# The Construction of College Teachers' Professional Ethics in the Digital Age

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**Abstract:** In the context of the digital age, facing the current situation that there is still a gap between the talents currently trained and the actual needs of the country, this paper first introduces the concept of the construction of professional ethics for college teachers and then points out the significance and challenges of the construction of professional ethics for college teachers in the context of the digital age. Finally, it introduces the path to improving the professional ethics of college teachers in the context of the digital age. It points out that as college teachers must be based on the present, focus on the future, dare to meet challenges, expand China, face the complex international situation, respond to the requirements of the digital age, adhere to serving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation as an important mission of education, and continuously strengthen the construction of teachers' professional. This can train qualified successors for the future of the motherland, improve students' innovative consciousness, practical ability and enterprising spirit, and provide society with innovative, compound and applied talents required for economic transformation and upgrading.

**Keywords:** College teacher; Professional ethics; Awareness; Route

## 1. Introduction

General Secretary Xi Jinping has delivered significant speeches on multiple occasions regarding the construction of professional ethics for university teachers, emphasizing the importance of these norms in cultivating builders and successors for socialism. In September 2016, during the National Education Conference, Xi Jinping pointed out that university teachers must adhere to the socialist orientation of running schools, uphold the mission of education, and cultivate well-rounded builders and successors of socialism. He emphasized that university teachers should enhance their patriotic sentiments and cultivate students' sense of national identity and social responsibility. In April 2018, during his visit to Peking University, Xi Jinping emphasized that university teachers should possess "four qualities": virtue, self-cultivation, knowledge, and ability. He stated that university teachers should focus on their moral cultivation, set an example, and guide

students to establish correct life values, moral values, and worldviews. In May 2020, at the opening ceremony of a special seminar in the Central Party School's Theoretical Research Department, Xi Jinping pointed out that university teachers should adhere to the correct political direction, enhance the "four consciousnesses," strengthen the "four confidences," and achieve the "two safeguards." He believes that university teachers should strengthen ideological and political theory education, fostering students' belief in Marxism and confidence in the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics [1].

General Secretary Xi Jinping's speeches emphasize the importance of constructing professional ethics for university teachers, outlining the qualities and responsibilities they should possess, encouraging teachers to lead by example, guiding students' correct development, and strengthening ideological and political education to cultivate students' core socialist values. These speeches provide essential guidance and direction for the construction of professional ethics for university teachers.

## 2. Concept of the construction of professional ethical standards for university teachers

The construction of professional ethical standards for university teachers refers to the process within higher education teaching and management practices, where various methods and means are employed to instill a commitment to professional ethics among teachers. Teachers are encouraged to actively practice socialist core values and integrate ethical standards into their daily activities, including teaching and research. This initiative aims to comprehensively enhance the ethical standards of the teaching profession [2]. The main components include:

(1) Strengthening the ethical education of teachers to enhance their moral cultivation and sense of responsibility. This involves organizing specialized training in moral education, guiding teachers to uphold firm ideals and beliefs, and promoting socialist core values.

(2) Establishing clear professional ethical standards for teachers, defining the baseline and behavioral norms that teachers must adhere to. At the institutional level, a "Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers" can be formulated, with specific rules and regulations further detailed by each faculty or organizational unit.

(3) Improving mechanisms for monitoring teacher ethics, including supervisory checks on the ethical conduct of teachers. Mechanisms such as public opinion monitoring, administrative supervision, team oversight, and individual self-discipline are established.

(4) Developing a culture of professional ethics among teachers to foster a strong ethical environment. This is achieved through initiatives such as ethical role model selections, promoting moral exemplars, establishing bases for ethical education, and using case studies to warn against and prevent misconduct.

(5) Implementing a combination of moral rewards and sanctions, tightly integrating moral evaluations with performance assessments. Establishing ethical rewards and handling ethical violations with measures such as public censure or reassignment from teaching positions.

(6) Encouraging teachers to manage themselves and develop their capacity for self-regulated professional ethics. Teachers are encouraged to engage in self-reflection, group supervision, and personal self-control.

Through the construction of professional ethical standards, the overall moral and professional capabilities of the teaching staff are enhanced, making them role models for student development. This is crucial for realizing the intrinsic development of higher education [3]. It represents not only a requirement for teachers but also a commitment to students and society at large.

## 3. Significance of establishing professional ethical standards for university teachers in the digital age

The traditional ethical standards for university teachers, developed during the industrial age, no longer fully meet the objectives of ethical standard construction in the information and intelligence era. The establishment of professional ethical standards for university teachers in the digital era is a practical necessity to fulfill the fundamental mission of fostering virtue through education. Teachers are expected to educate with noble spirit and rigorous scientific attitudes, uphold social fairness and justice, and provide talent and intellectual support for national development [4].

The construction of professional ethical standards in the digital era for university teachers is a practical requirement in response to changes in the internet environment. In the age of the internet, teachers' actions and speech are under greater public scrutiny and oversight. It is essential to establish new ethical standards suitable for the information and intelligent era to guide teacher behavior and prevent negative influences [5].

Moreover, building professional ethical standards is a practical need to enhance teachers' professional identity and sense of honor. Developing ethical standards can strengthen teachers' professional identity and instill a sense of elite honor, encouraging teachers to consciously maintain their professional image and social reputation. The construction of these standards is also crucial for promoting educational and teaching reforms within schools. A positive educational and teaching ethos facilitates these reforms, while the lack of teacher morality can compromise the quality of teaching.

Furthermore, the construction of professional ethical standards is necessary to address ideological struggles, enhance educational soft power and improve overall national strength. In today's increasingly complex ideological arenas, teachers must lead by example and remember their mission to educate and nurture students with ideological and political construction. Additionally, teachers' moral image is vital for the societal evaluation of higher education, which is directly linked to the enhancement of the country's educational soft power and overall national strength.

Therefore, in the new era, properly establishing professional ethical standards for teachers is an urgent requirement to implement the directives of the party and the state, crucial for the country's long-term governance and development [6]. This is not only a mission bestowed by the era on educational workers but also a responsibility and duty that all educators should embrace.

## 4. New challenges in the ethical development of university teachers in the digital age

In the classrooms of universities during the digital era, education through electronic information is gradually replacing traditional blackboard teaching. Most young teachers belong to the generations of the 1980s and 1990s, having grown up with new media. Compared to their predecessors, the internet has subtly influenced them. This group is more adept at embracing the achievements brought by the internet era and can more effectively utilize the knowledge and ideas available online. They enjoy the conveniences brought by the development of digital and intelligent education. However, within this context, the ethical integrity of young university teachers is challenged, making it imperative to enhance their ethical development [7].

### 4.1. Transformation of university teachers' roles brings challenges to ethical development

With the advent of the digital age, the roles of university teachers are inevitably transforming. They are no longer solely involved in "imparting knowledge, teaching, and resolving doubts" by transferring and replicating existing knowledge and ideologies to students. Instead, they are increasingly required to teach methodological

knowledge, helping students judge, filter, and apply knowledge, and to engage in dialogues and explorations with students. This significant role change challenges their professional values, teaching philosophies, and attitudes, ultimately affecting their adherence to and practice of professional ethical standards.

Some older university teachers struggle to adapt to the new educational thinking, tools, and methods of the digital age. Due to their age and many years of reliance on traditional teaching modes and methods, they are reluctant to change. The ethical development of some teachers with rigid and outdated ideas has fallen behind, unable to meet the demands of the new era. Additionally, since students' behaviors vary between virtual and real worlds, teachers face greater difficulties in fulfilling their ethical duties and truly educating and nurturing students [8].

## 4.2. The digital age imposes new and higher demands on the ethical development of university teachers

In the context of the digital age, university teachers must adhere not only to the ethical norms of the real world but also act consistently in the virtual world. They need to master the skills to handle online information while fully exploiting the educational functions of the internet. They should utilize internet technology scientifically and reasonably, maximizing the advantages of digital education without being blindly conformist or resistant. University teachers must enhance their ethical development in a complex and changing environment to fulfill the responsibilities of the era and nurture high-quality talents, which is a significant and challenging task.

Moreover, due to the extensive reach of the internet and the low cost for netizens to express opinions and evaluations, it is easy to follow the crowd, leading to misunderstandings and scandals, and causing irreversible negative impacts. Therefore, in the context of the internet, teachers need to be more cautious in their speech and conduct, setting an example and regulating their behavior to avoid irresponsible remarks. Facing the current situation where students are easily influenced by unreliable online information and negative comments, helping students improve their abilities to collect, filter, judge the truthfulness, and discern the quality of online information is a new requirement for enhancing the professional ethics of university teachers in the digital era.

## 5. Pathways to enhancing professional ethical competence of university teachers in the digital age

### 5.1. Strengthen ideological and political education to establish correct values and professional ethics

Enhance political theory learning to solidify ideals and beliefs. Political theory learning assists teachers in establishing correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values, thus reinforcing their commitment to the educational cause. University teachers should proactively improve their moral cultivation and diligently study national policies. They should establish correct value concepts and professional ethics, and enhance their sense of responsibility and mission. Teachers need to proactively strengthen their legal awareness and baseline thinking, familiarize themselves with relevant laws and regulations, and maintain vigilance [9]. Particularly, teachers must guard against impulsiveness and complacency, maintain a sense of crisis and alertness, consistently self-examine, and prevent ethical risks in their profession.

### 5.2. Understand and adapt to digital educational tools, enhancing digital literacy and information literacy

The digital era presents new challenges and opportunities for teaching. University teachers need to possess

adequate digital literacy and information literacy, actively understand and master various digital educational tools and platforms, and apply them flexibly in teaching. This includes designing online courses, remote teaching techniques, and virtual laboratories, and being proficient in using computer and internet technology, as well as in effectively searching and evaluating information and understanding and applying data analysis skills. Through continuous learning and training, they should enhance their digital literacy and information literacy. Additionally, teachers in the digital age should focus more on researching and practicing innovative teaching methods. For example, engaging with students through social media and online discussion platforms can stimulate students' interest in learning and their initiative.

## 5.3. Establish a robust supervisory and restraint mechanism, encouraging teachers to cultivate self-discipline

In the context of the digital age, schools should establish specialized institutions and a comprehensive internal supervision system, including setting up professional ethics committees or related departments to oversee the implementation of teachers' professional ethics and promptly handle violations of these ethics. Schools should also improve external supervision mechanisms: enhance the external supervision of university teachers through academic evaluations, peer reviews, and reviews by external experts, assessing and supervising their teaching quality and professional ethics. Additionally, it is vital to strengthen the monitoring of online public opinion to detect and address issues promptly [10]. Beyond enhancing external norms, teachers should abide by legal and professional ethical standards, willingly accept supervision, grasp internet ethical norms, develop a sense of self-discipline, learn internet ethical norms and legal knowledge, conscientiously adhere to ethical baselines, act with propriety, enhance risk awareness, prevent morally corrupt behaviors, value moral evaluations, accept external supervision, willingly receive moral evaluations from schools and society, identify shortcomings, and make timely improvements.

## 5.4. Establish positive teacher-student relationships, enhance professional ethical awareness

University teachers in the digital age must still focus on maintaining good relationships with students. They should respect individual differences among students, and understand, and fulfill their learning needs. By providing timely feedback, open communication, and supportive guidance, teachers can establish positive interactions with students [11]. University teachers in the digital age should enhance their understanding of professional ethics, adhere to ethical standards, uphold educational ethics, protect student privacy, ensure course content and assessments are fair and unbiased, and refrain from any form of academic misconduct.

## 6. Conclusion

In the context of the digital age, the enhancement of professional ethical standards among university teachers requires comprehensive consideration, including aspects such as technology, teaching methods, teacher-student relationships and professional ethics. University teachers need to develop an attitude of lifelong learning, continuously updating their knowledge and skills through ongoing study and practice to better adapt to the demands of digital education and provide high-quality educational services to students. Through these pathways, teachers can gradually improve their moral cultivation and self-discipline, better adapt to the online environment, and become role models for their students. This is the essential route for enhancing the professional ethical standards of university teachers in the digital age.

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