

The Teaching of the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educator Preparation Programs

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.



Marvin Davenport

J. Ray Thompson

Nathan R. Templeton

Texas A&M University-Commerce

The purpose of this descriptive quantitative research study was to answer three basic informational questions: (1) To what extent ethics training, as stipulated in Texas Administrative Code Chapter 247, was included in the EPP curriculum; (2) To what extent Texas public universities with approved EPP programs provided faculty opportunities for and/or required faculty to obtain ethics training; and (3) To what extent EPP professors included information regarding the consequences of unethical behavior and information on professional and ethical decision making. A short, concise electronically delivered survey provided the necessary data to answer the informational questions regarding the training received and the delivery of Texas Administrator Code Chapter 247, Educators' Code of Ethics. As such, this descriptive quantitative research study investigated the extent Texas Education Agency (TEA) approved state universities addressed these criteria of teaching the code of ethics in their EPP curricula. The study found that the overall picture shows a majority of the TEA approved EPP professors included this criterion in their curriculum. The study also found that specific training opportunities were minimal, although there was considerable interest in training opportunities from the participants. The study showed a consensus among the participants regarding the inclusion of specific information about consequences for unethical behavior and information regarding professional and ethical decision-making.

Introduction

The concept of ethics training in education has traditionally evolved slowly. Intrinsically, ethical behavior by educators is considered an axiom of the position. However, as current research reveals, the effort to improve ethical behavior through normative training has developed at a rapid pace (Rowland, 2009; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). According to Rowland (2009), this trend has been fueled by findings that revealed “incidents of cheating, corruption, dishonesty, fraud, and ethical violations both in the workplace and in higher and professional education were pervasive and being increasingly reported in the mainstream media and via the Internet” (p.324). Unlike other professions (e.g., lawyers, doctors, dentists, and businesses) that require students to complete at least one course in ethics prior to graduation, collectively teachers lack a rationally and empirically based ethics education with the focus of improving ethical behavior (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011).

Although codes of ethics have not played a significant role in teacher preparation programs in the past, as Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) noted, “the world had become more unstable due to terrorism, wars, and financial uncertainty” (p. xi). Furthermore, as America’s public schools have become more culturally diverse, school administrators and classroom teachers must now confront societal changes impacted by the increasing use of social media and advancements in technology, escalating violence and sexual promiscuity among youth, and the impact of different cultures and religions on ideology (Benninga, 2003; Voltz, Sims, & Nelson, 2010; Karp 2013/14; Lazarin, 2014; Blad, 2015). Amidst these changes, the idea that leaders of educational institutions should be ethical is not new.

Historically, it was assumed that leaders of educational institutions represented the highest moral standards of society (Beck, Murphy & Associates, 1997). “However, recent scandals occurring in some of society’s leading institutions [have] raised awareness for the importance of professional ethics; and increasingly graduate education programs worldwide are responding with more explicit instruction in ethical decision-making” (Walker & Green, 2006, n.p.). Conversely, Levine (2006) explained that many stakeholder groups, including school districts, universities, colleges, private companies, education service centers, and nonprofit organizations could be approved to train prospective educators in ethical behaviors. Nonetheless, the National Council on Teacher Quality (2010) reported that critical attention was needed to develop a system of accountability for educator preparation programs (EPPs). Ensuring programs meet minimum standards and adhere to research-based best practices is a crucial element in the comprehensive approach to improved educational quality (Steiner and Rozen, 2004).

In Texas, the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) requires EPPs to include in their curricula the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators (19 TAC §228.30 [1999]). This code addresses educators’ “professional ethical conduct, practices, and performance; ethical conduct toward professional colleagues; and ethical conduct toward students” (19 TAC §247.2 [1998]). The importance of including training in personal ethics goes beyond just the educators’ interactions with students, it also includes their interactions with professional colleagues and professional conduct outside the classroom. Consequently, it has become imperative that experiences be incorporated into current EPP curricula that shape not only school administrators’ and classroom teachers’ thoughts, but also their perceptions, beliefs, assumptions and commitments.

Furthermore, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2008) identified ethics as one of the competencies necessary for school administrators and classroom teachers;

however, research findings have indicated a gap between what was proposed and what is currently practiced (Shapiro & Stefkovich 2011). Even though the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) requires the inclusion of the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices in the curriculum, there are no specific guidelines as to how it should be taught or assessed (M. A. Davenport, personal communication, February 25, 2014). Rather, the Texas Administrative Code states, “the curriculum for each educator preparation program be based on scientifically-based research to ensure teacher effectiveness and that it be aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)” (19 TAC §228.30 [1999]). This descriptive quantitative research study was designed to answer informational questions regarding gaps between what was proposed by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) and what is in practice by Texas Education Agency (TEA) approved state university Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs).

Statement of the Problem

Educators lack a national standard that governs their behaviors. Further compounding the issues of a corporate understanding of ethics and personal responsibility is the lack of cultural mores or understandings that are widely accepted and practiced within communities. While the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC), pursuant to Chapter 247 of the Texas Administrative Code, requires each Educator Preparation Program (EPP) to include in its curricula the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators, the vagueness regarding the implementation and assessment of ethics training is as ambivalent as the collective moral compasses of the society charged with interpreting meanings and actions that define a singular understanding of culture. Texas Administrative Code Rule 228.50 states: “during the period of preparation, the educator preparation entity shall ensure that the individuals preparing candidates and the candidates themselves demonstrate adherence to Chapter 247 of this title (relating to Educators’ Code of Ethics)” (19 TAC §228.50 [1999]). Adherence to this code includes the teachers’ “professional ethical conduct, practices and performance; ethical conduct toward professional colleagues; and ethical conduct toward students” (19 TAC §247.2 [1998]), and the same applies for the individuals preparing the candidates. This requires both EPP professors and educator certification candidates to understand the importance of the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive quantitative research study was to answer three basic informational questions: (1) To what extent ethics training, as stipulated in Texas Administrative Code Chapter 247, was included in the EPP curriculum; (2) To what extent Texas public universities with approved EPP programs provided their faculty opportunities for and/or required them to obtain ethics training; and (3) To what extent the EPP professions included information regarding the consequences of unethical behavior and information on professional and ethical decision-making. This study was in concert with Texas SBEC Chapter 228: Requirement for Educator Preparation Program, Rule 228.40: Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement, Section C, which states: “For the purposes of educator preparation program improvement, an entity shall continuously evaluate the design and delivery of the educator preparation curriculum based on performance data, scientifically-based research practices, and the results of internal and external assessments” (19 TAC §228.40 [1999]).

Research Questions

The informational questions guiding this descriptive quantitative research study were the following:

1. To what extent do TEA approved state university EPP professors include instruction on Texas Administrative Code Chapter 247 Rule 247.2: Code of Ethics and Standard Practices to certification candidates in the curricula?
2. How do TEA approved state university EPP professors include instruction on the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices to certification candidates in their EPP curriculum?
3. To what extent are TEA approved state university EPP professors provided opportunities for training on Texas Administrative Code Chapter 247 Rule 247.2?

These research questions provided information about how EPP professors shared instruction over the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices in their courses. The research questions also investigated the training opportunities provided to EPP professors. The final questions provided information about the extent EPP professors provided information about the consequences of unethical behavior and professional and ethical decision-making in their curriculum because the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices were enforceable standards for certified educators in Texas.

Significance of the Study

Ethics training is an important part of the process of educating administrators and teachers to ensure they are adequately prepared to make professional decisions (Beck & Murphy, 1994b; Hutchings, 2009). Educators should be trained to give conscious consideration to their personal biases and how they apply ethical principles in the decision-making processes (Winston, 2007). EPPs should also teach practical application and knowledge about ethics so that classroom teachers can make ethical and wise choices in their classroom practices. According to Leonard (2007), the position of schoolteacher has become more complex and challenging due to social changes, the increase in accountability by federal and state agencies, and many new expectations such as addressing the needs of multicultural students, economically disadvantaged students, and special needs students. Knight, Shapiro, and Stefkovich (2001) noted that educators (i.e., administrators and teachers) relied too much on their emotions when they were required to make professional decisions. Educators must not render professional decisions based on their emotions or personal biases. For example, Soskolne (1985) stated that “codes could provide a practical guide to members of the profession who might be experiencing a moral or ethical dilemma concerning their professional conduct in a particular circumstance” (p. 173).

The existence of a code provides the basis of a profession’s ethics program of activity, and is designed to instill ethical standards among its membership (Gellermann, Frankel, & Ladenson 1990; Hall 1993). Educational training should include specific instruction in the practice of making ethical decisions based on the educators’ code of ethics. Regardless, codes provide no substitute for legal liability dimensions of conduct, for which the government has enacted laws to protect public interest (Cohen, 1982). At any rate, teaching the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices in EPPs must prepare educators to be ethically, morally, and legally responsible (Hutchings, 2009). Hutchings continued, “the implementation of a required course at

the foundational level that included specific learning objectives in ethics, professional conduct and teacher law [is] recommended and especially helpful to those encountering the challenges found [in schools]" (p. 154). Three components in ethics training have been identified as necessary:

1. internship experiences under seasoned mentors that modeled the best practices needed for the position,
2. ongoing professional development with specific training within the context of all other human activities and human responsibilities, and
3. the development of a literature base that supported knowledge of ethical leadership challenges, developments, and best practices. (Rebore, 2001, p. 23)

This descriptive quantitative research seeks to add to the body of emergent literature regarding the disconnect between theory and practice regarding the delivery of instruction in TEA approved EPPs. The results of this study could potentially provide a framework for teaching ethics to educators in Texas, and on the national stage, establishing a national standard for educator conduct.

Theoretical Framework

Ethical Leadership Theory

Because ethics training is an important part of the process of educating administrators and teachers, an understanding of how ethical leadership theory influences leadership behavior and outcomes of organizations provides the foundation for this study. Northouse (2013), who traces ethics back to Plato and Aristotle, defines ethics as the moral compass that frames character or conduct based on morals, the behavior of a person; or virtues, the quality of a person. Likewise, Chitpin and Evers (2014), posit how ethical values and morals guide actions or conduct based on coherent, generally accepted principles that define right from wrong. Resultantly, ethical leadership is leadership that is grounded in ethical beliefs and values and for the dignity and rights of others (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison (2005).

Furthermore, Monahan (2012) suggests that ethical leadership is one's influence upon others to do the right thing. Darcy (2010) notes that ethical leadership is a way of being in order to make the right choice. Conversely, Yukl (2012) contends that the ethics of the leader shapes the behavior of the followers either positively or negatively. Therefore, ethical leadership ultimately determines the ethical climate that will be developed in an organization.

Understanding that different cultures and traditions may define doing what is right in different ways, ethical leadership for professional educators is mandated by a specific code of ethics, which all teachers and administrators are expected to follow. In the State of Texas, ethical leadership is grounded in the Texas Code of Ethics and Standard Practices, a set of enforceable standards mandated by Texas Education Code to be taught in every Educator Preparation Program. As ethical leadership is considered the theoretical framework, it results in the preparation of educational leaders to be ethically, morally, and legally responsible. Therefore, ethical leadership serves as the overarching theory for this study.

Method

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) stated, “Descriptive [quantitative] research is one of the most basic forms of research. This type of research includes the description of phenomena in our world. Descriptive [quantitative] research tends to answer informational questions” (pp. 30-31). Descriptive quantitative research looks at phenomena as basic information from the perspective of the researcher, rather than examining how phenomena functions (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). In this study, using Likert-type items provided informational data on the extent the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices, consequences for unethical behavior, and professional and ethical decision-making were included in EPP curriculum. This allowed for analysis to answer informational questions from descriptive quantitative research. “The traditional way to report on a Likert scale is to sum the values of each selected option and create a score for each respondent. This score is then used to represent a particular trait” (Vanek, 2012). For this reason, Likert-type items were utilized because there was no value in creating a score for each respondent. Multiple choice/answer questions offered participants an opportunity to expound on the practices that they utilized in delivering the curriculum and their opportunities for training in the subject of ethics.

According to Sue and Ritter (2007), because of the schedules of TEA approved state university EPP professors, a short, concise, electronically-delivered survey (12 questions) was utilized to gather the data necessary to describe activity occurring in TEA approved EPP programs sponsored by Texas state universities. The survey instrument utilized for this study was a custom-designed set of questions that collected information about the EPP curricula and staff training. The survey was an online, self-administered questionnaire delivered using SurveyMonkey Inc., a web-based system. This study required collecting data from TEA approved state EPP professors utilizing a survey instrument with Likert type items and multiple choice/answer survey questions. The choice of a descriptive quantitative research study provided the best method for answering the informational research questions.

Selection of Sample

Each of the 36 Texas universities’ websites was accessed for a listing of their faculty and their email contact information. Isolating the faculty contact information for the college of education, a list was created of potential participants. The initial sample size included 1013 selected professors listed as working in the education department. Utilizing SurveyMonkey, Inc., a Participant Cover Letter and Consent Agreement for the online survey was delivered to each potential participant. Participants were invited from all 36 Texas state universities with a TEA approved EPP. If professors chose to respond, they volunteered to participate in the study and, by accessing the provided link, received access to an electronic copy of the survey questionnaire on the SurveyMonkey, Inc. website. Participants had the option to be removed from the study as well. The demographics of this sample were not a required collection item, and professors voluntarily responded to the survey demographics portion. The invitation to participate was emailed five more times over the next eight weeks before it was closed.

Collection of Data

The survey instrument utilized for this study reflected a custom-designed set of questions that addressed the curriculum utilized and training opportunities for professors in Texas EPPs. A pilot

study was conducted to establish the reliability of the survey instrument prior to the beginning of the study. As Lund and Lund (2012) stated in their SPSS software tutorial:

To insure that the specific research questions lead to a clear definition of study aim and objectives that set out the construct and how it will be measured, the pilot utilizes [professors from private universities rather than state universities] to provide content validity. (p. 1)

Lund and Lund (2012) further stated that Cronbach's alpha was the common measure of internal consistency (reliability). "It is commonly used when the researcher has multiple Likert-type items in a survey/questionnaire that form an interval, and he/she wishes to determine if the interval is reliable" (Lund & Lund, 2012, p. 1). Researchers Lund and Lund (2012) noted that Cronbach's alpha was used to establish reliability among the eight Likert-type items by showing what effect removing each question has on the end result. Cronbach's alpha simply provided an overall reliability coefficient for a set of variables. For this study, a panel of four experts that included current and retired professors from TEA approved EPP private universities was utilized to establish the content validity of the survey questions by ensuring the purpose was measured properly. After establishing the survey instrument's reliability and validity, the study began.

The survey results reflected a total of 213 completed surveys, one incomplete survey, 18 bounced emails, 52 opted-out, and 510 did not respond at all. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were maintained at all times. The researchers did not know participants' Internet Protocol (IP) or computers' addresses when they responded to this Internet survey. Furthermore, the researchers did not share with anyone other than the advisory committee that participants were in this study, or what information was collected about participants in particular. Participants' responses were stored in a secure server monitored by SurveyMonkey Inc. These servers are protected by high-end firewall systems, and vulnerability scans are performed regularly. Complete penetration tests are performed yearly. All servers have quick failover points and redundant hardware, and complete backups are performed nightly. SurveyMonkey Inc. uses Transport Layer Security encryption (also known as HTTPS) for all transmitted data. Surveys were also protected with passwords and HTTP referrer checking. The data was hosted by third party data centers that are SSAE-16 SOC II-certified. All data at rest are encrypted, and data on deprecated hard drives are destroyed by U.S. Department of Defense methods and delivered to a third-party data destruction service. The researchers were the only persons authorized to view and access the survey data. All data will be destroyed after three years.

Treatment of the Data

This section includes a detailed discussion of the applied descriptive quantitative research methodology utilized in this study. Exporting to IBM SPSS 22.0 from SurveyMonkey Inc. and utilizing the analysis programs within SurveyMonkey, Inc. were the best options because this could easily be read in IBM SPSS, Microsoft Excel, and many other software packages. The raw data received from the electronic survey providers was analyzed and exported into IBM SPSS for statistical analysis. The record of the number of members of the sample who did and did not return the survey was reported in a response summary so a percent for participation could be determined. Non-respondents received electronic reminders with additional time provided to allow them to respond to the survey. This occurred five times from August 27, 2014 to October 12, 2014. The results of the survey data were grouped to discuss the informational question

results, showing: (a) the extent the Code of Ethics was taught in the curriculum, (b) how instruction on the Code of Ethics was being provided, (c) the training of EPP professors on the Code of Ethics, (d) the extent to which EPP professors provided instruction over the consequences of misconduct, and (e) the extent to which EPP professors provided instruction over professional and ethical decision-making in their curriculum.

Summary of the Study

Discussion of the Findings

The data showed that the Code of Ethics was taught in the curriculum by a majority (94.37%) of EPP respondents. Of these EPP respondents, 82.1% were never provided or occasionally provided opportunities for training covering the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices. While many EPP respondents showed an interest in training opportunities, nearly 50% are responsible for their own training. Consequences for unethical behavior was reviewed by 75.6% of EPP respondents either Occasionally or Frequently in the curriculum. Every EPP professor responded that information should be delivered to education candidates over the consequences for unethical behavior. The majority of the respondents (97.7%) included specific information regarding professional and ethical decision-making in their EPP curriculum. Likewise, the majority of EPP professors (99.5%) responded that specific information regarding professional and ethical decision-making should be included in the EPP curriculum. These findings provided valuable information regarding the current state of TEA approved EPP providers in Texas state universities, and the areas that garner concern that affect the future of certification candidates.

Research Question 1

To what extent do TEA approved state university EPP professors include instruction over the Texas Administrative Code Chapter 247, Rule 247.2: Code of Ethics and Standard Practices to certification candidates in the curriculum? The findings of Research Question 1 revealed the extent TEA approved state university EPP professors included instruction over the Texas Administrative Code. The data from this study showed that nearly 75% of the participants delivered instruction over the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices, either frequently or continuously. A majority (94.73%) of EPP professors stated that they were including instruction in their teacher certification curriculum, as required by TEA to maintain an approved status as an EPP provider.

Research Question 2

How do TEA approved state university EPP professors include instruction over the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices to certification candidates in their EPP curriculum? A majority of the respondents (80.75%) integrated the content into other certification courses. Some respondents (5.16%) offered instruction as a standalone course, 7.51% offered instruction as a standalone integrated into other certification courses, and 14.08% provided additional comments on how they were complying with the SBEC requirement. Some of EPP professors' additional comments stated that the instruction over the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices was included in student orientations, seminars, workshops, and student handbooks, as well as a variety of other responses including that some professors did not provide any instruction on the topic.

Research Question 3

To what extent are TEA approved state university EPP professors provided opportunities for training on Texas Administrative Code Chapter 247, Rule 247.2 by their university? Expectations for professors participating in TEA approved EPP programs necessitate specialized training over the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices. The fact that educators hold positions of responsibility to the community demonstrates the importance of having adequate training available (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Prior to 2002, teacher training programs did not have to address the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices specifically to meet accreditation standards by NCATE. As Zions et al. (2006) stated, “According to NCATE, a key to increasing teacher quality ha[s] been alignment of accreditation standards, licensing standards, and advanced certification standards to create a coherent system of teacher preparation and development” (p. 6). Even though some professional organizations and institutions have begun to focus on the inclusion of ethics training, evidence showed that the perception of the importance of ethical behavior differs from its application.

The data showed that EPP respondents (82.1%) were never provided or only occasionally provided such opportunities. This provides evidence that there is a greater need for TEA approved EPP universities to offer more training opportunities for EPP professors regarding the Texas Administrative Code. This data should also reinforce to TEA the need to offer more training modules specifically on the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices to all educators.

Implications for Practice

This study investigated the teaching of this topic as perceived by EPP professors. Data from this study showed that a majority of the professors agree that the subject was being delivered but also that few opportunities exist to receive specialized training over the Ethics Code and Standard Practices as prescribed by the Texas Administrative Code. One implication for practice of interest to policymakers is that the Texas Education Agency, through SBEC, should provide specific guidelines for the teaching and delivery of the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices as well as every other curricular requirement in the EPP. This requires developing specific curricular and delivery methodologies other than the current ones “based on scientifically-based research to ensure teacher effectiveness” and alignment with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS; 19 TAC §228.30 [1999]). SBEC should “spell out” exactly what scientifically-based research entails and provide blueprints for aligning the expected curriculum with TEKS. Providing specific guidelines alleviates the pressure on state universities to ensure the SBEC curriculum had been adequately covered in the EPP.

“Teacher education programs continue to face the challenge of meeting uniform and very specific national and state standards that [are] established by external accreditation bodies, not by teacher preparation programs themselves” (Sherman, 2006, p. 41). Specific guidelines are measurable and as such, state audits could easily ensure universities’ compliance with SBEC requirements.

A second implication for practice of interest to state universities and individual professors is that either TEA or SBEC should develop specific training modules, other than the four aforementioned TEA-provided training modules on YouTube. This is a rather limited source for training on the Educators’ Code of Ethics. Rather than focusing only on negative behaviors, SBEC could develop specific training modules that demonstrate positive ethical behaviors. “There [are] increasing expectations for teacher and leader education programs to cultivate and

document appropriate professional moral and ethical dispositions in teacher and leader candidates” (Leonard, 2007, p. 418). Winston’s (2007) research stated that limited training in ethics “highlight[s] the need for educational approaches that support conscious consideration of biases and application of ethical principles” (p. 245). The role of leadership and the decisions made by the leadership are both models for stakeholders. State universities could incorporate training modules in professional development sessions with required attendance. Smith and Piper (1990) reported education institutions need to refocus on evaluating ethical training programs so they can become more effective and proficient especially “with an increase in ethical misconduct” (p. 35). Data from this study showed that individual professors are unopposed to having required training modules made available.

A third implication for practice of interest to curriculum providers is that specific curriculum modules should be created and produced that cover the Ethics Code and Standard Practices for use as an integral part of EPP curriculum. These curriculum modules could provide strategies to help professors teach values, commitments, and professional behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities, to enhance a teacher’s ability to affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator’s own professional growth (NCATE, 2002, p. 53).

A fourth implication for practice would be of interest to school districts, school campuses, and their professional development planners. By providing systematic professional development for all faculty and staff over ethical and unethical behavior, the school district or school campus could provide for better safety and welfare of the students. This training allows educators to better understand their responsibility in reporting behaviors that do not conform to the expected guidelines taught in professional development sessions (Hutchings, 2009).

Recommendations for Further Research

This study sought to answer informational questions about current practices regarding the teaching of the Code of Ethics and Standard practices by TEA approved EPP professors in Texas state universities. The literature revealed that such teaching has been evolving (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). With the state performing audits of TEA approved EPP universities, a further study of how such teaching practices has evolved would be useful for universities to ensure compliance with the Texas Administrative Code. This type of study could provide a source for best practices and allow universities to improve their EPP programs. Zions et al. (2006) reported “little [is] known of what university faculties think about professional standards” (p. 6). No framework has been developed for educators that address moral and responsible practices. To remedy this issue requires the development of specific learning objectives that include ethics, school law, and professional conduct (Hutchings, 2009). Moreover, Leonard (2007) contends that “integrating values and ethics into teaching in higher education facilitates the process of making important connections between theory, research, and practice when engaging candidates in authentic learning experiences” (p. 426). As part of this moral endeavor, “professors of education also ha[ve] an important role in ensuring that the courses they develop and teach include standards-based goals that address not only candidate knowledge and skills, but candidate dispositions as well.” (p. 415)

This information gives cause for concern especially if such university faculties develop EPP curriculum. Where this study focused on professors’ perceptions, further studies could focus on students’ perceptions. It is the EPPs responsibility to do more than prepare their students to

pass the state certification assessment, although the state could include ethics and professional conduct on the Professional Pedagogy and Responsibilities (PPR) exam in addition to the traditional pedagogical items. Further qualitative research studies involving students who complete EPPs would add to the data about the effectiveness of the program. Hutchings' (2009) research study reported that numerous options could be produced through case studies.

Future research into the development of professional standards regarding this subject could be expanded beyond Texas universities to include other states or countries. Hutchings (2009) noted that conducting research that determines the most effective strategies being used by countries, states, organizations, universities, school districts, and school campuses to prepare teachers could impact the future of education.

Future studies investigating if and/or how school districts and schools provide any specific in-service training for employees on the Ethics Code and Standard Practices would be a valuable resource for other school districts. The study could investigate if these training sessions are part of a systematic plan developed by the district or school to guard against and/or prevent unethical behavior that might threaten student welfare and safety (Hutchings, 2009).

Conclusions

This descriptive quantitative research study provided additional information that expanded the work of other researchers concerning the teaching of the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices. The study revealed the current status of what was happening in Texas state universities with TEA approved EPP programs by answering informational questions.

The data showed that the Code of Ethics was taught in the curriculum by a majority of EPP professors (94.37%). Of these EPP professors, 82.1% were never provided or occasionally provided opportunities for training covering the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices. While many EPP professors showed an interest in training opportunities, nearly 50% are responsible for their own training. Consequences for unethical behavior were reviewed by 75.6% of EPP professors either Occasionally or Frequently in the curriculum. Every EPP professor responded that information should be delivered to education candidates on the consequences for unethical behavior. The majority of professors (97.7%) included specific information regarding professional and ethical decision-making in their EPP curriculum. Likewise, the majority of EPP professors (99.5%) responded that specific information regarding professional and ethical decision-making should be included in the EPP curriculum. These findings provided valuable information regarding the current state of TEA approved EPP providers in Texas state universities, and the areas that garner concern that affect the future of certification candidates.

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