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Comparing Teachers' Codes of Ethics in China, the US, and Australia and Recommendations on Them

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Received: October 17, 2021 ▪ Reviewed: November 10, 2021

▪ Accepted: December 16, 2021 ▪ Published: January 28, 2022

Abstract:

Teaching is a moral activity and professional practice with ethical implications. There are many ethical issues in this process, and professional ethics is to help educators seek answers to various professional and ethical issues. Teachers' professional ethics is the concrete embodiment of general social or professional ethics in teachers' professional life. It is the sum of behavior norms and morality formed in teachers' educational practice to deal with various relations in education. Teachers' code of ethics is the external form of teachers' professional ethics and the evidence of teachers' professional behavior constraints. Through qualitative content analysis, this article reviews and compares the documents and Chinese and English literature on teachers' codes of ethics in China, the US, and Australia, determines the main differences of teachers' codes of ethics in China, the US, and Australia in five aspects: beginning time, the scope of application, content, establishing institution and process, effectiveness and operability, and provides five recommendations for future policymakers on teachers' code of ethics in China aiming to improve Chinese teachers' professional ethics. This article is more comprehensive at the comparative level than previous studies, providing a broader basis for follow-up researchers. Besides, it directly selected some English literature for analysis. Previous scholars focused on summarizing domestic literature.

Keywords: China, code of ethics, comparison, foreign countries, teaching profession.

中美澳教师职业道德规范比较及建议

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摘要:

教学是具有伦理意义的道德活动和专业实践。在这个过程中有很多伦理问题，而职业伦理就是帮助教育者寻求各种职业和伦理问题的答案。教师职业道德是一般社会道德或职业道德在教师职业生涯中的具体体现。它是教师在教育实践中为处理教育中的各种关系而形成的行为规范和道德的总和。教师职业道德规范是教师职业道德的外在形式，是教师职业行为约束的证据。本文通过定性的内容分析，对中、美、澳三国教师道德规范的文献和中英文文献进行回顾和比较，确定中、美、澳三国教师道德规范的主要差异。从开始时间、适用范围、内容、建立制度和过程、有效性和可操作性五个方面，为未来中国教师道德规范的决策者提供五点建议，旨在提高中国教师职业道德。本文在比较层面上比以往的研究更加全面，为后续研究人员提供了更广泛的基础。此外，还直接选取了一些英文文献进行分析。以往学者侧重于对国内文献的总结。

关键词: 中国，道德规范，比较，外国，教师职业。

1. Introduction

Developing a code of ethics is one critical characteristic for any occupation to be regarded as a profession (Hart & Marshall, 1992), so countries or regions worldwide attach great importance to developing teachers' code of ethics. However, there are many differences in the specific practice (Zhang, 2020). This article reviews current studies on teachers' codes of ethics in China, the US, and Australia. The comparison of the *Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers* in China and the countries mentioned above will be made in the review article to underline the main differences in teachers' code of ethics. These differences might help improve Chinese teachers' professional ethics and highlight the development directions for Chinese teachers' code of ethics.

Keeping up with the international community, China attaches great importance to developing a code of ethics for the teaching profession. All levels of educational administrative departments and schools are committed to developing and managing teachers' professional ethics. The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (MEPRC) developed professional codes of ethics for teachers at all levels to standardize the professional and technical personnel in education and teaching. However, there are many problems in teachers' code of ethics in China. Making the code is short of an extensive investigation of teachers. The code cannot adapt to the reality of teachers and reflect teachers' needs (Sun & Li, 2018). The professional ethics code only describes an ideal behavior mode of teachers. The real educational situation is a field of ethical practice full of conflicts; it lacks the response to the practical ethical problems and conflicts (Zhou, 2016). Professional ethics only stipulates the standard and direction, which is too general and abstract. It is difficult to make a reasonable judgment on the professional ethics of teachers (Yin, 2017). The problem of teachers' professional ethics anomie still exists: On May 31, 2019, a lecturer verbally harassed a female student through WeChat and had an improper sexual relationship with another female student during his marriage (Ministry of Education of the People's

Republic of China, 2019). In May 2020, a teacher made students pursue and flatter stars during class and recorded videos to spread on the internet, which caused adverse effects. In September 2020, a teacher took improper measures for discipline, resulting in physical injury to students (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020). The problems of an improper teacher-student relationship, corporal punishment of students, and academic misconduct have aroused widespread concern in society (Pi, 2021). Through comparison, the review hopes to provide the basis for the code writer to improve teachers' code of ethics.

The objectives of this study are:

- (1) To describe the key points about teachers' codes of ethics in China, the US, and Australia;
- (2) To identify the differences in teachers' codes of ethics in China, the US, and Australia;
- (3) To provide recommendations for the improvement about teachers' code of ethics in China.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teachers' Code of Ethics in China

Research on teachers' professional ethics in China is extensive, but there is not enough research on teachers' codes of ethics.

2.1.1. Current Study about Teachers' Code of Ethics in China

By reviewing the literature, scholars have performed rich research on the definition, requirements, development, and evaluation of teachers' professional ethics. The problem of teachers' ethics has led to continuous research. The starting point of scholars' research is to solve the current problems of teachers' ethics in China. When analyzing the causes of teachers' ethics problems, Yin (2017) pointed out that the contents of teachers' ethics at primary and secondary schools lack professionalism and guidance, and requirements for educators are too high, ignoring the realization of educators' values. Wang (2020) analyzed the problems in university lecturers' code of ethics: unclear establishing institution and imperfect

establishing method, unbalanced vertical level and imperfect horizontal structure of content, the method, object, and content of publicity are single, and lack of perfect evaluation mechanism and supervision mechanism. The literature review has discovered shortages in studying teachers' code of ethics. As Cheng (2019) concluded that a large amount of research is the "directly transplanted" type, this type applies philosophical terms and theories directly to explain issues without any consideration of theoretical adequacy and transformation. Researchers constructing theories ignore the hidden problems behind their theories, facts inconsistent with them, and overwhelm concrete issues with grand theoretical discourse. This situation shows the lack of in-depth reflection on theoretical problems and the failure to combine theoretical research with practical research closely.

2.1.2. Current Study about Comparison of Teachers' Code of Ethics in China

For comparative studies on teachers' codes of ethics, scholars mainly choose Hong Kong, the US, Britain, and Canada. These studies mainly compare the differences in the contents, establishing institutions and operability of the ethical codes, then provide recommendations for developing teachers' code of ethics in China. For example, Dang (2016) compared teachers' codes of ethics in China, Britain, and the US for the contents, degrees of specialization, establishing the institutions, implementation and operability of the codes; Yue (2019) analyzed the differences of the codes of ethics in Chinese and German universities: traditional cultural background, content, nature, establishing institution. There are some problems in the comparative study in China. The implication is not deep enough, and the analysis is not comprehensive enough; it is mainly a general summary without detailed comparative analysis, and the suggestions are also relatively grand descriptions, lacking more specific measures.

2.2. Teachers' Code of Ethics in Foreign Studies

Study on teachers' code of ethics has been carried out earlier in western countries and has achieved rich results (Colnerud, 1997; Schwimmer & Maxwell, 2017; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2020; Mohammed, 2020).

2.2.1. Study on Teachers' Code of Ethics

According to the literature, the situation is consistent with China; scholars affirmed the importance of a code of ethics for the teaching profession and tended to establish teachers' code of ethics to regulate teachers' ethical behavior. Nash (1991) believed that the code of ethics provides convenience for teachers, enables them to master ethical decision-making skills, and teachers can connect decisions with appropriate rules. Fredriksson (2004) believed that teachers could deal with professional ethics in diverse ways. One way is to establish a code of professional ethics for teachers as a standard to measure this profession. As a regulatory

tool, teachers' code of ethics aims to reinforce public trust in the teaching profession, guides teachers' professional behavior. It has important educational significance for teachers' education and professional socialization (Schwimmer & Maxwell, 2017). However, some studies view teachers' code of ethics in a passive light. Terhart (1998) argued that some codes treat teachers as passive role takers (rather than role makers) working toward functional citizenship, and other codes are too heroically drawn to guide teachers in their work and set them apart from society in ways, obliging them to model overstated ideals. Forster (2012) believed that a code of ethics is contradictory; it will discourage autonomous ethical reflection. Maxwell and Schwimmer (2016) pointed out that a code of ethics only provides a fragmentary portrait of ethical obligations of teacher professionalism; relying too heavily on the code of ethics as a source of content in teaching is not good for learning and evaluation of professional ethics for future teachers.

2.2.2. Study on Improving Teachers' Code of Ethics

Foreign scholars also made good efforts to research improving teachers' code of ethics. Their research was more specific, put forward specific rectification measures, focused on how to make full use of the role of ethics, and paid attention to the essence of teachers' role. In western history, like in China, teachers were expected to be moral exemplars, teacher's role was moral (Forster, 2012). However, with the development of research, scholars gradually realize the difference and change, but China is far from being developed enough in this regard.

Banter (2003) reviewed literature and concluded that educators were unknowledgeable of their profession's code of ethics or standards. Hence the appropriate training in professional ethics for educators should be strengthened. Recording the teacher's difficulties and helping the code writer develop the code, for instance, the Victorian Institute of Teaching in Victoria provided resources to teachers for using codes in specific activity areas (professional conduct, personal conduct, and professional competence) through a linear decision-making model and supplementary workshops available online. Attaching importance to teachers' evaluation, teacher registration bodies and teacher education programs can provide teachers with opportunities to explore, reflect on and clarify their moral expectations from the role and give them the mandate to interrogate and contest accepted norms and values (Forster, 2012).

To sum up, compared with China researchers' studies, western scholars' studies on establishing teachers' code of ethics are earlier, and their research level is deeper and more theoretical; hence the research problem is more specific. The studies on teachers' code of ethics are no longer unrealistic but focus on improving the rules of teachers' ethics so that most teachers can follow them in practical teaching activities. The code protects teachers' reasonable interests while constraining teachers and has a more humanistic spirit.

Therefore, the ethical codes can be accepted by most teachers, which further improves the enforceability of teacher ethics codes in teacher education activities.

3. Materials and Method

This article uses qualitative content analysis. We searched the literature on teachers' code of ethics and found 1253 literature sources on teachers' code of ethics and 20 literature sources on comparing teachers' code of ethics in China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. General situation with the studies in China

Theme	Quantity	Coverage
Teachers' code of ethics	1253	Preschool teachers, primary and secondary school teachers, and college teachers
Comparison of teachers' code of ethics	20	China and the USA, China and Germany, China, and the UK

Table 2. Sample of the selected literature on comparing teachers' codes of ethics

Author	Publication Year	Title	Journal/Work Type
Pi	2021	The development and implication of Chinese and American teachers' codes of ethics: A comparing perspective	The Forum of Leadership Science
Yue	2019	Comparison of teachers' codes of ethics development in Chinese and German universities	Master Thesis
Dang	2016	Comparison and Implication of teachers' professional ethics development in China, Britain, and the United States	Social Sciences Review

Foreign studies mainly come from Emerald Management, SAGE Journals and focus on 20 literature sources on teachers' codes of ethics for review.

Table 3. Sample of the selected literature on teachers' codes of ethics

Author	Publication Year	Title	Journal
Forster	2012	Codes of Ethics in Australian Education: Towards a National Perspective	Australian Journal of Teacher Education
Schwimmer & Maxwell	2017	Codes of Ethics and Teachers' Professional Autonomy	Ethics and Education
Mion & Bonfanti	2019	Drawing up Codes of Ethics of Higher Education Institutions: Evidence from Italian Universities	International Journal of Educational Management
Shapira-Lishchinsky	2020	A Multinational Study of Teachers' Codes of Ethics: Attitudes of Educational Leaders	NASSP Bulletin
Mohammed	2020	The Status of teachers' Professional Development and Code of Ethics: The Case of Madda Walabu University—Ethiopia	OALib

Then, we find the respective ethics codes of foreign countries on teachers' union websites, Ministry of Education websites, in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) collections, and by directly viewing links provided by scholars writing articles. Finally, teachers' codes of ethics in the US and Australia are selected because the US has a profound influence. In Australia, states have autonomy and limits of authority of looking over the code, so a regional code is selected here. We select the

Australian Capital Territory (ACT); its content is more complete.

Variations were observed in the documents' titles. Some titles use the term 'teachers' or 'educators,' some include the term 'code of ethics' or 'professional ethics,' and some refer to the term 'teaching profession' or 'professional practice' (Table 4). In this paper, the definition of the keyword refers to the code that regulates teachers' ethical behavior.

Table 4. Basic information on teachers' codes of ethics in three countries

Country	Document title	Year of the last update	Population	Organization mode	No. of code	Formulation institution
China	Occupational Moral Code for Teacher in Primary and Secondary School	2008	Primary and secondary school teacher	Item list	Six principles (Vague explanation)	Ministry of Education/The Union of Education, Science, Cultural, Healthy of National Committee
The US	Code of Ethics for Educators	2020	All educators	Classification by different stakeholders	Two sections (Detailed requirements for each point)	National Education Association
Australia	Teacher's Code of	2014	All educators	Classification	Five principles	ACT Department of

4. Results

This review mainly finds the following differences:

4.1. Comparing Beginning Time of Establishing Teachers' Codes of Ethics

In China, teachers' code of ethics started late and was established for a short time. In 1984, the Ministry of Education and the National Education Union developed *the Requirements for Primary and Secondary School Teachers' Occupational Moral Code (Trial)*, marking the beginning of the development of teachers' ethics in China (Pi, 2021). Based on the revision in 1991, it was renamed "*Occupational Moral Code for Primary and Secondary School Teachers*." After the revision in 2008, it is the latest and final version. After that, the occupational moral code of university lecturers was developed in 2011. Other countries or regions started to develop teachers' codes of ethics earlier than China, e.g., the US. The Georgia Teachers Association of the US promulgated a code of ethics for educators in 1896 (Feng, 2019). Then, based on 3145 questionnaires, NEA developed and promulgated the code in 1929. After that, it was improved and revised, and the final code of ethics for educators was formed in 1975 (Dang, 2016). Since then, many states have developed a code of ethics. A code of ethics was found in 23 of the 50 states, which translated to 46 percent of the US having ethical codes for their educators (Banter, 2003).

4.2. Comparing Scope of Application of Teachers' Codes of Ethics

The scope of application here refers to the applicable population and location. The code of ethics in western countries has a wide coverage. It applies to all educators at all levels (Chen, 2019) because ethical issues and related behaviors include activities of teachers, research staff, technical and administrative staff, and students (Mion & Bonfanti, 2019). Connecticut in the US has a unique code for teachers and a separate code for administrators (Banter, 2003). China's current teachers' code of ethics applies only to teachers; it does not mention other people working in education, e.g., non-staff teachers, educational administrators, and other school staff. There is no separate ethical code for administrators. Hence, it is difficult for them to find their own ethical ideas and codes of conduct in their work (Liu, 2016).

Moreover, there is a basic core value or national code abroad. The other states and regions develop corresponding codes according to local characteristics. For example, Australia mainly takes the national code of ethics for teachers as the core value of teachers. On this basis, each state develops its own rules of conduct for teachers. Schools in various states also develop the norms that their teachers must abide by (Zhang, 2020). As China has several regions, divided into the East,

Central, and Western regions, there are great differences in education. However, all the teachers will follow the unified national professional ethics, which do not have local differences.

4.3. Comparing Contents of Teachers' Codes of Ethics

In Chinese documents, teachers must have general occupational ethics, which is abstract and lacks professionalism. The code includes private and public ethics and pays attention to teachers' responsibility to the state and society. It mainly regulates the relationship between teachers and country (Principle 1), teachers and students (Principle 3). In the US and Australia, teachers' codes of ethics mainly regulate the relationships between teachers and students, teachers and parents, teachers and colleagues, teachers' attitude towards the profession, for instance, in the US: *Commitment to the Students* (Principle I), *Commitment to the Profession* (Principle II). Teachers must be responsible for the profession, professional competence, students, school community, and use of technology, fully considering the professional characteristics of teachers (Niu & Bian, 2020).

In China, teachers' code of ethics is more inclined to virtue ethics. The orientation of teachers is supreme, which requires teachers to pay attention to the cultivation of their own personality: have a noble sentiment, know honor and shame, be strict with themselves, set an example, dress appropriately, use a standard language, behave in a civilized manner (Principle 5). Teachers are moral and social models, which exerts great pressure on them. Simultaneously, some vague and subjective adjectives and adverbs are often used in their content expression, such as "reasonable" and "appropriate," difficult to grasp. The professional ethics of foreign teachers is normative ethics, which is the code of conduct (Feng, 2019). The content does not pay much attention to teachers' personal ethics, such as dedication and patriotism, but emphasizes teachers' profession and responsibility for serving students (Han & Tian, 2020). It focuses on the tasks and problems in students' learning and teachers' work and has obvious features of dynamic, expressive, consequential, and evaluative language (Wu, 2018). For example, according to Principle 1 "Responsibility to Students," educators:

"1. Shall not unreasonably restrain the student from independent actions in the pursuit of learning.

2. Shall not unreasonably deny the student's access to varying points of view" (National Education Association, 2020).

4.4. Comparing Establishing Institutions and Processes of Teachers' Codes of Ethics

4.4.1. Establishing Institutions

Different countries have different national conditions, so the compilation and revision of teachers' ethics standard documents are also different (Pi, 2021). In China, teachers' code of ethics is developed by the central administrative department of education: MEPRC and National Committee of China Education, Science, Culture, Health and Sports Union (NCCESCHSU). Although there are some changes in establishing the institution of teachers' ethical codes in China from 1984 to 2011, the national education administrative department is always in a leading position. At the same time, China does not invite professional teacher organizations and teacher associations to participate together. Different established institutions will favor the interests of different groups in developing teachers' codes of ethics (Chen, 2020).

Foreign countries' codes emanate from different kinds of trustee institutions, for instance, in Maxwell and Schwimmer's (2016) study about the Canadian code of ethics: "The most common ones are the provincial or

territorial teachers' associations (6/13 or 46%) and teachers' federations or societies (4/13 or 31%). The remaining codes of ethics are overseen by the teacher's union, the professional order of teachers, and the Ministry of Education". The US and Australia are almost alike; the educational system is decentralized and run by state or province. Every state has professional educational organizations or teacher associations, such as in the US - the Professional Teaching Practices Commission in Alaska; in Australia - ACT Department of Education and Training.

4.4.2. Establishing Processes

Establishing teachers' ethical norms in China is top-down (Wang, 2019). Taking developing university teachers' code as an example, in October 2011, MEPRC and NCCESCHSU developed *A Draft for Comments* on developing teachers' codes of ethics in universities. The draft was published in *China Education Daily* on October 13, 2011. Although the draft was solicited nationwide, it ended on October 30; this process did not make sense to ask for advice. The draft is only for understanding the attitude toward the six listed principles (Table 5).

Table 5. A draft for comments

Overall evaluation	Very reasonable	Reasonable	Basically reasonable	Unreasonable	Very unreasonable
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principle 1	Very reasonable	Reasonable	Basically reasonable	Unreasonable	Very unreasonable
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principle 2	Very reasonable	Reasonable	Basically reasonable	Unreasonable	Very unreasonable
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principle 3	Very reasonable	Reasonable	Basically reasonable	Unreasonable	Very unreasonable
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principle 4	Very reasonable	Reasonable	Basically reasonable	Unreasonable	Very unreasonable
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principle 5	Very reasonable	Reasonable	Basically reasonable	Unreasonable	Very unreasonable
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principle 6	Very reasonable	Reasonable	Basically reasonable	Unreasonable	Very unreasonable
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Two months later, MEPRC issued a notice on printing and distributing the University Teachers' Code of Ethics. It only took about 100 days from the solicitation of comments to the final release of the code (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2011). From the perspective of developing procedure, the code lacks a scientific investigation on teachers' ethics in universities and does not conduct a nationwide survey on educators like NEA. Therefore, the code lacks an objective understanding of teachers' ethics, which further leads to the lack of practical basis for the content of the code.

Compared with foreign countries, teachers' code of ethics is developed by the educators working in the first line, based on sufficient empirical research, listening to professional opinions, such as local directors, principals, teachers, and university personnel (Niu & Bian, 2020).

For example, developing the *Code of Ethics for Teachers* by the American educational organization in 1929 took four years from the initial issue to its final formal adoption. Firstly, the teachers' organization appoints a committee on ethics of the profession to develop teachers' ethical code, and the committee members are carefully selected. The main members are principals, teachers, professors, and educational supervisors of schools at all levels to ensure professionalism. After that, a full investigation (survey, interview) is conducted. Its content is the unethical behavior of personnel in the educational sector, developing ethical standards purposefully (Wang, 2020). So, it is a bottom-up developing and implementing process that makes the content of the code match the requirements of teachers, more practical.

4.5. Comparing Effectiveness and Operability of Teachers' Codes of Ethics

Teachers in compared countries can follow a code because it has detailed requirements and code of conduct, such as the *Teachers' Code of Professional Practice* in ACT, with detailed and sufficient *explanatory guidelines*. They aid teachers and principals in performing their professional duties following ethical principles and obligations. Moreover, there are explanations and examples; teachers know what actions mean, for instance, what does *conflict of interest* mean? Or *assault*? How to deal with them? Because the examples provide appropriate and inappropriate responses, they make the guiding role stronger and prevent teachers' inadequate understanding (ACT Department of Education and Training) (Australian Capital Territory, 2014). It is consistent with Mohammed's (2020) study "Establishing certain standards, strategies, and principles in ethics education may benefit all ethics programs". So, the code has practical effectiveness.

The code of ethics in China stays on the web page, not as formal as abroad, and does not enter teachers' hearts. At present, teachers' code of ethics in China has been criticized by scholars: the code only provides an ideal behavior mode of teachers' ethics; the real educational situation is the field of ethical practice full of conflicts, lacks the response to the practical ethical problems and conflicts (Zhou, 2016); the code only stipulates the standard and direction, which is too general and abstract, it is difficult to make a reasonable judgment on the professional practice of teachers (Yin, 2017); The code tends to be emotional, that is, pays more attention to the generation of teacher's ethics emotion. The specific standards are mostly emotional attributes, not directly transformed into specific and practical moral action criteria (Cheng & Liu, 2017). Therefore, the code cannot play a normative role. Teachers' unethical behaviors exist and are exposed.

The main concepts of the code abroad can be understood from the words "professional ability and integrity," "evidence and professional knowledge," "appeal and improvement," "active participation"; emotional expression is hidden. It emphasizes that teachers should not only use emotions to maintain moral standards but urge teachers to transform educational emotions into professional rationality and activity, to realize the infiltration of emotions into practice (Cheng & Liu, 2017). For example, two of the requirements of the code in the US are extracted here: "Shall not knowingly make a false statement concerning the qualifications of a candidate for a professional position; Shall not knowingly make false or malicious statements about a colleague" (National Education Association, 2020), this is different from the code in China, such as the fourth requirement of university lecturers' ethical code: Be meticulous with knowledge, teaching, study (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2011), after the main four words principle, only a general explanation is

given, not has a clear behavior requirement. Unlike the latter, the former has obvious supervision and effectiveness (Wang, 2020).

5. Discussion

Due to the differences in China, the US, and Australia's national, cultural, and educational backgrounds, we cannot completely copy their teachers' codes of ethics. However, we can reasonably apply their experience in developing teachers' ethics to formulate teachers' ethics documents in the future.

5.1. Improving the Contents of Teachers' Codes of Ethics

A complete code can develop like ACT (*Teachers' Code of Professional Practice*), including an introduction, definition of key terms, principles, guideline explanation, and treatment of unethical behavior (Australian Capital Territory, 2014). Firstly, it is necessary to identify the core values, such as care, integrity, and responsibility, to add responsibility to the profession, formulated like the following: "Unqualified personnel and non-educators should not be helped to be teachers or engage in educational activities" (National Education Association, 2020). Because teachers' perception is important for the profession (Zhang, 2020), scholars argue if *teaching is a profession*. Third, responsibility to students needs enhancement, formulated like the following: "Deliberately suppressing or distorting the facts reflecting students' progress are not allowed" (National Education Association, 2020). Chambers (1922) believed that the highest obligation of every member of the profession is to those being taught; it is the fundamental ethical principle of the profession. Among the exposed unethical behaviors, harming students' interests accounts for the majority. Students' interests should be considered in teachers' code of ethics in China. The code needs reflection on teachers' ethical ideals, principles, and rules. Teachers' ethical ideal is the direction of teachers' efforts. Teachers' ethical principles are the requirements of teachers' code of conduct and the intermediate requirements to teachers. Teachers' ethical rules are the basic requirements that teachers must meet; they are the core content of teachers' ethical code (Liu, 2016). China mainly stays at the teachers' ethical ideal; this is neither realistic nor easy to implement.

5.2. Localization and Concretization of the National Standards of Teachers' Codes of Ethics

China developed different teachers' codes of ethics for all stages of education: preschool, primary and middle school, university. At one level, one standard applies to all teachers. However, China comprises a vast territory. Different geographical environments form the characteristics and needs of education in different regions (Pi, 2021). Educational resources, teaching staff, teaching conditions, and students' characteristics in the

East, the Middle, and the West are significantly different (Guo, 2019). Suppose one same set of professional ethics standards for teachers is implemented. In that case, it will not only not conform to the reality of different regions but also make education management unreasonable and inhumane (Ding, 2020). Therefore, the basic teachers' code of ethics can be developed uniformly by MEPRC. However, all education authorities at all levels should localize teachers' ethics according to the actual situation and development needs, and schools at all levels should fully consider the opinions of front-line educators. For instance, in the US, teachers' associations have chosen to develop ethical rules for educators that work throughout the US. With the aid of their education departments, different states have chosen to develop their own codes for their educators (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2018).

5.3. Distinguishing Teachers' Personal Morality and Their Professional Ethics

Teachers' personal morality is the moral responsibility and obligation of the individual to the profession and society that they are engaged in; it focuses on the individual behavior and requires strong self-discipline. Teachers' professional ethics refers to professional standards, which professional groups develop according to their professional characteristics. It focuses on the standardization and restriction of the industry and has strong heteronomy (Han & Tian, 2020). In China, teachers' professional ethics is equal to teachers' personal morality; teachers are often endowed with a lofty social image and a strong sense of social responsibility (Niu & Bian, 2020). Chinese teachers' code of ethics should be based on the specific characteristics and reality of teachers' profession, not just on the lofty nature of teachers' profession. Excessive pursuit of idealized teachers' high standards, lack of social basis of real life, weak binding force, lack of effective normative measures to constraint those breaking the code lead to the overhead of teachers' code of ethics.

5.4. Enhancing the Operability of Teachers' Codes of Ethics

5.4.1. Language Concretization

For implementing and measuring the action, the criteria of abstract emotional attributes ought to be transformed into concrete action criteria as far as possible (Qian, 2016). The code of action needs to fully reflect the hierarchy of ethical standards, adhere to the unity of lofty and bottom-line ethics, and provide a practical basis for teachers to choose and practice their own moral zone of recent development to avoid being unreachable. For example, comparing the Chinese and American expressions "treat students equally and fairly"

(Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2008), "shall not exclude any student from participation in any program, shall not use professional relationships with students for private advantage" (National Education Association, 2020), the latter description is much more specific, as Ladd (1998) contended that one of the pitfalls of writing a code of professional ethics is using bombastic phrases and overblown statements painting an idealized (and hence unrealistic) professional portrait.

5.4.2. Listening to Educators' Voices

Better inductive development of a code of ethics is based on facts and empirical evidence. The empirical research of professional ethics is strengthened through interviews and other research methods. The respondents should comprise three groups: educators (education professionals, teachers, and education system managers), students, and parents. Education professionals are the direct executors of teachers' ethics. Students are the direct beneficiaries of teachers' ethics code development. Students, parents, and teachers jointly supervise its implementation (Chen, 2020) to make a comparative analysis of teachers' personalities and formulate a feasible ethical code of conduct for teachers, to put forward detailed requirements and guidance for teachers' professional ethics (Yuan & Sun, 2020).

5.4.3. Detailed Requirements

Durkheim (2014) stated that the code must inform every worker of their rights and obligations; be meticulous and comprehensive, not general; consider the most common phenomena, so the ethical requirements for teachers are detailed. Teachers' ethical codes should consider teachers' practical educational situations and put forward specific behavior requirements, such as remembering students' names, not using threatening language, not getting angry in public.

5.5. Making the Best Use of the Role of Educational Organizations or Teacher Professional Groups

Teacher groups play an important role in safeguarding teachers' legitimate rights and interests and promoting their professional development (Xu, 2012). The standard of teachers' professional ethics must reflect the will of teachers. Teachers' professional organizations are the main body to develop teachers' codes, which has become a trend. Educational associations play an important part, "we have organizations by states, by counties and by local districts; we have organizations based on the subjects taught; we have organizations based on the kind of school or college in which the members teach" (Chambers, 1922). In China, teachers' professional organizations have limited power to participate and make decisions (Fan, 2016). The education authorities

should decentralize the power, promote the construction of teachers' professional organizations, make them actively participate in educational decisions, listen to their voices in developing the code, and provide valuable opinions and suggestions for revising teachers' professional ethics. Through the development of teachers' professional organizations, the dominant position of teachers can be better ensured (Wang & Huan, 2018).

6. Conclusion

Through the comparison and qualitative content analysis of documents and Chinese and English literature on teachers' codes of ethics in China, the US, and Australia, the specific differences are mainly found in the following five aspects: beginning time, applicable population and location, content, establishing institution and process, effectiveness and operability. This study is different from previous ones. It makes a more detailed and specific comparison and expands its scope and content, e.g., establishing the process and application scope. Previous studies either compare document texts or summarize the current situation with studying teachers' code of ethics in China. There is no overall comparison of documents with literature, especially English works.

The discussion of this study provides five specific suggestions for improving teachers' code of ethics in China. With the improvement of the code, teachers will fully approve and actively practice it. The code can regulate teachers' unethical behavior, help them deal with ethical conflicts so that educational activity can realize the essence of moral practice.

Besides, the latest teachers' code of ethics in China was developed in 2011. It is time to update and improve it, and this article provides detailed measures and materials for its revision. It is also helpful for foreign teachers to understand the management and conduct codes of teachers in China, adapt to the Chinese teaching environment. Furthermore, future scholars can obtain the corresponding systematic research basis for further practical investigation in Australia and the US, in particular, to understand teachers' perception of ethical codes and the effectiveness of practice in their countries.

Due to the limitedness of professional ethics in the selected foreign countries, only two of them were chosen. The sample is small. The follow-up research can be further carried out to analyze teachers' code of ethics in more countries. The factors leading to the difference are not analyzed. There is no considering the factors of cultural background. Future research can choose teacher norms in Asian countries with closer cultural backgrounds for comparison.

Future studies might choose specific perspectives: policymakers involved in developing codes of ethics for teachers, ethical code supervisors, educational leaders, and teachers, to understand their opinions, to construct theory inductively based on facts and empirical

evidence. Future researchers might connect it more closely with teachers' teaching practice, realize a deep integration between ethical theory and teaching practice. Additionally, revising the code of ethics and developing programs ought to focus on the recommendations explored in this study.

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