The Ethical and Morally Competent Educator: A Quantitative Analysis of the Teaching of

Ethical Practices in Texas Educator Preparation Programs

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this descriptive quantitative research study was to answer two basic informational questions: (1) To what extent ethics training, as stipulated in Texas Administrative Code Chapter 247, was included in the Education Preparation Program (EPP) curriculum; and (2) To what extent the EPP professions 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 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

Ethics is the study of moral choices. Additionally, ethics is "…the reflective consideration of our moral beliefs and practices" (Hinman, 2013, p. 363). By contrast, morality is the belief and practice about good and evil and is the means by which we guide our behavior (Hinman, 2013). Morality then may be synonymous with behavior, while ethics refers to beliefs and assumptions of right and wrong. Morality gives rise to moral standards, responsibility, and identity. Therefore, the goal of teaching ethics is to establish a degree of commonality that promotes the greater good of humanity (Starrat, 2004; Rebore, 2014).

Often referred to as authentic humanity, the overarching goal of teaching the processes of navigating through ethical dilemmas is to equip educators to make decisions that promote the greater good of society (Sadeghi & Callahan, 2015). Intrinsically, school teachers and administrators face a number of challenges and pressures that require a resolution of moral conflict. These ethical issues pose serious implications for practice; yet few forums or methods currently address these issues. Thiel et al. (2012) suggested that educators must recognize ethical situations and subsequently apply a moral code grounded in abstract rules and obligations. Although ethical behavior by educators is considered an axiom of the position, persistent ethical misconduct in educational settings has stakeholders wondering whether the teaching of ethics should be of greater focus for school faculty and staff (Rowland, 2009).

According to Hinman (2013), morality provides both a motivation and a blueprint for peaceful coexistence, defining why we should act in a certain manner. On the other hand, that which is specific and reflects one's personal framework is moral voice. Scholarly evidence then posits that morality has the criteria of rightness and moral voice focuses on experiences of care

and justice (Zhu, He, Trevino, Chao, & Wang, 2015). The question becomes, how can morality

fit with moral voice? The result is a very different approach to morality which has a dynamic

impact on ethics. Herein lies the potential for struggle in ethical decision-making.

Theoretical Framework

Ethical Leadership Theory

Since 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 provide the foundation for this study. Northouse (2013), who traces

ethics back to Plato and Aristotle, defined ethics as the moral compass that frames character or

conduct based on morals, the behavior of a person; or virtues, and 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 posits leadership that is grounded in ethical beliefs and values for the dignity

and right of others (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison (2005).

Furthermore, Monahan (2012) suggested that ethical leadership is one's influence upon

other to do the right thing. Darcy (2010) noted that ethical leadership is a way of being in order

to make the right choice. Conversely, Yukl (2012) contended 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 what is right in different

ways, ethical leadership for professional educators is mandated by a specific code of ethics,

which all teacher 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.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive quantitative research study was to answer two basic

informational questions: (1) to what extent ethics training, as stipulated in Texas Administrative

Code Chapter 247, was included in the EPP curriculum; and (2) 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 curriculum?

2. To what extent do TEA-approved state university EPP professors include in the training

curriculum information on the consequences of unethical behavior as described in Texas
Administrative Code Chapter 247 Rule 247.2?

3. To what extent do TEA-approved state university EPP professors include in the curriculum
any specific information regarding professional and ethical decision-making?

These research questions provided information about how EPP professors shared
instruction over the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices in their courses. Additionally, answers
to these 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 their ethical principles in their decision-making
processes (Winston, 2007). EPP should 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. 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). 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. Teaching the Code of Ethics and Standard

Practices in EPP has helped prepare teachers 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 was recommended" (2009, p. 154). This would be especially helpful for new

teachers prior to entering the school environment and encountering the challenges found there.

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)

All educators should be adept at applying appropriate ethical theories to a variety of situations,

whether they are initiated from in-school or out-of-school situations.

Method of Procedure

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 curriculum 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 to each potential participant. Participants were invited from all 36 Texas state universities with 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. 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 EPP. 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 were deleted non-response. The major content areas for

this study included the following items:

1. TEA-approved state university education professors received by electronic mail the

Participant Cover Letter and Consent Agreement for the online survey.

2. Education professors of TEA-approved state universities read the Participant Cover

Letter and Consent Agreement for the online survey before they participated in the study.

3. If education professors chose to participate, this constituted giving their consent. The

participants received information concerning the criteria for the data collection process,

including the approximate length of time required to respond to the electronic survey. If they

chose to participate, they opened a secure link to the software company website and received an

electronic copy of the survey to complete.

4. Participants' privacy and confidentiality was maintained at all times. The researchers

did not know participants' Internet Protocol (IP) or computers' addresses when they responded to

this Internet survey. 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 services

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 and

(b) the extent to which EPP professors provided instruction over the consequences of

misconduct, information on 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. Consequences for unethical behavior were 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 on 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 collected from Survey Questions 1 and 2 (Likert-type items) dealt with the teaching of the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices by EPP professors and their perception of the inclusion of this teaching in EPP. There was an interesting difference between the responses for Survey Questions 1 and 2. The percentage (75.1%) of the respondents including teaching of ethics continuously or frequently in Survey Question 1 was less than the interests shown in Survey Question 2. A higher percentage (87.8%) of the professors responded that the teaching of ethics should be included continuously or frequently in the curriculum in Survey Question 2. This response supported Shapiro and Stefkovich's (2011) research findings. The importance of the teaching of the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices was reflected in research. According to Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011), there currently existed an increased interest in ethics as evidenced by researchers in educational administration. These researchers believed it is important to provide prospective administrators with some training in ethics (p. 20). This agrees with the SBEC, which required EPP to include the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices in their curriculum for Texas educators.

The results illuminated the perceived adherence to SBEC requirements by Texas state universities that were TEA-approved EPP providers. Hutchings (2011) national research study reported that case studies reports were in opposition to what his survey revealed. Hutchings' (2009) findings indicated that teachers were not adequately prepared by their EPP in the areas of "teacher ethics and boundary violations" (p. 146). 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. While the data indicated a perceived adherence to TEA requirements, further research is needed to reach a similar conclusion as Hutchings' study.

Research Question 2. To what extent do TEA-approved state university EPP professors include in the training curriculum information on the consequences of unethical behavior as described in Texas Administrative Code Chapter 247 Rule 247.2?

The findings of this question revealed the perceived delivery of information reviewing the consequences for unethical behavior to education candidates. This is important in light of research by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) that stated, "Despite the shift away from direct community control, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that there was any significant movement toward acceptance of greater persona freedom for teachers" (p. 34). Individuals' innate desire to make personal decisions, live independently, and possess a personal identity often creates conflict with community standards. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) reported that in McBroom vs. Board of Education (1986), in "the latter half of the twentieth century, dismissal of teachers for conduct outside of school was practiced by various communities" (p. 34). Without specific training and practice in ethics and moral values, educators face numerous challenges from public scrutiny.

Survey Question 9 was: "To what extent do you deliver information to education candidates that review the consequences for unethical behavior as described in the Texas Administrative Code in your curriculum?" The data showed the majority of the respondents

either occasionally (39%), frequently (36.6%), or continuously (18.8%) reviewed the

consequences for unethical behavior in their curriculum.

Survey Question 10 was: "To what extent should professors deliver information to

education candidates that review the consequences for unethical behavior as described in the

Texas Administrative Code in the curriculum?" The data showed that 43.7% of the respondents

felt they should deliver information to the education candidates that review the consequences for

unethical behavior frequently, and 27.2% felt they should deliver this information continuously.

The professors' responses to Survey Question 9 showed that they deliver information

regarding consequences for unethical behavior frequently (36.6%) and continuously (18.8%) for

a total of 55.4%. Comparing this percentage to the responses of Survey Question 10 (70.9%

total for frequently and continuously) revealed that there was an interest for this to be taught in

the curriculum to a greater extent. In spite of this interest, however, many EPP's curriculum

continue to focus on pedagogical issues linked to state exams rather than character-building

elements. Lumpkin (2008) summarized that to exhibit the right character, administrators and/or

teachers must have a variety of characteristics, including wisdom, discernment, honesty,

trustworthiness, fairness, respectfulness, and responsibility (p. 45). These are some of the

character-building elements that provide strategies for educators to incorporate in their jobs.

Research Question 3. To what extent do TEA-approved state university EPP professors

include in the curriculum any specific information regarding professional and ethical decision-

making?

The findings for this question revealed a significant result regarding the perceived

importance of including specific information regarding ethics training in the EPP curriculum.

Survey Question 11 asked: "To what extent do you include any specific information regarding

professional and ethical decision-making in your EPP curriculum?" The data showed that 2.3%

of EPP respondents never included any specific information regarding professional and ethical

decision-making in their curriculum, 37.9% included information occasionally, and 39.9%

included information frequently. Only 24.9% of the respondents included information on a

continuous basis.

Survey Question 12 was: "To what extent should professors include any specific

information regarding professional and ethical decision-making in their EPP curriculum?" The

data showed only .5% chose Never, 46.9% chose Frequently, and 31.9% chose Continuously.

This indicated that EPP respondents understand the importance of including specific information

regarding professional and ethical decision-making in EPP curriculum. Beck and Murphy

(1994b) reported that the largest number of institutions they surveyed "highlighted the

importance of including consideration of ethics in courses designed to help practitioners make

wise, judicious decisions" (p. 42).

Comparing the data from Survey Question 11 (64.8%) to the data from Survey Question

12 (78.8%) revealed a deficit of 14% of the respondents showing an interest to include more

decision-making instruction in the curriculum. Knight, Shapiro, and Stefkovich (2001) reported

that "frequently, educational leaders [are] forced to make a decision relying too much on their

emotions and not enough on the voices of those involved in the situation" (p. 365). Cairns

(2006) wrote that there is more to making ethical decisions than "following rules, district

policies, and accepted practices and depend[ing] on a level of ethical commitment and expertise

that may be abandoned in the everyday decisions of school leadership" (pp. 21-22). These

research findings reiterated the interest on the part of EPP professors to include more specific

information regarding professional and ethical decision-making in the curriculum for education candidates.

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 (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.

A second 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 third implication for practice of interest to TEA-approved EPP providers is to adopt the NCATE standard that all children could and should learn as a theme for educator preparation programs. This goal would be achievable if EPP providers:

- "ensure[d] that all new administrators and other professional specialists attain the knowledge and skills to create an environment for student learning";

- "administere[d] multiple assessments in a variety of forms, engage in follow-up studies, and use the results to determine whether candidates meet professional standards, and whether graduates can teach so that students learn";

- "commite[d] to preparing teachers for a diverse community of students";

- "encourage[d] collegiality, reflective practice, continuous improvement, and collaboration among educators, learners, and families"; and

- "viewe[d] teacher preparation and development as a continuum, moving from preservice preparation to supervised beginning practice to continuing professional development." (NCATE, 2006, p. 4).

These guidelines provide the basis for a productive academic program for new teachers. These guidelines could be embedded throughout the EPP curriculum and also included in a foundations course.

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, as well as ethical decision making, 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. Zionts 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, ethical decision making, school law, and professional conduct (Hutchings, 2009). Leonard (2007) stated as part of this moral endeavor, "professors of education also ha[ve] an important role in ensuring that the courses they develop and teach included standards-based goals that address not only candidate knowledge and skills, but candidate dispositions as well" (p. 415).

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 and ethical decision making. 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%). 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. 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 and ethical decision making.

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