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Codes of Ethics in Public Universities: Foundations, Challenges and Perspectives for their Implementation

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ABSTRACT: Codes of ethics in public universities are key instruments for strengthening an institutional culture based on integrity, responsibility, and respect for democratic values. This article analyzes the role that these codes play in university governance, academic life, and professional training, highlighting their importance in contexts where transparency, equity, and accountability are growing demands. Through a theoretical review and institutional experiences in Latin America, the challenges in its formulation, appropriation and implementation are examined. It is concluded that for codes of ethics to be effective, they must be accompanied by pedagogical processes, active participation of the university community and institutional mechanisms that guarantee their application.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, public universities have faced the growing demand for greater transparency, accountability, and social responsibility. In this scenario, codes of ethics have emerged as fundamental tools to guide the conduct of the different university actors, students, teachers, researchers, and administrative staff, and to strengthen their institutional legitimacy in the social context in which they operate.

The objective of this article is to analyze the role of codes of ethics in public universities, addressing their theoretical foundations, their impact on organizational culture and the main challenges faced in their implementation. The central hypothesis is that the mere existence of a Code of Ethics does not guarantee institutional ethical behavior, but that its effectiveness depends on its integration into university life and the collective commitment that is assumed to observe its principles.

Codes of ethics are formal declarations that include principles and norms that must govern the behavior of the members of an institution. In the university environment, these documents transcend simple regulations to become demands, for all members of the university community, to assume an explicit commitment to values such as academic honesty, equity, freedom of thought, mutual respect, or social responsibility, among others. (Ramírez & Solano, 2018).

From the professional and organizational points of view, codes of ethics fulfill pedagogical, normative, and symbolic functions. They help to delimit what is acceptable and unacceptable, promote ethical reflection and contribute to the construction of a culture of integrity. (Cortina, 2009).

Codes of ethics are instruments that allow the healthy development of institutions, both public and private, to be founded. Their importance lies in the fact that they establish a precise framework of principles and values that guide the conduct of people in their professional functions and, in this way, contribute to the construction of fairer, more transparent, and responsible work environments.

Codes of ethics are normative and educational references, which not only establish what is allowed or prohibited, but also promote reflection on what should be, responsibility and the ethical consequences of the decisions that are adopted in professional practice. In the university environment, they serve to delimit unacceptable practices such as plagiarism, nepotism, or discrimination, while reinforcing the practice of values such as intellectual honesty, equity, and respect for diversity. (Shishkin & Smimova, 2021).

Its validity contributes to strengthening institutional trust. When a community knows that there are clear and shared rules, and that there are legitimate mechanisms to enforce them, internal cohesion, and external credibility increase. This is especially relevant in public universities, where accountability and exemplarity are essential to maintain the support of society and ensure the fulfillment of their roles and functions, with an orientation to the common good.

Codes of ethics favor the development of a culture of prevention, rather than punishment. By establishing clear patterns of behavior, they help prevent conflicts, abuses of power, and inappropriate behavior. Instead of waiting for problematic situations to occur, they promote self-regulation, critical judgment, and institutional commitment in daily action.

These codes contribute to the strengthening of institutional cohesion and identity. By defining the values that an institution adopts, they stand as guiding principles that are assumed in a sense of belonging, shared purpose and collective responsibility that goes beyond individual behavior.

Codes of ethics are not mere administrative formalities. They are living and necessary instruments to guarantee responsible behavior, guide decision-making in complex contexts and consolidate an institutional culture based on respect, justice, and integrity. Their effectiveness, however, depends on whether they are known, applied, and assumed by the entire community. (Silvera. 2023).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research has been conducted by applying the documentary methodology. This is how we have analyzed, in the current university legislation, the aspects related to the codes of ethics of teachers. In this task, we have found that the University Law does not establish any Code of Ethics, but it does recommend that each University, in the exercise of its autonomy, approve its respective Code of Ethics. To this end, it establishes mechanisms such as the Court of Honor, which enables the effective institutionalization of university Codes of Ethics.

With the methodology of comparative research, we have found that very few universities in Peru have approved their respective codes of ethics. The universities of San Marcos and Federico Villarreal can be considered pioneers in this aspect, as we find high motivation to implement their respective Codes of Ethics. (Federico Villarreal National University, 2021).

Private universities, for their part, are focusing on ensuring ethics in research. For this reason, they are strengthening regulations related to these tasks, putting them into operation, at the institutional level, their respective Research Ethics Committees. (Peruvian University of Applied Sciences, 2020).

3. RESULTS

3.1. Previous studies

Prieto (2019), argues that there is conceptual confusion regarding ethics and personal and social values. Many teachers understand ethics primarily as moral and recognize values such as honesty, respect, and social justice as priorities in their daily practice. He highlights that the most valued attitudes in teaching are motivation, openness to change, willingness to help and permanent dialogue. The study highlights the need to understand ethics to improve the ethical-moral competencies of teachers and emphasizes that, although they recognize the importance of ethics, they lack a clear and systematic understanding of its foundations, which limits their commitment, so it recommends implementing ethical commitment programs to strengthen their attitudes and competencies in this area. to improve the quality of the educational service and the social impact produced by the University. According to Prieto (2019), medical teachers recognize the importance of values such as honesty and respect, but they have confusions about ethical concepts.

Sánchez (2020) analyzes the importance of ethics in university teaching, pointing out that ethical training is inherent to teaching, including research and social service. It highlights that there is a severe ethical crisis in Peruvian society that also affects the academic field, even though it is an indispensable element to train upright and responsible professionals. It recommends that

ethics should be integrated transversally into teacher training and practice to face the social and educational challenges of the country and thus strengthen its ethical-moral values.

Zapata Jaramillo, et al. (2021), point out that ethical and moral values are the central axis in teaching conduct and have a direct impact on the professional training of students. The authors highlight the need to strengthen these values to ensure quality education and its positive impact on society. The authors conclude by emphasizing that higher education should promote the ethical training of teachers as an essential component for the integral development of future professionals and to respond to current social challenges, because ethical and moral values guide the conduct of teachers and affect the training of students.

Cesario, María del Carmen et al. (2024), highlight the importance of integrity, justice, and equity in university teaching to foster an ethical learning environment. They stress that clear institutional policies and timely accountability are determinants of teachers' ethical behavior. The authors conclude that fostering a culture of accountability and transparency in universities is a key factor in promoting ethical conduct, which in turn strengthens trust and well-being in the academic community, considering that integrity and fairness are essential in the exercise of quality university teaching.

3.2. Codes of ethics in public universities

In Latin America, many public universities have adopted codes of ethics as part of their institutional reforms. However, the diversity in its content, structure and implementation mechanisms complicates its application. In some cases, these are documents that are widely discussed and legitimized by the university community. In others, their elaboration is the result of external demands, and their application is merely formal.

Among the common aspects of these codes is the prohibition of plagiarism, they recommend avoiding conflicts of interest, promoting equal treatment, and defending academic freedom. However, challenges persist related to their lack of knowledge and commitment on the part of the actors, the lack of effective mechanisms for their dissemination and evaluation, and their weak articulation with other normative instruments of the respective institutions. (Maldonado-Mendiburu et al. 2021).

3.3. Analysis of Law 30220

The University Law of Peru, Law No. 30220, although it does not contain a specific Code of Ethics for teachers, establishes a framework that integrates the ethical and disciplinary principles and the procedures that universities must follow in these cases. The most relevant is explained below.

Ethical principles and teaching duties. The Law defines the University as "an academic community oriented to research and teaching" and states that it must be governed by principles such as truthfulness, academic quality, academic freedom, critical spirit, pluralism, and respect for human dignity. These ethical foundations inspire the behavior that university teachers must observe.

Duties, obligations, and prohibitions. Articles 88 et seq. of the Teaching Staff Regulations, derived from the Law, establish duties such as assuming a high moral standard to perform functions with honesty, responsibility, and respect for the university community.

University Court of Honor. The Law introduces a body specialized in ethics such as the University Court of Honor, whose main functions are to issue value judgments on ethical issues involving students or teachers and to propose, to the University Council, sanctions when ethical misconduct is identified. This tribunal is made up of three main professors of recognized trajectory, elected by the Council or the University Assembly. This body is autonomous and must observe due process in accordance with the General Administrative Procedure.

Sanctions for ethical misconduct. Teachers who violate the principles and duties are subject to sanctions in proportion to their severity. Minor offences are punishable by a written warning; the less minor ones are punished with suspension for up to 30 days without pay; serious offences, with temporary cessation from 31 days to 12 months; and the profoundly serious ones, with definitive dismissal. These offenses include acts such as kidnapping, violence, both physical and psychological, harassment or behaviors that damage the dignity of people. Likewise, in the event of serious accusations such as sexual harassment or other crimes, the Law orders the preventive dismissal of the teacher until the disciplinary process is concluded.

Ethical duties. They derive from the Statute and university regulations, inspired by the principles of the University Law, Law 30220 which, although it does not include a Code of Ethics, requires universities to design and apply their own code of principles

and duties, in addition to establishing an ethical-disciplinary system through the Court of Honor and a regime of sanctions in relation to their proportionality. In this sense, the Federico Villarreal National University is a paradigmatic example that reflects what other national universities must establish. (Congress of the Republic of Peru, 2014).

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Principles of Teacher Conduct

A Code of Ethics must specify that the teacher is guided by values such as loyalty, sincerity, legality, responsibility, probity, respect, honesty, rectitude, equal treatment, attitude of service and courtesy. In addition, it must emphasize that the relationship with students must be governed by principles of seriousness, justice, kindness, honorability, and discretion, committing to promote a formative experience based on respect for dignity. Below, we analyze the most important ones.

Unrestricted compliance with their duties as a teacher. Especially when it comes to obligations of utmost importance such as demonstrating a vocation for service and continuous updating in pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge. To promote a formative relationship with each student, which enriches their personal and professional development guided by ethical and moral conduct. Every teacher must establish respectful and democratic relationships with their colleagues, authorities, and students. Acting with discretion and maintaining a formative, fair and cordial relationship with students, without undermining their pedagogical authority, is expected of teachers. (Ccolque Tarifa, J. 2020).

Continuous updating and training. Teachers are obliged to be trained and undergo constant and continuous evaluations to improve the quality of their performance, incorporate and transfer new techniques, methodologies and knowledge in the teaching and learning processes they direct.

Participate in the fight against corruption. The code must be noticeably clear in stating that the professor must refuse favors, bribes, or influence peddling, both inside and outside the University, and that he is obliged to report to the competent authorities any ethical or moral irregularity that he detects. The Code of Ethics of the Federico Villarreal National University establishes a clear list of values and expected behaviors, details the specific duties of the teacher in his or her work, regulates relations with students, colleagues and authorities, requires continuous training, professional improvement, promotes a firm commitment in the fight against corruption and establishes the respective complaint mechanisms. (Cuse-Quipe, J. 2022).

4.2. Importance of codes of ethics

A university Code of Ethics is a formal set of principles, norms and values that regulate the conduct of faculty members such as teachers, students, researchers, and authorities. Its purpose is to guarantee integrity, respect, and professional behavior, in accordance with the academic and social purposes of the University. They are manifested in formal documents that articulate values, principles and standards of conduct expected of the members of the academic community.

Their importance is vital in university life because they constitute a frame of reference and guide for conduct. These codes, by setting certain institutional expectations, clearly define what is considered acceptable and unacceptable in each context, which eliminates ambiguity and guides sound decision-making, as they are based on explicit norms and not on personal or subjective opinions. Every Code of Ethics provides precise guidance because it is a reference document so that authorities, professors, or students can resolve daily or complex ethical dilemmas that arise in the context of institutional life. (UNESCO, 2005).

Codes of ethics strengthen institutional protection and reputation, because a solid code, clearly drafted, known by all and applied in a timely manner, generates trust among members of the academic community and society in general, because it is the demonstration of the commitment to integrity that goes beyond simple compliance with legal regulations. In the event of the occurrence of any wrongdoing, the code provides the basis for fair and consistent disciplinary action, showing the public that the organization takes ethics seriously and is willing to correct errors or wrongdoing.

It is also a powerful factor in mitigating institutional risks, because by establishing standards of conduct, it helps prevent illegal or harmful actions, such as fraud, corruption, or harassment, thus reducing legal and financial risks for the institution.

A code of ethics strengthens the institutional culture, by promoting identity and cohesion and contributes to cementing an organizational culture based on shared values. It promotes a sense of belonging and guides individual actions with the mission and vision of the entity. When promoting social responsibility, many modern codes include principles of corporate social

responsibility or social commitment, ensuring that institutional decisions are made based on the potential impact on the community.

They facilitate compliance with legal norms and make self-regulation viable, because they are complementary to the Law, which establishes the mandatory minimum, but codes of ethics raise the standard, encouraging behavior that is ethically superior to what is required by law. For this reason, they serve as a basis for establishing self-regulation mechanisms, such as in specific professions, such as medicine, law, or engineering, which are essential to establish self-regulation mechanisms. They enable the profession to maintain the trust of society and ensure that its members act with standards of competence and a sense of morality. (Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, 2023).

For all the above, codes of ethics are essential because they transform abstract ideals into operational principles that guide conduct, protect the integrity of institutions, and contribute to the establishment of a more just and trustworthy society.

4.3. Critical aspects of a university Code of Ethics

There are many critical aspects of a university Code of Ethics. In what follows we try to explain the most important aspects that we have identified in this research.

About the clarity and specificity of principles. If the code is expressed in vague or overly generic terms, such as "acting morally," it does not adequately guide actions. It must precisely promote values such as honesty, responsibility, equity, justice, respect, academic integrity, and the exercise of authority with a pedagogical and moral sense. These are specific behaviors that are expected of both teachers and students.

In terms of its institutional scope. Some codes do not cover all actors; they omit the authorities or administrative personnel. The Code must be transversal to all staff and must include teachers, students, researchers, administrative staff, and authorities.

About the mechanisms of application and sanction. If it is not established who should enforce the code and how it should be enforced, it becomes inoperative. For this reason, it must include a complaint procedure, evaluation criteria, types of proportional sanctions, and guarantees of due process. It must be considered whether it is really applied or symbolic, if there are mechanisms for reporting and sanctioning, if ethics committees or courts of honor work, or if documented cases of application or lack of application are detected.

In terms of its legitimacy. Codes imposed "from above" lack acceptance and commitment from staff. Its drafting must include the participation of teachers, students, and workers, through deliberate and democratic processes. It is necessary to determine the degree of knowledge of the code by teachers as well as attitudes towards ethical norms, ethical dilemmas faced in professional practice.

About its link with the legal and institutional framework. If the University Law is isolated, the Statute or the regulations, it can generate regulatory conflicts. It must be articulated with all of them to be effective.

About ethical training and dissemination. If it is not taught or socialized, it is a dead letter. It must be accompanied by training activities such as workshops, courses, talks and other strategies to integrate it into the institutional culture. Ethics must be understood as part of the pedagogical training of university professors and proposals for continuous training in professional ethics must be made and the role of the University in the promotion of an ethical culture must be defined.

About its periodic updating. A static code can become obsolete in the face of recent problems, such as virtual harassment or artificial intelligence. It should contain clauses for periodic review with the active participation of the community, to include current topics: artificial intelligence, digital relations, new forms of academic violence, and the democratization of code drafting and review processes. (Ramírez & Litardo, 2025; Silvera, 2023).

4.4. Content and usefulness of the University Code of Ethics

The University Code of Ethics must guide the conduct of the members of the faculty, establishing what is considered right or wrong in academic contexts. It must promote institutional values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, justice, and equity. It must prevent conflicts of interest and punish misconduct such as plagiarism, harassment, nepotism, or corruption. It must strengthen trust among the members of the university community, protect their rights, and ensure the fulfillment of their duties.

The content of a University Code of Ethics is a function of the spirit of the University Law and the Statute of the respective University. It must regulate certain behaviors such as plagiarism or academic falsification, discrimination or sexual, political, racial, or other harassment; it must promote respectful treatment between colleagues and students, the improper use of university resources and maintain transparency in evaluations or research.

The main ethical principles that it must regulate are respect, truthfulness, impartiality, fairness, dignity, confidentiality, abuse of authority and pluralism. In research, it must promote authenticity, scientific integrity, recognition of authorship, and avoid any conflict of interest. In addition, it must establish complaint and sanction mechanisms, defining specific procedures to investigate ethical misconduct and apply sanctions.

4.5. Validity of university codes of ethics

The validity and relevance of codes of ethics in universities are topics of constant debate and of immense importance in the academic and social context. Far from being simple bureaucratic documents, they represent the institutional commitment to integrity, transparency and values that should guide the entire university community.

The strongest arguments in favor of its validity are the following: the fulfillment of the mission of the university, which is the training of professionals and citizens committed to ethical values. Codes serve as a normative and axiological framework that formalizes and communicates this moral requirement, promoting values. Another reason is to maintain academic and scientific integrity, essential aspects to combat misconduct, especially in academic research and evaluation. In this sense, the code establishes clear guidelines on plagiarism, intellectual authorship, data handling, and conflicts of interest. Finally, they must regulate interactions in the academic community by promoting peaceful coexistence, inclusion, the fight against discrimination, and due respect among all members of the community and regulate relations between the University and society.

Despite their fundamental importance, the full validity of codes of ethics faces several challenges, which highlight the need for their constant review and adaptation.

We analyze below the most salient aspects that require constant changes, adaptations, and updates.

The intense impact of emerging technologies. The emergence of modern technologies, especially Artificial Intelligence, poses unprecedented ethical dilemmas in education and research. Codes should be updated to define the acceptable use of these tools, addressing issues of originality, authorship, and integrity in the generation of academic content. (Añaños, F. 2021).

The strengthening of globalization and recognition of the importance of diversity. In a world interconnected by the effects of globalization, universities welcome people with a great diversity of cultures and perspectives. Codes must be flexible and broad enough to maintain their relevance, while respecting cultural diversity.

Assumption of the holistic approach: An effective code must not only be punitive, but also formative. Its validity is reinforced when ethics is actively integrated into the curriculum of vocational training, classroom discussions, and daily practices, becoming part of the institutional culture.

4.6. Main challenges facing its implementation.

The implementation of codes of ethics in universities faces a series of structural and cultural problems and challenges that often make it difficult for these documents to move from theory to effective practice. The main challenges facing the application of codes of ethics in universities are the following.

Strategy to make it effective and applicable. The mere existence of a Code of Ethics does not guarantee its compliance. Its true validity lies in the effectiveness of the dissemination mechanisms, the training of all the faculty and the sanction mechanisms, such as ethics committees or tribunals. If its provisions are not applied rigorously and transparently, the code goes unnoticed and considered a simple documentary formality. Every university Code of Ethics acts as a moral and institutional compass that strengthens academic quality, mutual respect, and professional integrity. It is essential to prevent abuses of power, protect equity in learning and guarantee the prestige and social function of the University.

Identification of the critical aspects of a university Code of Ethics. This identification is essential and determines its effectiveness, legitimacy, and its ability to guide the behavior of the members of the academic community. If these aspects are not well identified, the code can become a decorative or ineffective document. In general, the application of the University

Code of Ethics oversees the courts of honor or ethics commissions, but in their absence, in charge of the university councils, the offices of academic or legal affairs.

Disconnection from daily practice. Since many codes of ethics are perceived as abstract documents and alien to the dynamics of university activity and their weak institutionalization due to the lack of autonomous and transparent bodies in charge of their monitoring and application, their application is significantly difficult. On the other hand, the lack of ethical training of the members of the university faculty, a consequence of the fact that ethics is not always integrated transversally into the curriculum or teacher training, is another factor. This is the reason many teachers have not internalized the precepts of institutional codes of ethics. Finally, the culture of impunity because, in some contexts, impunity for ethical transgressions discourages reporting and weakens institutional trust.

Ambiguity and generality of its provisions. Codes typically use abstract or general language that is difficult to apply to concrete situations faced by students, teachers, and researchers. The lack of clear examples or specific procedures on how to manage certain situations, such as a minor conflict of interest, renders them ineffective.

Speed of technological changes. The codes are not designed to address ethical issues arising from the emergence of Artificial Intelligence and other emerging technologies. The main problems in these cases are cases of authorship, originality, data use, among others, so constant updates are necessary, which are often slow.

Excessive focus on the punitive. If the code is perceived only as a list of prohibitions and sanctions, it breeds resistance and fear rather than promoting an ethical culture. The focus on ethical formation and the development of moral judgment is lost. However, many codes are conceived and written with this distortion.

Problems of dissemination and lack of an institutional culture. Due to ignorance and lack of training, many members of the university community, especially students and administrative staff, transgress ethical issues, since they never received adequate training on their meaning and practical application, due to ignorance of the rules.

The well-known culture of indifference is another factor, as the actions and attitudes of leaders and professors carry more weight than the legal document. If cases of ethical misconduct are ignored or handled inconsistently, the code becomes a mere formality that undermines its credibility.

Resistance and lack of identification. Some professionals, especially experienced professors and researchers, see the code as an unnecessary interference with their academic autonomy or a bureaucratic imposition with no practical value, leading to resistance to compliance.

Obstacles arising from its application. These obstacles are many, among which we highlight the lack of integrity infrastructure, in the sense that the University does not have the adequate mechanisms and resources for its application. This leads to weak ethics committees or insufficient staff and training, absence of clear protocols for reporting and investigating misconduct, lack of dedicated time on the part of committee members, risk of conflicts of interest, due to the fact that the committees in charge of investigating misconduct are usually composed of peers, which leads to institutional pressure, favoritism or fear of sanctioning colleagues, especially high-profile or powerful colleagues. Inconsistency in the sanction is another obstacle, because when similar offenses receive different punishments, a perception of injustice and arbitrariness is generated. The absence of a system of precedents or clear sanction guidelines prevents many cases from not being reported.

Fear of reporting or retaliation. Students or employees who report ethical misconduct, such as fraud or harassment, fear retaliation from teachers, such as low grades, loss of research opportunities, etc., which favors silence and impunity. (Caballero Montañez, L. 2014).

For codes of ethics to be truly valid, universities must address them not only as normative documents, but as programs for the development of organizational culture, investing in training, transparency in application and continuously reforming the content. Overcoming these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that combines normative measures with educational processes, spaces for deliberation and active participation of all university levels.

However, the validity of university codes of ethics is more urgent than ever, but dynamic processes of continuous review and adaptation to the challenges of modernity and sustained implementation are required to ensure that the principles established on paper are translated into ethical conduct in university life.

4.7. The Code of Ethics of the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos

Based on the University Law, its Statute, its Teaching Regulations, and institutional directives, it prescribes the following with respect to ethical values: respect, pluralism, academic freedom, human dignity, democratic participation, ethics, and transparency. It promotes values such as respect for the person and human dignity, freedom of thought, expression and teaching, ethics and transparency, equality, tolerance and responsibility, democratic participation, and pluralism.

With regard to the duties of the teacher, it establishes that teachers must comply with the University Law, the Statute and internal regulations, teach with academic rigor, suitability, responsibility, respect for intellectual property, professional ethics and conceptual openness, develop research and innovation, constantly improve and generate intellectual production, provide tutoring, participate in curricular improvement and comply with reports, carrying their overdue hour, maintaining dignified conduct, without discrimination, defending the prestige and heritage of the university. In this sense, all university professors must provide fair treatment to students, maintain objectivity in evaluation, and fulfill all their academic and professional functions. In academic management, it must maintain transparency, leadership, and institutional commitment. (Congress of the Republic of Peru, 2014; UNMSM, 2016a; UNMSM, 2016b).

The UNMSM Researcher Code of Ethics regulates all phases of scientific work – from formulation to dissemination – with the principles of rectitude, honesty, and truthfulness, as well as ethical responsibility that is supervised by the Office of the Vice-Rector for Research and Graduate Studies. The important thing in this aspect is that plagiarism and conflicts of interest must be avoided.

About the disciplinary regime and sanctions, the Statute of the UNMSM provides for disciplinary sanctions for ethical misconduct, applicable after the Administrative Disciplinary Procedure. This process is also regulated by legal provisions and sanctions are applied according to the seriousness of the infraction, guaranteeing due process. (UNMSMN, 2021).

The UNMSM has a robust ethical framework for teachers. Its legal basis is clear, as it is based on the Law, its Statute, and its academic regulations. The institutional values are well defined and are respectable and transparent.

5. CONCLUSION

FIRST: Codes of ethics are valuable instruments for consolidating an institutional culture based on shared values and principles. However, its effectiveness does not lie in the mere existence of the document, but in its appropriation, legitimization, and effective application in university life. Only in this way will the codes become effective means of institutional transformation and strengthening of the University's social commitment.

SECOND: Public universities must promote the participatory elaboration of codes and encourage their members to assume the commitment to comply with them, developing continuous ethics training programs for all university actors, establishing autonomous, plural ethics committees with effective sanctioning capacity and periodically evaluating their validity and effectiveness to incorporate, later, the most effective feedback mechanisms.

THIRD. There is a wide variety of codes of ethics in universities. Some research shows that private universities have more complete and detailed codes than public universities.

FOURTH. Often, codes tend to focus more on research ethics, to promote integrity, prevent plagiarism, efficient data handling or avoid conflicts of interest. They put ethics in teaching or administrative management in the background.

FIFTH. Most university codes share a core of common ethical foundations, such as honesty, integrity, respect, social responsibility, transparency, justice, and accountability.

SIXTH. Many codes seek to transcend professional responsibilities to aspire to contribute to social welfare and the formation of responsible citizens.

SEVENTH. There is a gap between the written norm and everyday practice. The code is often perceived as an 'abstract normativity' because it is not always accompanied by a deep and continuous ethical reflection on the part of university actors.

SEVENTH. The code needs not only exist but be accompanied by an effective "academic integrity infrastructure," including active ethics committees, clear mechanisms for reporting malpractice, and monitoring and sanctioning processes.

EIGHTH. The most effective and relevant codes of ethics are those that are adapted to the singularities of the institution, are realistic, applicable in practice, balanced, reviewable, and subject to periodic updates.

NINTH. A poorly conceived code can be perceived as a mere instrument of bureaucratic control, focused on the punitive and limiting the autonomy of researchers or teachers.

TENTH. The challenge lies in the quality of the code, in terms of it being specific and comprehensive and that it is implemented culturally and structurally to ensure that ethics is a living practice and not dependent only on a formal document.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Degollación Andrés Páucar-Coz, Isabel Angélica Quillatupa-Machuca, Elías Jesús Mejía-Mejía: Conceptualization, Investigation.

Isabel Angélica Quillatupa-Machuca, Elías Jesús Mejía-Mejía: Methodology, Laboratory Analysis.

Isabel Angélica Quillatupa-Machuca, Elías Jesús Mejía-Mejía: Data Curation, Formal Analysis.

Degollación Andrés Páucar-Coz, Isabel Angélica Quillatupa-Machuca, Elías Jesús Mejía-Mejía: Supervision, Writing—Review & Editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical approval was not required for this study.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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