Abstract

Selected Canadian codes of conduct and ethics for the teaching profession were examined using a grounded theory approach. Teachers' conduct and ethical duties are governed by provincial legislation and legally-mandated provincial professional bodies. The data was coded, categorized and aggregated to find common elements to determine the similarities and differences among the provincial codes to unearth the overall concepts. Codes focus on defining and protecting the teaching profession rather than developing moral and ethical teachers. While concern for student well-being is a common theme, it is often governed by prohibitive, regulatory codes on teacher misconduct. Union codes of conduct are heavily phrased in an ethic of justice rather than an ethic of caring. All examined union codes except Nova Scotia identified the student as the teacher's primary responsibility. In contrast, codes issued by the British Columbia Teachers' Council and the Ontario College of Teachers do not specify the teacher-student relationship as unique.

Purpose

The teacher codes of Ontario, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and Manitoba were inspected to analyze and determine commonalities and differences between these provinces. Particular attention was paid to finding commonalities between the provinces.

Methodology

In teaching, the teacher has several important and often competing relationships where he/she must act ethically: with students, parents, colleagues, educational authorities, community, etc.

A teacher code of conduct or ethics outlines the acceptable ethical ideals, behaviours, actions and duties of a teacher. There are three identified aims for teacher codes:

1. Enhance and protect the profession
2. Protect professional relationships, especially with students
3. Members to care for students

The following provinces were examined: Ontario, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and Manitoba. For each province, teacher responsibilities and/or duties were amalgamated from provincial acts and statutes and by-laws, codes of ethics and conduct, and policies of governing bodies such as the Ontario College of Teachers and/or teacher unions such as the Nova Scotia Teachers’ Union.

Results

Joint codes were very similar with clauses designed to guard the union’s rights, and protect members and the profession. Manitoba and BC had several similar statements and phrasing in their union codes; Ontario and Nova Scotia were also similar in this regard. Overall, the union codes were regulatory codes with both positive and negative phrasing. They also heavily focused on an ethic of justice whereas the BCTC and OCT codes were aspirational and positively phrased in an ethic of care and justice. This may be related to the age of the codes as the BCTC and OCT codes are newly developed compared with the union codes. The codes and duties rarely use ethical and instead use professional. Despite the fact provinces have individual jurisdiction over education, the duties and conduct outlined in both the legislation and teacher codes were often the same and sometimes even identical.

Conclusion

Union codes were similar with clauses designed to guard the union’s rights, and protect members and the profession. Manitoba and BC had several similar statements and phrasing in their union codes; Ontario and Nova Scotia were also similar in this regard. Overall, the union codes were regulatory codes with both positive and negative phrasing. They also heavily focused on an ethic of justice whereas the BCTC and OCT codes were aspirational and positively phrased in an ethic of care and justice. This may be related to the age of the codes as the BCTC and OCT codes are newly developed compared with the union codes. The codes and duties rarely use ethical and instead use professional. Despite the fact provinces have individual jurisdiction over education, the duties and conduct outlined in both the legislation and teacher codes were often the same and sometimes even identical.

References