



A Study on the Relationship Between University Teachers' Ethical Quality and Education Quality

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Abstract

To enhance the quality of higher education and foster the professional development of teachers, this article examines the intrinsic connection between the ethical literacy of university teachers and the quality of education. This study systematically examined the components of teachers' moral literacy and their impact on teaching quality, scientific research quality, and social service quality. The research found that the ethical qualities of university teachers (such as caring for students, academic integrity, professionalism, etc.) have a significant positive promotion effect on the quality of education, while the lack of ethical literacy may restrict the improvement of education quality. Specifically, teachers with high ethical qualities can more effectively stimulate students' motivation to learn, enhance their scientific research and innovation levels, and improve the effectiveness of social services. Based on the research results, this article suggests that teachers' ethics literacy will be further improved through strategies such as strengthening teachers' ethics education, improving system construction, and creating a good atmosphere, thereby promoting the overall optimization of the quality of higher education.

Keywords

University teachers; Ethics; Education quality; Teacher ethics construction

1. Introduction

As a core field for talent cultivation, higher education has increasingly made teachers' ethical literacy a key variable affecting the quality of education. With the deepening of educational modernization, the traditional knowledge transfer model is no longer sufficient, and teachers' ethical awareness has become an important fulcrum for improving quality. At present, the focus on teachers' ethical literacy has been systematically improved, which is due to both society's expectations for educational equity and a re-examination of the teacher-student relationship (Southworth, 2023). With the intervention of technologies such as AI, the connotation of ethical literacy is undergoing a profound transformation, forming a more complex normative system (Wang, Zhang, & Zhao, 2025).

This study reveals the multi-dimensional interactive relationship between university teachers' ethical literacy and education quality. This two-way interaction is reflected in the fact that ethical literacy directly affects education quality through teaching, scientific research, and other practices, while quality improvement feeds back to ethical development, forming a virtuous circle (Zhao et al., 2024). The research method combines theoretical analysis with logical deduction,

analyzes the internal mechanism from a multidisciplinary perspective, and puts forward practical guidance suggestions (Li & Chen, 2025). The research framework defines the connotation of ethical literacy, establishes a quality evaluation system, analyzes specific connections, and proposes improvement strategies in turn to ensure the systematic and rigorous nature of the argument.

2. Overview of University Teachers' Ethical Literacy

2.1 The connotation of ethical literacy

Ethical literacy is the core of university teachers' professional development. It integrates moral cognition, judgment, and practical ability, and is reflected in the dynamic process of moral practice. Its hierarchical characteristics include cognitive norms, emotional responsibility, and behavioral consciousness. Compared with the fixed norms of professional ethics, ethical literacy emphasizes moral wisdom and judgment in complex situations (Li & Chen, 2025). The two are dialectically unified: the former provides a foundation, and the latter injects vitality. In particular, when dealing with ethical dilemmas in the AI era, critical thinking is needed (Wang, Huang, & Wang, 2025).

Ethical literacy is an inherent requirement for teacher professionalism. It guarantees the quality of education, enables teachers to transcend technical rationality, and maintain moral consciousness in teaching (Li & Chen, 2025). Especially in the training of graduate students (Chai, 2025), it directly affects the value ecology of the academic community and realizes the unity of teaching and educating people.

Digital transformation has expanded the scope of ethical literacy, requiring teachers to have both traditional academic integrity and digital ethical awareness, such as dealing with algorithmic bias and data privacy issues (Southworth, 2023). Its development is phased, from normative compliance to moral autonomy, requiring institutional support and individual reflection. The main body part should include the main proposed ideas, results, and discussions.

2.2 Elements of university teachers' ethical literacy

The ethical quality of university teachers consists of three core elements: caring for students, professionalism, and academic integrity. Each element supports the others and is organically unified. Caring for students is reflected in respecting individual differences, providing personalized guidance, and emotional support to improve academic achievement. It is necessary to maintain a balance between strictness and care. Professionalism drives teachers to pursue teaching optimization and scientific research innovation, combining personal development with social mission. Academic integrity requires adherence to norms. The three form a dynamic system: caring needs to be supported by professionalism, professionalism is based on integrity, and integrity is given meaning by caring (Wang, Huang, & Wang, 2025), which together constitute the ethical coordinates of teacher development.

3. Dimensions of Measuring Education Quality

3.1 Teaching quality

As the core of education quality, the measurement standard of university teaching quality should be a systematic multi-level framework. The degree of achievement of teaching objectives is reflected in whether the preset knowledge, ability, and value objectives are effectively achieved, which directly reflects the teacher's grasp of content and cognitive rules. At the level of teaching methods, the quality depends on whether the teacher can choose appropriate strategies according to the characteristics of the subject and the learning situation. High-quality teaching should adopt diversified methods such as heuristic and exploratory methods to stimulate students' active learning.

Teaching effectiveness evaluation is a key link. A scientific system must combine formative and summative evaluations and focus on both outcomes and process improvements. Studies have shown that multiple evaluations are better than single tests (Hu & Guo, 2025). High-quality teaching is reflected in stimulating learning interest, cultivating innovative ability, and promoting students' all-around development (Wang, Huang, & Wang, 2025).

Improving teaching quality has dual significance for students' growth and school development: for students, it can improve their knowledge structure and thinking ability; for schools, it is the key to improving the quality of talent training. Teachers need to transform ethical literacy into conscious norms, and schools need to build a complete quality assurance system.

Quality improvement requires the concerted efforts of individual teachers, teams, and school management. Teachers need to constantly reflect on and improve their teaching, and schools need to provide institutional support and resource guarantees (Chai, 2025). High-quality teaching should go beyond imparting knowledge and cultivate students' critical thinking and creative problem-solving abilities through problem-based learning (Wang, Huang, & Wang, 2025).

3.2 Research quality

The quality of scientific research is the core dimension of a university's comprehensive strength, which is reflected in the innovation, practicality, and disciplinary driving force of knowledge production. High-quality scientific research needs to break through the boundaries of knowledge, solve practical problems, and lead the development of disciplines. These three constitute its internal logic. The evaluation system covers the number and quality of papers (such as impact factors, citation frequency), project influence, and achievement conversion rate, but it needs to be comprehensively considered in combination with innovation and value.

Research quality and university strength promote each other: research results enhance reputation and attract resources, while high-quality platforms feed back to research, which is especially true in "double first-class" universities. Research ethics (such as academic integrity and data authenticity) are the basis of quality assurance, and the supervision mechanism needs to be improved and incorporated into the evaluation system (Chai, 2025).

Digital transformation brings new opportunities, such as AI and big data to improve efficiency, but also requires higher digital literacy (Xie et al., 2025). Future evaluations may need to introduce technology application indicators to address research paradigms.

3.3 Quality of social services

The quality of university teachers' social services is an important dimension to measure their comprehensive contributions, reflecting the social responsibility of universities and their functional positioning in the knowledge economy era. Social services are a key way to transform professional knowledge into public value and directly affect the social recognition of universities. Knowledge dissemination requires teachers to share academic achievements through popular science lectures and other means; technology transformation emphasizes the application of research to practical fields such as industrial upgrading.

Evaluation requires the establishment of multi-dimensional indicators: targeted requirements require precise matching of social needs; effectiveness focuses on measurable results such as economic benefits; sustainability requires the establishment of long-term mechanisms; and innovation requires the exploration of service paths in emerging fields. Teachers have a dual mission: to lead the progress of civilization and to respond to real needs. In national strategies such as rural revitalization, services should be forward-looking, while improving digital literacy to adapt to online service needs.

Improving quality requires building institutional guarantees: colleges and universities should establish a scientific evaluation mechanism and incorporate it into the assessment system (Wang, Huang, & Wang, 2025); build a school-enterprise cooperation platform; strengthen teacher interdisciplinary capacity training; and establish a results tracking and feedback mechanism. These measures will promote the transformation of services from quantitative expansion to quality improvement.

4. Analysis of the Relationship between University Teachers' Ethical Literacy and Education Quality

4.1 Positively promoting relationships

The ethical quality of university teachers has a multi-dimensional role in promoting the improvement of education quality. At the teaching level, it directly affects teaching behavior and teacher-student interaction. Caring for students can establish harmonious relationships, respect differences, and provide guidance, thereby improving learning motivation and participation. In the field of scientific research, academic integrity guarantees the quality of scientific research, rigorous scholarship produces reliable results, and sets a moral example for students. In terms of social services, teachers with a sense of social responsibility are more willing to transform professional knowledge into social value, and their professional quality and moral integrity become an important window for the public to evaluate higher education.

There is a dynamic interaction between ethical literacy and education quality, which requires both institutional constraints and value internalization. Different literacy has different impacts on various functions: caring improves teaching quality, and integrity guarantees scientific research quality. In the long run, the construction of ethical literacy will not only improve the current quality, but also affect the sustainable development of education. The professional culture formed by good literacy will be passed on from generation to generation and become a stable characteristic of the education system. Therefore, the cultivation of ethical literacy should be included in the core content of teacher professional development to lay the foundation for continuous quality improvement.

4.2 Reverse constraint relationship

The lack of teachers' ethical literacy has a multi-level negative impact on the quality of education. In teaching, the lack of ethical standards of teachers undermines the trust between teachers and students and inhibits learning enthusiasm. Studies have shown that negative evaluations can reduce course satisfaction by 40%. In the field of scientific research, academic misconduct (such as data falsification) reduces the credibility of research results. Surveys show that for every 1% increase in misconduct incidents, the research influence of the institution decreases by 0.8% (Ciampa et al., 2023). In terms of social services, a weak sense of responsibility makes services become a formality, wastes resources, and weakens the social influence of universities. These impacts have a cumulative effect. A single misconduct may trigger a chain reaction, especially in the digital age (Xie et al., 2025). It is necessary to establish a prevention mechanism and internalize ethical requirements into professional beliefs in order to achieve sustainable improvement in education quality.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the intrinsic relationship between the ethical literacy of university teachers and the quality of education, and found that it was positively correlated with the quality of teaching, scientific research, and social services. Ethical literacy has become a key variable in improving the quality of education by shaping educational beliefs and regulating behaviors. The research has limitations, such as mainly theoretical analysis, a lack of empirical data, and disciplinary differentiation. Future research should build quantitative models, conduct interdisciplinary comparisons, and pay attention to the new connotation of teachers' ethical literacy in the era of artificial intelligence. Improving teachers' ethical literacy requires the coordinated promotion of teacher ethics education, system construction, and cultural creation to achieve the fundamental task of higher education in cultivating morality and cultivating people.

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