

## **A Survey of Ethics Curriculum in Canadian Initial Teacher Education**

### **Enquête sur l'éducation à l'éthique professionnelle dans la formation initiale en enseignement au Canada**

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#### Résumé de l'article

Cet article présente les résultats d'une étude par sondage sur l'éducation à l'éthique professionnelle dans la formation initiale des enseignants au Canada. À l'aide d'un questionnaire en ligne et d'une analyse des offres de cours, des données ont été recueillies sur les exigences des cours d'éthique professionnelle, les perceptions sur le contenu des cours, les facteurs institutionnels conciliant la mise en place des cours d'éthique et les objectifs de lecture et d'apprentissage. Contre toute attente, les résultats ont démontré que les cours d'éthique professionnelle sont aussi communs dans les programmes de formation initiale en enseignement que dans les programmes de médecine, mais également que l'éthique professionnelle est considérée par les formateurs canadiens comme un aspect essentiel de la formation à l'enseignement. L'article conclue en suggérant des directives pour les recherches futures et en soulignant la nécessité de créer un réseau dans le domaine de l'éthique professionnelle dans les programmes de formations initiale en enseignement au Canada.

# A SURVEY OF ETHICS CURRICULUM IN CANADIAN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT.** This paper reports the results of a survey on ethics education in initial teacher education in Canada. Using an online survey and an academic calendar analysis, data was collected on ethics course requirements, perceptions about ethics content, institutional factors mediating the implementation of ethics courses, and teaching and learning objectives. Unexpectedly, the results showed that a required ethics course is as common in teacher education in Canada as it is in medical education and that an ethics curriculum is regarded highly by Canadian teacher educators as an aspect of teacher education. The paper concludes by suggesting directions for future research and underlining the need for network building in the area of ethics education for teachers in Canada.

## ENQUÊTE SUR L'ÉDUCATION À L'ÉTHIQUE PROFESSIONNELLE DANS LA FORMATION INITIALE EN ENSEIGNEMENT AU CANADA

**RÉSUMÉ.** Cet article présente les résultats d'une étude par sondage sur l'éducation à l'éthique professionnelle dans la formation initiale des enseignants au Canada. À l'aide d'un questionnaire en ligne et d'une analyse des offres de cours, des données ont été recueillies sur les exigences des cours d'éthique professionnelle, les perceptions sur le contenu des cours, les facteurs institutionnels conciliant la mise en place des cours d'éthique et les objectifs de lecture et d'apprentissage. Contre toute attente, les résultats ont démontré que les cours d'éthique professionnelle sont aussi communs dans les programmes de formation initiale en enseignement que dans les programmes de médecine, mais également que l'éthique professionnelle est considérée par les formateurs canadiens comme un aspect essentiel de la formation à l'enseignement. L'article conclue en suggérant des directives pour les recherches futures et en soulignant la nécessité de créer un réseau dans le domaine de l'éthique professionnelle dans les programmes de formations initiale en enseignement au Canada.

In his classic book, *What is a Mature Morality?* (1943), Harold H. Titus recalled the integrative role that an ethics course was once thought to play in a college education. Seen as a way of setting students' moral compasses before sending them off into the world of work, family, and citizenship, colleges typically required students to take a course on moral philosophy and ethics in their final year, and, to underscore its importance and lend an air of gravitas, the course was traditionally taught by the college president himself (Titus, 1943).

The importance of an ethics curriculum in higher education experienced a period of decline through the early and middle decades of the twentieth century until it re-emerged in the 1960s in the form of practical and professional ethics education (Davis, 1999). Medicine was on the cutting edge of the movement to make ethics a program-specific requirement of graduation and professional certification. From the 1980s, a body of literature on the ethical and moral dimensions of teaching began to appear (e.g., Reagan, 1983; Rich, 1984; Strike & Soltis 1998; Tom, 1984) and, as Warnick and Silverman (2001) observed, efforts got underway to align how ethics education content was handled in teacher education with broader trends in professional education. By the 1990s, survey work had already begun to assess the extent of ethics education implementation in the professions. Today, a considerable cross-professional literature documents the state of ethics education in fields as diverse as medicine (DuBois & Burkemper, 2002; Eckles, Meslin, Gaffney, & Helft, 2005; Fox, Arnold, & Brody, 1995; Goldie, 2000; Lehmann, Kasoff, & Federman, 2004; Musick, 1999), business (Christensen, Pierce, Hartman, Hoffman, & Carrier, 2007; Swanson & Fisher 2008;), dentistry (Berk, 2001), occupational and physiotherapy (Hudon et al., 2013), neuroscience (Walther, 2013), engineering (Stephan, 1999), and teaching (Glanzer & Ream, 2007).

The degree of methodological variability found in the survey work on ethics education in the professions poses a challenge for establishing comparable figures on how common it is for professional programs to include at least one mandatory ethics-related course. According to the findings of the most recent North American research, however, at least one ethics-related course is a requirement of 50% of MD programs (Lehmann et al., 2004), 17% of undergraduate programs in engineering (Stephan, 1999), 91% of doctoral programs in dentistry (Berk, 2001), and in about one third of business programs both at the master's (Christensen et al., 2007) and undergraduate level (Swanson & Fisher, 2008).

In contrast to these findings, the limited evidence on ethics education in initial teacher education (ITE) indicates that, despite the growing professionalization of teaching and the introduction of professional standards of teaching by trustee institutions worldwide (Drury & Baer, 2011), the stand-alone course model of professional ethics education has not been widely adopted (Glanzer & Ream, 2007). Glanzer and Ream (2007) collected information on patterns of ethics

education in pre-service teacher education and found that among 151 education programs surveyed, a relatively small percentage contained a required ethics course. To determine how common a dedicated ethics course is in different professional programs offered by 156 Christian colleges and universities in the United States, Glanzer and Ream (2007) gathered comparative data on ethics education in nursing, business, social work, journalism, engineering, computer science, and teaching. They found that, as a general rule, one third to one half of professional majors programs included at least one course concerned primarily with ethics. Teaching stood out in their findings because an ethics-related course was mandatory in only 6% of the teacher education programs.

The general objective of this research is to take a second look, from a Canadian perspective, at Glanzer and Ream's (2007) finding that teacher education has missed out on the "ethics boom" in higher education. It was important to attempt to reproduce Glanzer and Ream's (2007) results, we felt, because a sample bias built into their survey design suggested that the actual percentage of teacher education programs requiring a mandatory ethics-related course in North America was likely lower than their 6% figure. The Christian colleges and universities that constituted the survey's sample explicitly market themselves as schools that are particularly concerned with students' ethical and moral development and the authors of the survey knew from previous research (i.e., Glanzer, Ream, Villarreal, & Davis, 2004) that this nominal commitment to ethics education is reflected in the tendency of a significant portion of these institutions to require an ethics course in all programs of study. In addition, Glanzer and Ream's (2007) definition of "ethics course" was broad. It encompassed not just ethics-related courses dealing with professional ethics and values in teaching – the sense in which "ethics course" has tended to be broadly understood in past surveys on ethics education in the professions – but also courses focusing on the moral education of children and on how to teach and promote community values and character in classroom teaching. For these reasons, it seemed reasonable to assume that there are even fewer opportunities for formal teaching and learning about ethical issues in education in the large non-denominational state and regional public colleges and universities, where the majority of North American teachers are trained (Goodlad 1990; Lanier & Little, 1986), than there are in the denominational institutions of higher education surveyed by Glanzer and Ream (2007).

How are future teachers in Canada being prepared to face the ethical challenges of contemporary teaching, achieve the ethical standards for the teaching profession set by trustee institutions, and meet the public's expectations of ethical conduct and professionalism? The aim of the research reported in this article is to take stock of ethics education in pre-service teacher education in Canada. Inspired by similar survey work conducted in other professions, the research aims to provide insights into four main questions: How common are dedicated ethics courses in pre-service teacher education programs? How

do teacher educators perceive and appreciate ethics content as an aspect of pre-service teacher education? What institutional factors facilitate and impede the implementation of dedicated ethics courses? What are the objectives of ethics courses when they are taught and what teaching approaches are used?

## METHODS

### *Data collection and sources*

The survey collected data from two participant groups: (1) heads of Canadian academic units offering accredited programs leading to teaching certification and (2) faculty members with experience teaching ethics-related courses in ITE. The rationale for including academic unit heads was that, given their managerial and leadership roles, they would be knowledgeable about the structure of the teacher education programs offered by their unit, sensitive to the pragmatic and practical aspects of program development, and likely to have a relatively balanced (rather than discipline-specific) vision of the academic content of teacher education and a sense of where ethics might fit into that vision. For their part, ethics instructors would bring the vantage point of faculty members who have reflected in a sustained way on the contribution that ethics content can make to teacher education and who are routinely exposed to education students' reactions to ethics courses. Also, the instructors were uniquely placed to provide information about course objectives, content, and approaches to teaching ethics in ITE.

To reach the survey's target sample of academic unit heads, the Association of Canadian Deans of Education voluntarily provided us with a contact list of the chief administrative representatives of all departments, faculties, and schools of education in Canadian universities, colleges, or schools of applied science (80 English-language and 16 French-language institutions) that offer accredited programs leading to teaching certification. An information letter containing a link to participate in the online survey was sent by email to all the individuals on this list. The response rate for this group of participants was 16% (15/96).

To reach teacher educators involved in ethics education for teacher candidates, in the information letter, we initially asked chief representatives to connect us (by providing an email address or by forwarding the invitation) with colleagues, in their respective academic units, who might have been responsible for teaching ethics-related courses in pre-service teacher education. As this recruitment strategy proved ineffective, we resorted to snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961) through the principal investigator's professional networks. Snowball sampling is generally not amenable to determining a precise response rate, but 23 instructors completed both parts of the questionnaire, representing 61% of the total 38 participants that made up the sample.

Participants who responded to the invitation were directed to a two-part, 64-item survey housed on the online survey platform SurveyMonkey. Validated by two experts in ethics education in teaching at two different Canadian universities, the survey was elaborated on the basis of the principal investigator's familiarity with the literature on the teaching and learning of ethics and professional values in pre-service teacher education (e.g., Bruneau, 1998; Bull, 1993; Coombs, 1998; Goodlad, 1990; Heilbronn & Foreman-Peck, 2015; Howe, 1986; Maruyama & Ueno, 2010; Soltis, 1986; Strike & Ternasky, 1993; Warnick & Silverman, 2011) and by consulting similar published surveys conducted in professional fields other than teaching. Part 1 of the survey, which was to be answered by all participants, elicited information about requirements and opportunities for ethics education, resources dedicated to ethics education in teacher training, whether ethics is required or elective, and at which stage of the program ethics is taught. It also contained questions about respondents' views on the role of ethics education in pre-service teacher education and on challenges to the implementation of dedicated ethics-related courses in pre-service teacher education. In the introduction letter received by all participants, "ethics course" was defined as any course that has as its central focus ethics, morality, or values in teaching. Part 2 of the survey, which was to be answered only by participants having taught professional ethics to teacher candidates in the previous five years, elicited information about teaching and learning objectives of courses in professional ethics, learning activities used to teach professional ethics, instructors' qualifications, the type and quality of material (textbooks, course manuals, journal articles, case studies, etc.) used to teach ethics to teacher candidates, and evaluation methods. To supplement the responses to part 2, instructor participants were asked to provide the syllabi of dedicated ethics courses taught recently. The survey data collection period was from September to December 2013.

Following the method adopted by Stephan (1999), Walther (2012), and Hudon et al. (2013) and in previous surveys on ethics education in the professions, we also conducted a manual calendar search for the purposes of triangulating the data on program content obtained from the online survey. Program and course information were accessed through the institutional websites of departments, faculties, or schools of education at 40 Canadian universities. This sample, which represented 42% of the 96 academic units offering academic programs leading to teacher certification in Canada, was generated on the basis of the comprehensive list available on the website of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. The list of institutions was chosen to represent Canada's geographic diversity and its range of institutional types, from small regional centres to large research universities. Information was collected on the program blocks offered by each academic unit (B.Ed. primary, B.Ed. secondary concurrent, Master's in teaching, etc.), on program-specific required ethics-related or other foundations courses, and the placement on the program schedule of

any required ethics course. We opted for a random sample of universities for the calendar search to compensate for any self-selection bias which might have occurred through our open invitation participant recruitment strategy and to counterbalance the effect on the result of the proportionally high number of ethics instructors in the survey sample.

The primary aim of the manual calendar search was to determine how common a mandatory ethics-related course is in teacher education in Canada by identifying courses that met our definition of an ethics course. The definition we adopted mirrored the one provided to survey participants. We considered as an ethics course any course found, which, judging by the title and course description given in the university calendar, had as its primary content focus ethics, morality, or values in teaching.

The application of this definition required discernment and borderline cases were not uncommon. Courses on teacher professionalism presented one ambiguity. We counted professionalism-focused courses as ethics courses as long as the themes of ethics or values featured prominently in the course description. Similarly, courses on educational law were not considered ethics courses unless the course description indicated that the course dealt extensively with both education ethics and law in at least equal measure. Excluded were so-called “teachables” on moral, religious, or ethics education and required ethics courses linked to a teachable subject (e.g., a course on applied ethics for education students preparing to teach high-school philosophy in Ontario or the Ethics and Religious Culture program in Quebec). In the few highly ambiguous cases, we erred on the side of inclusion.

Finally, because of the conceptual affinities between ethics and social foundations in education and, being aware of concerns in certain quarters of the Canadian teacher education community about the gradual disappearance of social foundations courses in teacher preparation in Canada (cf. Kerr, Mandzuk, & Raptis, 2012), we collected secondary data on required courses focusing on these six topics: philosophy of education, sociology of education, history of education, “educational foundations” (when understood as philosophy, sociology and/or history of education combined in the same course), multicultural or intercultural education, and educational law.

Data was entered into a data collection tool housed on the platform SurveyMonkey by a member of the research team in July and August of 2014.

### *Data analysis*

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each questionnaire item. To compare and assess academic unit heads’ and instructors’ responses to survey questions, we conducted independent *t* tests and one-sample *t* tests and, in the case of ordinal questions, Pearson’s chi-square tests. Furthermore, to determine participants’ degree of assent to specific statements, one-sample *t* tests were

conducted against the mid-point of the rating scale. Finally, 95% confidence intervals were calculated where we wished to assess levels of participant consensus on certain items. All statistical calculations were performed using the data analysis software SPSS.

## RESULTS

### *Commonness of a mandatory ethics-related course*

Aware of how varied programs in ITE in Canada are, to make the task of collecting the data manageable, we organized the range of pre-service education programs into program categories or “blocks.” On the basis of an initial scan of the education programs typically available at Canadian universities as described in the academic calendars, we created four analytic categories of programs, which tended to share the same set of core courses. The program blocks were: (I) primary, elementary, or early-years education, (II) secondary education, (III) special education, and (IV) Master’s in teaching.

The choice to include the categories of special education and Master’s in teaching was motivated by the desire to collect data that could provide insights into a controversial trend in teacher education in Canada. Recently, commentators (e.g., Tardif, 2013) have expressed concerns that the specialization of teacher-education programs and, in particular, the introduction of Master’s in teaching degrees, which tend to exclude courses on educational foundations in favour of content dealing with instruction, evaluation, and class management, deprives students of important opportunities for professional socialization that a dedicated ethics course can provide. We could not have predicted how few programs would fall into the categories of special education and Master’s in teaching (6 and 7 respectively out of the 124 programs surveyed, see Table 1) – and thus how tenuous generalization from our sample would be – but the findings in connection with these program blocks proved suggestive. Half of special education programs (3/6) and 29% of Master’s in teaching programs (2/7) required students to take at least one ethics-related course compared with 44% of primary, elementary, or early years education programs (25/57) and 46% of secondary education programs (23/54).

The manual search of academic calendars also revealed that, according to our definition of “ethics-related course” (see above), 53% (21/40) of academic units required pre-service teaching students to take at least one ethics-related course. Of the remaining academic units surveyed, 18% (7/40) had an ethics requirement in some of their programs while 30% (12/40) required no stand-alone ethics course. These results were somewhat consistent with the participant reported information about the commonness of a mandatory ethics course. On the survey, 37% (10/27) of respondents said that an ethics-related course was a requirement of all programs offered by their academic unit, 30% (8/27) said ethics is required in some programs, and 23% in no programs.



TABLE 1. Commonness of a required ethics course by program

Program block	n/N (% of all programs surveyed)	Programs included in block	n/N (% of programs with a mandatory ethics course)
I. Primary, elementary or early years education	57/124 (45%)	B.Ed. primary, elementary, or early years (3 or 4 years / 90-120 credits)	23/54 (46%)
		B.A., B.Sc., M.Mus, or similar / B.Ed. pri- mary, elementary or early years concurrent (3 or 4 years / 90-120 credits)	
		B.Ed. post undergraduate professional degree in primary, elementary, or early years teaching (1 to 2 years / 30-60 credits)	
II. Secondary education	54/124 (44%)	B.Ed. secondary (3 or 4 years / 90-120 credits)	25/57 (44%)
		B.A., B.Sc., M.Mus, or similar / B.Ed. secondary concurrent (3 or 4 years / 90- 120 credits)	
		B.Ed. post undergraduate professional degree in secondary teaching (1 to 2 years / 30-60 credits)	
III. Special education	6/124 (5%)	B.Ed. special education (3 or 4 years / 90-120 credits)	3/6 (50%)
IV. Master's in teaching	7/124 (6%)	Master's degree in primary, elementary, or early years teaching (1 to 2 years / 30-60 credits)	2/7 (29%)
		Master's degree in secondary teaching (1 to 2 years / 30-60 credits)	
Total for all programs surveyed			53/124 (43%)

*Credits / teaching hours attributed to required ethics-related courses.* To refine the picture of ethics education in teaching programs, we collected information about the number of credits and teaching hours attributed to required ethics-related courses. In about 70% of all cases, when a stand-alone ethics course is required in a teacher education program, it takes the form of a full 3 credit / 45 hour course, rather than a short or half course.

*Pacing.* In the academic calendar search, we collected data on the year and semester of the program of studies when the required ethics-related course is typically taken and considered the findings on pacing in light of participants' responses to a question on the online survey about why program committees might make particular scheduling choices for the ethics course. We found a moderate tendency to place ethics-related courses towards the end of programs. Of the 43 individual ethics-related courses for which pacing information was available, we found that 30% (13/43) were scheduled in the first half of the program whereas 61% (26/43) were scheduled in the second half. The two

considerations judged to be the most important in motivating academic units' choices of a program year were that taking the ethics course in the year chosen was thought to have the greatest impact on students' professional development and because it fit with students' schedules.

*Secondary findings about program requirements in social foundations in education.* To gain an empirical foothold on whether courses dealing with social foundations in education are on the decline in Canadian teacher education as some claim (Kerr, Mandzuk, & Raptis, 2012), we collected secondary data on required courses focusing on six topics that are associated with social foundations in education: philosophy of education, sociology of education, history of education, educational foundations (i.e., philosophy, sociology and/or history of education combined in one course), multicultural education, and educational law. According to our findings, 95% (38/40) of academic units required students to take at least one course in social foundations in education in some or all programs. The most common required social foundations course was educational law (39%), followed by sociology of education and educational foundations (30% and 28% respectively). About 10% of programs contained a required course in the history of education, multicultural education, or philosophy of education.

Parsing the data using the same system of program blocks devised to analyze the commonness of ethics-related courses, we found that educational law, sociology of education, and multicultural education were judged equally common in all program categories with a slight tendency for educational foundations, history of education, and philosophy of education to be required in primary over secondary education programs. For details, see Table 2.

**TABLE 2. Secondary data on required social foundations in education courses by program**

Course topic	Primary, elementary or early years education (57) <sup>a</sup>		Secondary education (54) <sup>a</sup>		Special education (6) <sup>a</sup>		Master's in teaching (7) <sup>a</sup>		Combined program blocks	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Educational law	22	39	21	39	3	50	3	43	49	40
Sociology of education	17	30	16	30	2	33	1	14	33	29
Educational foundations	18	32	13	24	1	17	0	0	32	26
History of education	7	12	5	9	2	33	1	14	15	12
Multicultural education	6	11	6	11	0	0	0	0	12	10
Philosophy of education	7	13	4	7	0	0	1	14	12	10

NOTE. <sup>a</sup>Bracketed number indicates the total number of programs per program block surveyed.

Note that if a course description for a particular social foundations course was found to meet our definitional criteria for an ethics-related course, we counted the course both as an ethics-related and a social foundations course. In other words, some of the noted required courses in social foundations in education were the same course as the ones considered as ethics courses.

Of course, these findings do not, on their own, afford inferences about whether social foundations content in ITE is on the decline in Canada, but they do provide a snapshot of the commonness of required courses related to this topic and, hence, could be useful as a baseline for future research.

### ***Perspectives on ethics education and ethical influences in pre-service teacher education***

The online survey asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with 10 statements meant to gauge their views on the importance of ethics education in pre-service teacher education and, more specifically, how ethical role modelling, the explicit teaching of ethics, and institutional culture contribute to students' professional development. Overall, academic unit heads and instructors concurred that ethics is an important aspect of the pre-service teacher education, that an introductory ethics course can have a significant impact on students' ethical behaviour and development, and that it is important to take into account students' ethical qualities in the admissions process – presumably through selection practices such as requiring applicants to outline related work experiences and reasons for pursuing a teaching career (Smith & Pratt, 1996), reference letters (Caskey, Peterson, & Temple, 2001), or less commonly, the applicant's performance during an admissions interview (Denner, Salzman, & Newsome, 2001).

There was significant divergence of opinion over other issues. Ethics instructors tended to consider that an introductory ethics course should be a requirement of teacher certification, that the culture of their teaching unit is not optimally favourable to students' ethical development, and were dissatisfied with the current level of instruction in ethics. Academic unit heads did not share these views. For details see Table 3.

Nonetheless, 73% of academic unit heads and 100% of instructors said they would support increasing ethics education in their pre-service teacher programs.

***Students' appreciation of the required ethics-related course.*** Instructor participants' responses revealed that they felt that ethics-related courses are taken seriously because their students see ethics as making a valuable contribution to their university-based professional formation. Instructors also agreed strongly that, compared to other courses, students tend to regard the ethics course as intellectually challenging. Participants were more neutral about how hard it is to convince their students of the course's relevance to them as future teachers and there was greater divergence of opinion on this item.

TABLE 3. Perspectives on ethics education and ethical influences in pre-service teacher education

Questionnaire item	All participants		Academic unit heads		Ethics instructors		Independent t-test results		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
No matter whether ethics is taught as integrated curriculum or in dedicated courses, ethics is an important aspect of the preservice teaching curriculum.	4.45 <sup>a</sup>	1.15	4.45 <sup>a</sup>	1.21	4.44 <sup>a</sup>	1.15	.02	27	.98
At least one introductory ethics course should be mandatory for all students enrolled in a teacher education program.	4.31 <sup>a</sup>	1.00	3.45	1.13	4.83 <sup>a</sup>	.38	-4.78	27	.00 <sup>c</sup>
Ethics courses have no significant effect on students' ethical behaviour as professionals.	1.97 <sup>b</sup>	1.02	2.27	1.27	1.78 <sup>b</sup>	.81	1.29	27	.21
Ethics courses can have a significant effect on students' professional development as teachers.	4.54 <sup>a</sup>	.51	4.60 <sup>a</sup>	.51	4.5 <sup>a</sup>	.51	.49	26	.63
It is important to take into consideration applicants' ethical qualities in the student admissions process.	4.14 <sup>a</sup>	.79	4.45 <sup>a</sup>	.69	3.94 <sup>a</sup>	.80	1.75	27	.92
Professional role models (practicum supervisors, associate teachers, colleagues, etc.) have a greater effect on students' ethical development as teachers than learning about ethics in courses.	3.31	1.14	3.72	1.20	3.06	1.06	1.59	27	.13
The instruction in ethics that the students in our preservice teacher education programs receive is inadequate.	3.03	1.15	2.36	1.02	3.44	1.04	-2.73	27	.01 <sup>c</sup>
The institutional culture of our teacher education programs is favourable to students' ethical development as teachers.	3.72 <sup>a</sup>	1.01	5.00 <sup>a</sup>	.52	3.22	1.06	3.85	27	.00 <sup>c</sup>
Greater emphasis should be placed on applicants' ethical qualities in the student admissions process.	3.82 <sup>a</sup>	.95	3.60	1.17	3.94 <sup>a</sup>	.80	-.92	26	.365

NOTE. <sup>a</sup>A one-sample t-test revealed that the mean is statistically superior to 3 ("Neutral") at  $p < .05$ . <sup>b</sup>A one-sample t-test revealed that the mean is statistically inferior to 3 ("Neutral") at  $p < .05$ . <sup>c</sup>Value of less than .05 indicates a statistically significant difference between the two groups' responses.

TABLE 4. *Perspectives on institutional obstacles to the implementation of a required ethics course*

Questionnaire item	All participants		Academic unit heads		Ethics instructors		Independent t-test results		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Lack of time in program schedules	3.96 <sup>a</sup>	1.02	4.00 <sup>a</sup>	.93	3.94 <sup>a</sup>	1.01	.13	23	.90
Faculty members unavailable	2.58	1.28	2.38	.41	2.69	1.35	-.55	22	.56
Qualified instructors unavailable	2.56	1.26	2.50	1.19	2.59	1.33	-.16	23	.87
Financial resources unavailable to hire qualified instructors	2.76	1.23	2.88	1.46	2.71	1.16	.31	23	.76
No established curriculum to follow	2.38 <sup>b</sup>	1.31	1.60 <sup>b</sup>	.92	2.75	1.34	-2.13	22	.045 <sup>c</sup>
No financial resources available to develop new courses or curriculum	2.64	1.35	2.25	1.58	2.82	1.23	-.99	23	.33
Resistance from faculty	2.67	1.20	2.25	1.38	2.88	1.09	-1.21	22	.24
Resistance from administration	2.28 <sup>b</sup>	1.17	1.63 <sup>b</sup>	1.19	2.56	1.06	-2.04	23	.05
Resistance from third-party trustee institutions (e.g., professional association or governmental bodies)	1.76 <sup>b</sup>	1.01	1.00	.00	2.11 <sup>b</sup>	1.05	-2.97	23	.007 <sup>c</sup>
Resistance from students	1.96 <sup>b</sup>	1.04	2.00	1.15	1.94 <sup>b</sup>	1.03	.12	22	.90

NOTE. <sup>a</sup>A one-sample t-test revealed that the mean is statistically superior to 3 ("Neutral") at  $p < .05$ . <sup>b</sup>A one-sample t-test revealed that the mean is statistically inferior to 3 ("Neutral") at  $p < .05$ . <sup>c</sup>Value of less than .05 indicates a statistically significant difference between the two groups' responses.

#### *Perspectives on institutional obstacles to the implementation of a required ethics course*

To gauge participants' perceptions about the institutional factors that affect program committees' choice-making about how to handle ethics content in ITE, the survey elicited responses on 10 potential impediments to the implementation of a required ethics course. In the results (see Table 4), time constraint on program schedules was identified as being the most important obstacle to implementation according to both ethics instructors and academic unit heads. The results also showed a statistically significant disagreement between the two participant groups over whether resistance from third-party trustee regulatory bodies posed a challenge to the introduction of ethics education but neither group consider it to be a significant factor in decision-making.

*Why is ethics education less common in teacher education? Participants' views*

With this survey, we sought to go beyond Glanzer and Ream (2007) and other authors' intuitive accounts of why teacher education might have been left behind by the ethics movement in higher education (see Bruneau, 1998; Bull, 1993; Coombs, 1998; Maruyama & Ueno, 2010; Strike & Ternasky, 1993; Warnick & Silverman, 2011) by gaining empirical insights into this question. Participants were asked to rank the importance of 11 literature-derived hypothetical explanations that could account for this apparent anomaly. The choice to include questions about obstacles to implementation was informed by our expectation that our findings on the commonness of an ethics-related course in ITE in Canada would be more or less consistent with Glanzer and Ream's baseline figure of 6%. Going into the study, we did not anticipate that such a high percentage of programs (i.e., 45%) would be found to have a mandatory course dealing with ethical issues in education. This matter is addressed in more detail below in the discussion of the findings.

The findings from the section of the survey on obstacles to implementation were just as important for providing disconfirming evidence against certain hypothetical explanations as they were for providing confirmation for others. In the results, two factors emerged strongly as salient for respondents: intense competition for space on program schedules between ethics and other new content, and a tradition in teacher education to deal with ethics content as integrated curriculum. Participants disagreed with or were neutral about all the other items, which seems to evince the speculative or anecdotal nature of many of the factors advanced in the conceptual literature to explain why teacher education has resisted the stand-alone course model of ethics education (e.g., pre-service teacher education's conservativeness with regard to integrating new curriculum, the perception that ethics is too personal or subjective to be taught, perceptions of a weak link between good teaching and ethical skills, and resistance from faculty and administration). See Table 5 for details.

TABLE 5. *Why is ethics education less common in teacher education? Participants' views*

Questionnaire item	All participants		Academic unit heads		Ethics instructors		Independent t-test results		Sig. (2-tailed)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	
Teacher education is just slow to adopt new curriculum and keep abreast of trends in higher education.	2.59	1.08	1.82 <sup>b</sup>	.40	3.13	1.09	-3.79	25	.00 <sup>c</sup>
Complex and emerging ethical issues are rare in teaching.	1.44 <sup>b</sup>	.85	1.18 <sup>b</sup>	.40	1.63 <sup>b</sup>	1.02	-1.36	25	.18
Ethical scandals are rare in teaching.	1.59 <sup>b</sup>	.57	1.36 <sup>b</sup>	.50	1.75 <sup>b</sup>	.58	-1.80	25	.09
The topic of ethics in teaching is not rich or interesting enough to warrant a whole course.	1.55 <sup>b</sup>	.75	1.73 <sup>b</sup>	.76	1.44 <sup>b</sup>	.73	.98	25	.33
The link between the ethics of teaching and what students need to know to teach well is too tenuous to warrant a whole course.	1.70 <sup>b</sup>	1.03	1.91 <sup>b</sup>	.94	1.56 <sup>b</sup>	1.09	.85	25	.40
There has been intense competition over the years to introduce more and more content onto the pre-service teacher curriculum and ethics has just not been a priority.	3.67 <sup>a</sup>	1.36	3.18	1.40	4.00 <sup>a</sup>	1.26	-1.58	25	.13
There is a tradition in the field of teacher education to deal with ethics as integrated curriculum.	3.67 <sup>a</sup>	1.00	4.27 <sup>a</sup>	.65	3.25	1.00	2.98	25	.01 <sup>c</sup>
Offering a mandatory ethics course would require a faculty-wide agreement about the ethical obligations and responsibilities of teachers, and it is unrealistic to think that we could all agree about this.	2.33 <sup>b</sup>	1.07	2.27	1.19	2.38 <sup>b</sup>	1.02	-.24	25	.81
Offering students specific instruction in ethics may be necessary in fields that need to repair or maintain their relationship of trust with the public, but teaching does not generally have a problem with public trust.	1.74 <sup>b</sup>	.81	1.64 <sup>b</sup>	.92	1.81 <sup>b</sup>	.75	-.54	25	.59
Local trustee institutions (e.g., professional associations or governmental bodies) have not put any pressure on education schools or provided incentives to offer students specific instruction in ethics.	2.92	1.44	2.36	1.43	3.31	1.35	-1.75	25	.09
Ethics is too personal and subjective to be taught as part of pre-service teacher education.	1.70 <sup>b</sup>	1.17	1.81 <sup>b</sup>	1.25	1.63 <sup>b</sup>	1.15	.42	25	.682

Note. <sup>a</sup>A one-sample t-test revealed that the mean is statistically superior to 3 ("Neutral") at  $p < .05$ .

<sup>b</sup>A one-sample t-test revealed that the mean is statistically inferior to 3 ("Neutral") at  $p < .05$ . <sup>c</sup>Value of less than .05 indicates a statistically significant difference between the two groups' responses.

TABLE 6. *Teaching and learning objectives of ethics-related courses in ITE*

Rank <sup>a</sup>	Teaching and learning objective	n	M	SD	95% CI
1	Understand teachers' professional obligations (e.g., to evaluate fairly, to engage in continuing professional development)	19	1.21	.41	[1.01, 1.41]
2	Promote the professional values of teaching (e.g., human development, getting a fair chance)	19	1.21	.42	[1.01, 1.41]
3	Develop sensitivity to ethical issues in context	19	1.21	.42	[1.01, 1.41]
4	Raise students' awareness about teacher professionalism	19	1.21	.42	[1.01, 1.41]
5	Develop ethical reasoning skills	18	1.28	.75	[0.90, 1.65]
6	Familiarize students with ethically-relevant concepts in teaching (e.g., in loco parentis, racial discrimination, professional incompetence)	18	1.33	.69	[2.01, 3.04]
7	Develop professional qualities (e.g., honest, fairness, empathy)	18	1.44	.78	[1.05, 1.83]
8	Help students clarify their values	18	1.50	.86	[1.07, 1.93]
9	Help students develop their own personal philosophy of education	18	1.61	.92	[1.15, 2.07]
10	Encourage students to become ethically better people	18	1.67	.84	[1.24, 2.08]
11	Provide ethically meaningful experiences (e.g., watching a film or reading literature that deals with ethical issues in teaching)	18	1.78	1.11	[1.22, 2.33]
12	Acquaint students with the local legal and regulatory context of teaching (e.g., applicable laws and legal frameworks, codes of ethics)	19	1.84	1.01	[1.35, 2.33]
13	Learn about the literature on the ethics of teaching	18	1.94	1.16	[1.37, 2.52]
14	Improve communication skills	18	2.00	.77	[1.62, 2.38]
15	Learn about theories of normative ethics (e.g., deontology, consequentialism)	17	2.53	1.01	[2.01, 3.04]

NOTE. <sup>a</sup>Based on mean ranking on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "very important" to 5 = "not important")

*Teaching and learning objectives in ethics-related courses*

An additional research aim was to shed light on teaching and learning objectives of existing ethics-related courses in teacher education in Canada. Part 2 of the survey, answered by the 19 respondents who had recently taught ethics, asked participants to rank the importance of 15 teaching and learning objectives in the ethics courses they had taught. Table 6 lists these objectives in order of most to least important according to the mean score obtained for each item.



The results showed that ethics educators generally agree that four objectives are of particular importance in ethics-related courses for teacher candidates: teaching and learning about teachers' ethical duties as professionals, promoting professional values in teaching, encouraging sensitivity to ethical issues in a professional context, and helping students become aware of the demands of teacher professionalism. As indicated by standard deviation scores, ethics instructors were somewhat divided over the importance of providing students with ethically meaningful experiences like watching films or reading stories, learning about the academic literature on teacher ethics, and acquainting students with legal and regulatory frameworks. That said, participants considered all 15 of the teaching and learning objectives listed on the survey as important with one exception: learning about theories of normative ethics.

## DISCUSSION

### *ITE has not missed out on the “ethics boom” in higher education*

As mentioned above, the survey's results on the commonness of mandatory ethics-related courses in ITE in Canada defied our expectations. The finding that some 53% of the academic units offering programs leading to teaching certification had at least one required dedicated ethics course in all their programs and that approximately 45% of programs surveyed contained a mandatory ethics-related course greatly surpassed the baseline of 6% set in the only other comparable research (i.e., Glanzer & Ream, 2007). Furthermore, we found that nearly three-quarters of these courses were offered as full-credit, one-semester university courses. Based on what is known from the cross-disciplinary findings on the commonness of an ethics requirement in professional formation, summarized above in the introduction, we can only conclude that, at least in Canada, ITE has not missed the ethics boom in higher education. Instead, the commonness of an ethics requirement in teacher education in Canada is comparable with North American data for medicine, often regarded as a leader in ethics education, and is higher than in business and engineering.

### *Ethics education takes many different forms in ITE*

Another unanticipated and significant finding of this study is that ethics education takes a wide variety of forms in ITE in Canada. In the academic calendar search, we expected to find ethics courses easily identifiable as such by the course title. While a number of ethics-related courses did use such explicit labelling, at least half the courses that met our definitional criteria did not. To give some examples: “Teacher as leader: the professional role,” “School and society,” “Critical issues and policies,” and “The self as professional.” Furthermore, it was not uncommon to find that required courses labelled “Philosophy of education” focused centrally on ethical issues in education – at least as far as we could tell from the course descriptions available from university websites.

How should we interpret this situation and what lessons can be drawn from it? One possible reading is that the variety of ethics-related courses one finds in Canadian teacher education programs is a manifestation of a concern for ethics and professional socialization that predates the ethics movement in higher education. Until the middle of the twentieth century, a principal goal of teacher education in North America and Europe was to ensure that teacher candidates internalized a “professional morality.” A mission of early forms of mass education was to “raise the moral standards of the population” (Castelli, 2002; Hamel, 1991; Jeffrey, 2013). Teachers were thus expected to promote in their students and embody themselves “high moral standards” – and this as much in their professional interactions with young people and colleagues in schools as in their private lives (Castelli, 2002; Jeffrey, Deschênes, Harvengt, & Vachon, 2009; Pachod, 2007). Education systems in plural liberal societies of today have, for good reasons, abandoned such monolithic conceptions of professional morality. Yet it is possible to see the rich variety of courses dealing with ethics, values, and morality in contemporary teacher education as different attempts to find an appropriate educational response to an unchanging reality of teachers’ work. Namely, teachers’ privileged access to other people’s children imposes on teachers an imperative to maintain trust with the communities and families they serve by respecting high standards of ethical conduct. Daily direct work with children and young people also makes it inevitable that teachers play an important role in the socialization and upbringing of the next generation of citizens.

The survey’s results on teacher educators’ attitudes towards an ethics curriculum lend some credence to this interpretation. There was strong agreement among ethics instructors and academic unit heads that ethics content is an important aspect of teacher education. Even if ethics instructors and academic unit heads disagreed on whether a dedicated course is the best way of delivering this content, it was generally agreed that a dedicated ethics course can be an effective way to positively impact teacher candidates’ professional development and their ethical behaviour in professional settings.

*A need for network building in ethics education for teacher candidates*

This study’s findings on the variety of courses that fall into the category of “ethics in teaching” may suggest a currently unmet need for opportunities for relevant constituencies in teacher education to engage in scholarly dialogue about such issues as the role and goals of ethics curriculum and its thematic content in ITE, models for handling ethics content in teacher education, and how to evaluate student teachers’ ethical development in university-based education as well as in school practicums. It may be unrealistic for teacher education to strive for a consensus on a core curriculum for ethics education – indeed, the core curriculum ideal frequently discussed in biomedical ethics (DuBois & Burkemper, 2002; Eckles et al., 2005; Lehman et al., 2004) may

be unable to do justice to the necessary regionalism of teaching and teacher education. Nevertheless, teacher education could turn to biomedical ethics for inspiration in the search for the kind of set of basic professional values that has operated as crucial conceptual infrastructure for professional ethics education in medicine. We are referring here to the four principles of ethical medical practice initiated in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) – namely, autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. Structuring Beauchamp and Childress' (2002) classic, widely used medical ethics textbook, it is safe to say that scarcely a course in medical ethics is taught today that does not make explicit reference to these principles and use them as a didactic device for explaining and justifying key concepts in medical ethics like informed consent, surrogate decision-makers, paternalism, quality-adjusted life-years (i.e., "QALYs"), and resource allocation. Finally, and as the results of this survey demonstrate, there is, within teacher education itself, a rich source of experience in teaching ethics. The multiplicity of courses that can be considered "ethics-related" suggests that course development is often occurring in isolation. Stronger networks of teacher educators involved in research and teaching in ethics in education, and the sharing of ideas that occurs in such networks, could provide enrichment for ethics content in teaching globally and bring corresponding benefits in terms of the quality of ethics education that teacher candidates receive.

#### *Directions for future research*

*Exploration of "styles" or "philosophies" of teaching ethics in ITE.* The results concerning the teaching and learning objectives identified by the instructor participants as being the most important signal that there may be divergent and possibly conflicting "styles" or "philosophies" of teaching ethical issues in ITE. This raises the further question of the impact of different teaching styles on student-teachers' professional development. In this connection, the first suggestive finding was that the objective "learning about theories of normative ethics," which has long been staple content of practical and applied ethics education (Bowie, 2003; Warnick & Silverman, 2011), came out at the bottom of the list of important objectives and was the only item to receive a score approaching the middle score of "moderately important." Furthermore, the analysis also classed this objective among the most controversial course objectives based on the observed 95% confidence index range. Incidentally, this result reflects the controversy that exists in the literature on the ethics of teaching about the educational value of introducing philosophical theories in an ethics class (for discussions see Bull, 1993; Carr, 2000; Howe, 1986; Soltis, 1986; Strike, 2003). The second finding was that "developing ethical reasoning skills" proved not to be the object of general agreement among ethics educators.

In spite of the limitations of the data in terms of number of participants and questionnaire items involved, we nevertheless feel confident in asserting, based on our practical experience in professional ethics education and knowledge of the literature, that the survey's findings on teaching and learning objectives in ethics education for teacher candidates are suggestive of three distinct approaches to the teaching of values and ethics in education: (1) an approach focusing on helping students identify and confront ethical dilemmas in professional practice and find reasoned solutions; (2) an approach centred on developing students' ethical sensitivity and concern for others as key personal ethical qualities of human-service professionals; and (3) a humanistic psychology affiliated approach concerned mainly with promoting student's holistic ethical development as persons. Clearly beyond the scope of the present research, a proper exploration of this hypothesis would likely have recourse to an ethnographic methodology to probe teacher educators' conceptions of teaching and learning about ethics and values in education and/or a qualitative content analysis of course plans and other teaching material connected to existing ethics-related courses in ITE.

*Will more data yield correlations between an ethics requirement and institutional context?*

In hopes of uncovering correlations between certain aspects of the broader context of teacher education, at the provincial and institutional levels, and the presence of a required ethics-related course at the program level, the questionnaire asked participants: whether teachers in the participant's jurisdiction are subject to a code of ethics; whether the program content is based on a set of professional standards mandated by a trustee institution, whether programs emphasize a competency-based approach to professional education, whether applicants' ethical qualities are taken into account in the admissions process, and whether there is an ethics specialist on faculty. Having this information about regulatory and institutional context, we reasoned, might allow us to single out external factors that are favourable to academic units deciding to add or maintaining a required ethics-related course in their teacher education programs. Tests of six hypotheses using Spearman's rho coefficient yielded very weak correlations in each case.

Again, given the statistical limitations of our small sample size, a much larger sample would provide greater validity to these correlational results as well as the findings of this survey of ethics education in ITE more generally. An international phase of this research, involving the analysis of parallel survey data for teacher education in the U.S., for example, and comparing the results to the findings of this study, would also provide us with a perspective on whether teacher education in Canada is exceptional, typical, or average with regard to how common it is for teacher candidates to be required to take an ethics course as part of their professional formation and the generally positive attitudes on the part of teacher educators towards ethical content in teacher education.

## CONCLUSION

In medicine, business, and other fields, a number of surveys similar to the one described in this article have been conducted with the aim of taking stock of the state of ethics education for future professionals. The research reported here was the first in-depth survey work on ethics education to be undertaken specifically in the field of initial teacher preparation. For teaching, as for any other field, the results of such research are significant both from the perspective of educational development and research, as it can serve as an important resource for knowledge-based improvement and implementation of ethics education. By highlighting points of agreement and disagreement on salient issues in professional ethics education, such research can also provide a baseline for renewed reflection on the particular social and personal ends that professional ethics education serves and how well existing professional preparation is achieving those ends.

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