1 The educator should balance between their autonomy and professional responsibility; 4.2 The educator should retain full autonomy while maintaining respectful communication with public authority" (Ethics Commission, 2003).

Norway

"2.1 All teachers and leaders of pedagogical institutions should be loyal to the goals and regulations *as long as* they . . . are not in conflict with our professional ethics" (Union of Education, 2002).

USA

"2.9 The professional educator complies with the written local school policies and applicable laws and regulations that are not in conflict with this code of ethics" (Association of American Educators, 1994).

Discussion

The challenge of this study was to explore the meaning of "ethics in school practice" based on cross-national attitudes of educational leaders. We based our analysis on codes of ethics that were developed by educational leaders for educators in 30 countries. We argue that these codes may reflect ethical aspects in school practice specifically due to the fact that they were developed by educational leaders. The challenge was even greater when we tried to define a shared cross-national definition of "ethics in school practice," because we were mindful of the fact that codes of ethics are based on the culture, context, policy, politics, and the people involved (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2013). However, we were also mindful of the fact that by discovering shared patterns of ethics in school practice that are based on universal values, we may offer educators lifelong learning and fundamental rules of ethical conduct on which they can base their professional decisions and actions (Bok 2002; Cullen et al., 2004; Roche, 2017; Terry, 2011).

Our findings generated a multidimensional model which provides deeper insights into "ethics in school practice" from the perspective of educational leaders. The multidimensional model for "ethics in school practice" yielded six dimensions (major categories) that appear in almost in every code of ethics that we reviewed: 'caring about students'; 'educators' professionalism'; 'collegial relationships'; 'parental involvement'; 'community involvement'; and 'respecting the law and regulations'.

The first dimension, 'caring about students,' focuses primarily on caring about student wellbeing rather than caring about their learning. The focus on fairness, equality, respecting others, and confidentiality demonstrate the real ethical challenges in today's educational system and reflect the expectation that educators realise that their role extends beyond the mere transfer of academic knowledge.

The second dimension, 'educators' professionalism,' demonstrates that educational leaders expect educators to meet and maintain high standards in their profession by participating in ongoing professional development and by serving as role models both within and outside the school environment. The inclusion of this dimension in the codes of ethics of many countries may indicate that personal growth as professionals and individuals is universally acknowledged as essential to improving student achievement.

The third dimension, 'educators' collegial relationships,' focuses on promoting collaborative learning among colleagues. According to the codes of ethics that we studied, collaborative learning may help foster support among colleagues when dealing with ethical aspects such as inequality among students. This dimension also includes ethical aspects of 'caring about colleagues' such as just and equitable treatment of colleagues, positive cooperation in which all opinions are treated with respect, and honoring the discretion and privacy of colleagues. The inclusion of this dimension in the codes of ethics of many countries may indicate a shared belief that an effective learning environment is dependent not only on healthy relationships between educators and students but among educators as well.

The fourth dimension, 'parental involvement,' stresses the importance of informing parents about their children's academic status and their wellbeing, as well as keeping confidentiality and recognising parental authority and responsibility toward their children. It is important that the codes of ethics yielded this dimension as previous studies (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011; Lawson, 2003) have shown that although educators perceive parents as important factors in developing and empowering their children, in practice, educators are reluctant to solicit parental involvement since they fear parental intervention. Our findings indicate that the leading educators that devised the codes of ethics had noticed the gap between educators' understanding of the importance of parental involvement and their actual actions in the field, and therefore decided to include the dimension of parental involvement in their code of ethics.

The fifth dimension, 'community involvement,' was bidirectional and included both the school's contribution to the community and the community's contribution to the school. The school's contribution to the community is characterised by promoting a democratic community and preparing students to work in the community. The community's contribution to the school is characterised by promoting equal opportunity through school programs that are supported by the community, offering professional help in school decision-making and actions, helping schools uphold their reputation and building community trust and confidence in the educational system.

Both of the above dimensions that encourage involvement of out of school parties (parents and community) demonstrated that schools that promote ethical practice are 'open educational systems', whereby information flows from the school to the community and from the community to the school.

The sixth dimension, 'respecting the law and regulations,' shows that while abidance to school regulations may protect the rights of students and educators, a balance should be struck between educators' need for autonomy and their obligation to abide by the rules. As such, the codes of ethics reflect the understanding that educators' conscience and professional ethics bear weight in educational decisions.

In all six dimensions that were found in the codes of ethics as relating to "ethics in school practice," educators were expected to be pro-active. That includes promoting students' well-being, participating in ongoing professional development courses to maintain high standards of instruction, initiating collaborative learning with colleagues, encouraging parental involvement and using judgment to balance autonomy with abidance by the rules.

In sum, our study offers a broad view of a shared "ethics in school practice" across 30 countries through the analysis of codes of ethics of those countries, an analytical approach that has not been used before. The findings support the existence of universal ethics, as the codes of ethics that we investigated reflect shared ethical beliefs of educational leaders in both developing and developed countries. The findings of this study reveal shared ethical meanings regarding educators' relationship with colleagues, students, parents, and community, and may help in promoting lifelong learning from an ethical perspective.

Conclusions, Implications and Future Studies

This study offers a multidimensional model for understanding the meaning of "ethics in school practice," based on educational leaders' perspectives. The findings suggest that six main dimensions of "ethics in school practice" are relevant in describing ethical behaviour in schools. Gaining better insights into the concept "ethics in school practice" may possibly decrease unethical behaviour. The findings demonstrate that "ethics in school practice" is an important factor in defining the roles of ethical educators. Educators' awareness of their roles may shape their ethical behaviour.

The study's findings, which generated shared categories that characterise ethics in school practices across a variety of countries with different national cultures, justified our universal approach. Future studies could further investigate our proposed multidimensional model of "ethics in school practice" by comparing cultures and contexts of different countries. In addition, by incorporating educational policies and programs that focus on the dimensions explored in this study, leaders in education can promote lifelong learning from an ethical perspective. As a result, educators will be more aware of their school's expectations

regarding ethical behaviour, and the feedback they provide after implementing the educational policies will enable a further refinement of the existing codes of ethics.

Limitations

This study has two main limitations. Firstly, we had to translate codes from non-English speaking countries that participated in this study. Although the professional translators were very careful when translating the codes of ethics, and their translations were cross-checked with educational researchers from the countries of origin, the possibility of some misunderstanding across languages and national cultures has to be acknowledged. The second limitation of this study relates to the shared aspects of ethics that are based on a universal approach. We are aware of the fact that the specific national culture, the unique educational policy in each country, interpretations within a country's context, and the special school context could have influenced one or more of the proposed dimensions. Therefore, further testing is needed to assess the multidimensional model of "ethics in practice" that is proposed in this study.

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