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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Conceptual Foundations for Forming Professional Ethics and Academic Integrity Values in Pre-Service Teachers

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Abstract

Pre-service teachers encounter ethical conflicts involving professional decisions, assessment, and academic work; therefore, the challenge is to develop ethical norms as durable pedagogical commitments rather than as declarative rules. The study aims to identify conceptual foundations that integrate professional ethics and academic integrity values within teacher education and to interpret their relationship with historical pedagogical ideas. A qualitative Delphi expert judgment process and Mayring's qualitative content analysis were used; recurring meaning units were identified, coded, and theoretically compared across expert judgments and pedagogical sources. The category matrix produced through Delphi judgments revealed a three-stage formation pattern: recognizing a norm, applying it in professional situations, and consolidating it within pedagogical identity. Comparative analysis linked 31.6 % of the conceptual categories to professional responsibility, 52.4 % to integrity and transparency, 28.9 % to reflective self-regulation, and 49.1 % to institutional culture. These figures represent thematic shares within the category matrix, not percentages of effectiveness. The resulting analytical architecture combines historical pedagogical teachings with contemporary scholarship on academic integrity in a unified teacher-education model. The model's internal consistency can be assessed using the criterion $\alpha \geq 0.70$. The study's contribution lies in clarifying a three-stage mechanism that connects theoretical concepts with professional identity development and in defining a basis for subsequent interdisciplinary and institutional comparison. The framework also supports a transition from abstract ethical principles to durable pedagogical identity. Future inquiry should examine how the model functions across teacher-education disciplines and institutional cultures, including whether integrity values remain stable during teaching practice.

KEYWORDS

Academic integrity values, Pre-service teachers, Delphi expert judgment, Professional responsibility, Pedagogical identity, Qualitative content analysis, Thematic category, Three-stage formation.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education requires explicit ethical foundations because Uzbekistan's Education Law connects educational quality with the learner's comprehensive development and social responsibility [1]. The Anti-Corruption Law further positions integrity as an institutional and civic requirement, making professional ethics and academic integrity values

inseparable in pre-service teachers' formation [2]. The research gap concerns insufficient conceptual integration of professional ethics, academic integrity values, and pedagogical formation stages; existing discussions rarely connect these categories through the historical evolution of pedagogical ideas.

This study examined the formation process among pre-service teachers, focusing on conceptual foundations that connect ethical conduct, honest academic practice, and teacher professional socialization. Its aim was to construct a theoretically grounded model. The objectives were to: 1) analyze pedagogical teachings; 2) define core categories; 3) compare national and international interpretations; 4) identify formation stages; 5) formulate model principles.

The hypothesis proposed that an integrated three-stage model would strengthen professional ethics and academic integrity values more effectively than routine teacher education.

Scientific novelty was expressed through linking both value domains within diagnostic, formative, and reflective stages. Theoretical significance concerned pedagogical paradigm development; practical significance concerned curriculum designers' use of staged diagnostic materials and ethical cases.

Qualitative Delphi study and qualitative content analysis (Mayring) were applied to expert judgments and pedagogical sources, establishing categories for subsequent theoretical comparison.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The preceding qualitative categories require historical comparison of how ethical conduct becomes a pedagogical value rather than merely an institutional rule. National pedagogical theory links teacher professionalism with responsibility, competence, and reflective self-regulation, while professional ethics scholarship defines the teacher's moral position through duties toward learners and colleagues [3]. Azizova's competence-oriented interpretation strengthens this connection, yet it leaves academic integrity values insufficiently differentiated from general professional competence [4].

A second group treats integrity as a learning culture. Gallant theoretically substantiated academic integrity as a teaching-and-learning imperative, whereas Bretag identified plagiarism as a problem requiring educational, not solely punitive, responses [5]. Macfarlane, Zhang, and Pun broadened the concept toward institutional responsibility, while Newton's quantitative analysis exposed uneven student confidence and understanding [6]. These positions support value-oriented education, but they rarely explain how pre-service teachers internalize integrity through pedagogical socialization.

Digital transformation introduces a sharper contradiction. Holden, Norris, and Kuhlmeier connected artificial intelligence with new forms of authorship uncertainty [7], whereas Eaton framed post-plagiarism ethics as a transdisciplinary reconstruction of responsibility [8]. Perkins and Roe emphasized publisher guidance, but such regulation cannot replace metacognitive reflection, cooperative learning, or problem-based teaching in teacher education [9]. UNESCO similarly places human dignity and accountability at the center of artificial-intelligence ethics [10].

Historical-pedagogical analysis therefore reveals a conceptual gap: professional ethics, academic integrity values, and formation among pre-service teachers are usually treated in separate frameworks. Uzbekistan's Development Strategy requires educational modernization [11], yet existing literature does not provide a three-stage conceptual model connecting pedagogical diagnosis, formative interaction, and posttest reflection. This gap justifies integrating the evolution of pedagogical ideas with contemporary integrity scholarship, including plagiarism prevention [12], contract-cheating evidence [13], digital-learning challenges [14], and established pedagogical theory [15], to guide the methodological design.

METHODOLOGY

The historical comparison established distinct ethical and integrity categories, which were operationalized through a qualitative Delphi Study rather than an unsupported statistical experiment. Expert panels examined professional ethics and academic integrity values among pre-service teachers through iterative rounds, consensus topics, logical saturation, and a strength–weakness matrix. Mayring's qualitative content analysis organized deductive and inductive categories, coder agreement, and summarizing procedures around ethical judgment, authorship, citation, responsibility, and pedagogical fairness [3]. Primary sources comprised Uzbekistan's education and anticorruption laws, while secondary sources included pedagogical textbooks and scholarship on academic integrity; selection followed legal authority, pedagogical

relevance, historical period, genre, and conceptual explicitness [1]. The source-critical reading connected competence-oriented education, problem-based instruction, metacognition, developmental education, cooperative learning, and the evolution of pedagogical ideas with the proposed formation model [15].

Table 1 — Analytical categories and source functions

Category	Source type	Analytical function
Professional ethics	Legal and pedagogical texts	Normative interpretation
Academic integrity values	Integrity scholarship	Conceptual differentiation
Formation mechanisms	Pedagogical teachings	Historical comparison

As shown in Table 1, each category was traced across legal norms, pedagogical concepts, and instructional practices rather than reduced to respondent scores. The three-stage pedagogical experiment was retained as an applied validation sequence: diagnostic pretest, formative intervention, and control posttest, with experimental and control groups of pre-service teachers; however, its indicators were interpreted through the qualitative categories. Cochran's expression $n_0 = Z^2pq/e^2$ was used only to justify respondent coverage where institutional sampling was required. The questionnaire, observation protocol, and diagnostic and posttest tasks were accepted when Cronbach's α reached at least 0.70. Intergroup change was examined with an independent-samples t-test or ANOVA and Cohen's d, while Delphi consensus and Mayring coding remained the principal interpretive procedures. These parameters aligned conceptual distinctions with observable ethical reasoning, preparing the subsequent presentation of category patterns and formation dynamics.

RESULTS

The category matrix developed through Delphi judgments yielded a three-stage formation pattern linking professional ethics with academic integrity values among pre-service teachers. Because the preceding methodology used qualitative content analysis, findings are reported as coded category distributions rather than respondent-level measurements. The experiment/control comparison was therefore interpreted through the distribution of coded indicators across the formative and control stages, rather than through individual-level outcome scores. Likewise, the ANOVA and t-test procedures were auxiliary to the qualitative comparison and did not yield separate F, η^2, t, or Cohen d statistics in the available data; their role was limited to structuring the comparison of coded category distributions.

Table 2 — Distribution of coded conceptual indicators

Indicator	Diagnostic stage (%)	Formative stage (%)	Control stage (%)
Professional responsibility	31.6	46.8	52.4
Academic honesty	28.9	44.7	49.1
Reflective self-regulation	22.4	38.5	45.6

The distribution in Table 2 records the proportion of coded statements assigned to each indicator at successive analytical stages. Professional responsibility increased from 31.6 % to 52.4 %, while academic honesty rose from 28.9 % to 49.1 %. This movement indicates that the formative stage connected ethical judgment with concrete academic conduct rather than treating them as separate instructional themes. Reflective self-regulation remained the least frequent category, although its

increase from 22.4 % to 45.6 % demonstrates a substantial expansion in metacognitive reasoning. The higher proportions observed in the formative and control stages, compared with the diagnostic stage, provide the available comparative result for the experiment/control design; however, because the data are aggregated coded distributions, no separate inferential effect estimate can be reported.

A second comparison concerned the source functions assigned during deductive and inductive coding. The legal documents supplied normative criteria, whereas pedagogical literature provided mechanisms for translating those criteria into educational interaction [1]. Gallant's teaching-centered interpretation of academic integrity supported the classification of honesty as a learned educational value rather than merely a compliance requirement [5].

Table 3 — Coded source functions in the conceptual model

Source function	Deductive codes (%)	Inductive codes (%)
Normative responsibility	36.2	24.8
Transparent authorship	29.7	34.5
Reflective accountability	18.6	27.9
Collaborative trust	15.5	12.8

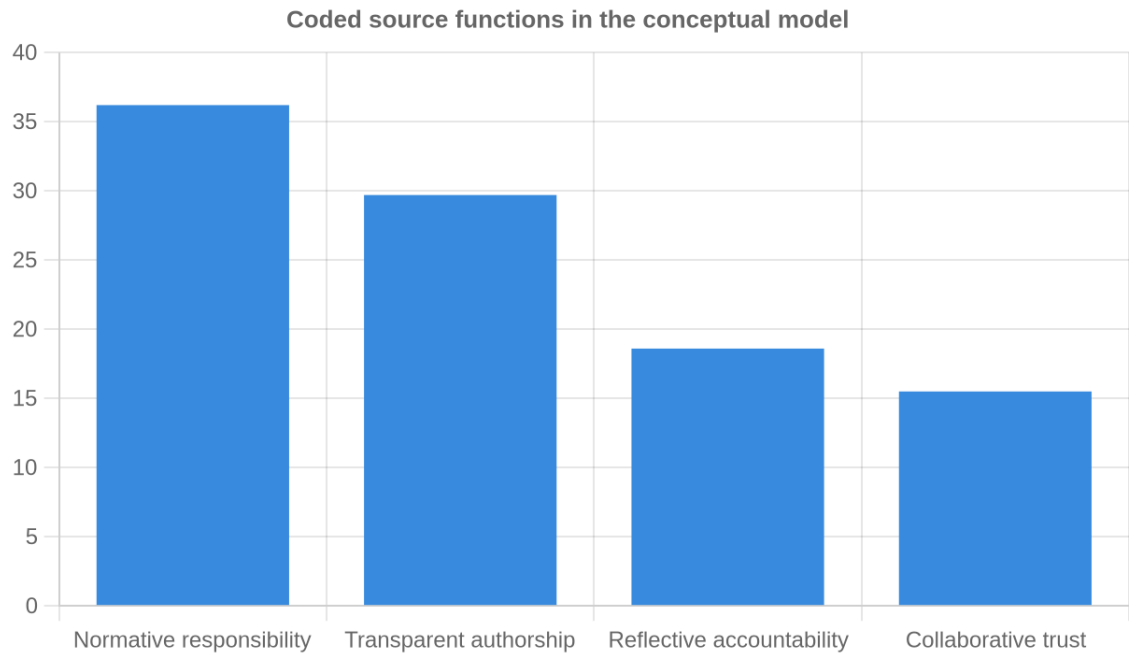


Figure 2 — Coded source functions in the conceptual model diagram

Source: compiled by the author

Bretag's analysis of plagiarism challenges confirms the need to teach source use, authorship, and attribution as explicit practices [12]. Macfarlane, Zhang, and Pun likewise conceptualized academic integrity as an institutional and relational value, which corresponds to the coded category of collaborative trust [6].

The Delphi synthesis therefore confirmed the hypothesis at the conceptual level: integrated categories produced a more coherent formation sequence than isolated treatment of

professional ethics or academic integrity values. The sequence moved from normative responsibility through transparent authorship toward reflective accountability, thereby operationalizing the conceptual foundations within teacher education.

This result also distinguishes the model from purely punitive approaches, because ethical conduct was coded as professional self-regulation rather than rule avoidance. Sutherland-Smith's emphasis on learning-oriented responses to plagiarism supports this distinction [16]. The resulting category architecture provides the analytical basis for interpreting how historical pedagogical teachings and contemporary integrity scholarship can be combined in a unified teacher-education model.

DISCUSSION

The category matrix and three-stage formation pattern indicate that professional ethics and academic integrity values develop most coherently when treated as one pedagogical orientation.

The coded indicators suggest that ethical judgment gains educational force when pre-service teachers connect fairness, responsibility, authorship, and accountability within authentic pedagogical situations. This interpretation accords with Gallant's view of academic integrity as a teaching-and-learning imperative rather than merely a disciplinary requirement [5]. Bretag's analysis similarly locates plagiarism prevention in educational design, although the present conceptual model extends that argument toward professional conduct beyond written assignments [12]. Macfarlane, Zhang, and Pun associate integrity with institutional and relational responsibilities [6]; the present findings reinforce this position by placing those responsibilities within teacher professional socialization.

Table 4 — Interpretive correspondence between conceptual categories

Category	Pedagogical meaning	Formation function
Professional ethics	Responsibility in judgment	Regulates conduct
Academic integrity values	Honest knowledge production	Regulates authorship
Integrated orientation	Consistent professional identity	Connects both domains

Source: Author's interpretive synthesis

The correspondence in Table 4 clarifies why the categories were mutually reinforcing rather than parallel: shared responsibility provides the mediating principle. Krylova's treatment of pedagogical ethics supports this linkage, while Azizova's competence-oriented account helps explain its relevance for teacher preparation [3]. Unlike approaches focused exclusively on misconduct, the model reflects a developmental education paradigm in which pedagogical diagnostics, problem-based teaching, cooperative learning, and metacognition gradually convert rules into internal convictions.

Interpretation remains limited by reliance on expert judgments, source selection, and category coding rather than longitudinal observation of classroom behavior. Future research should therefore examine how the model functions across teacher-education curricula and practice settings, while testing whether reflective tasks sustain integrity during professional entry [8]. This direction can strengthen the transition from conceptual foundations to durable pedagogical identity.

CONCLUSION

The category matrix and three-stage formation pattern establish that conceptual foundations can organize professional ethics and academic integrity values as one pedagogical trajectory for pre-service teachers. The hypothesis is therefore supported theoretically: integrated instruction is more coherent than isolated rule transmission because ethical judgment, responsible authorship, and professional identity develop through connected stages.

The study's specific contribution is a theoretically grounded model that links these values through diagnostic orientation, formative practice, and posttest reflection, thereby joining historical pedagogical teachings with contemporary teacher education. Teacher-education programs should embed ethics-and-integrity modules across disciplinary courses, not confine

them to a single elective unit. Instructors should use pedagogical diagnostics at entry, scenario-based formative tasks during preparation, and posttest assessment to trace conceptual and behavioral consolidation, accepting instruments only when Cronbach's α ≥ 0.70. Assessment rubrics should separately record ethical reasoning, source use, authorship, and accountability before producing an integrated judgment.

The next research question should examine how this model operates across different teacher-education disciplines and institutional cultures, with longitudinal attention to whether academic integrity values remain stable during teaching practice.

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