

Reframing teacher vocation through ethics: Deontological foundations for educational practice

 Jorge Luis Castillo-Lamadrid^{1*}

¹Universidad César Vallejo. Lima – Perú; jlcastillo@ucvvirtual.edu.pe (J.L.C.L.).

Abstract: The teaching profession faces increasing ethical and vocational challenges in a globalized and technocratic educational context. In Latin America, particularly in Peru, the weakening of professional commitment and the undervaluation of ethical responsibility have generated growing concerns about the integrity and purpose of teacher education. This study addresses this issue by analyzing how professional vocation and deontological principles shape educational practice, identity, and policy. The objective of this research is to examine the relationship between teacher vocation and professional ethics from a deontological perspective and to assess how these elements contribute to the quality and integrity of teaching in the Peruvian educational system. A systematic review was conducted using the PRISMA protocol, analyzing 23 peer-reviewed articles indexed in Scopus, Scielo, and Web of Science from 2020 to 2024. The selection criteria focused on studies addressing ethics, teacher identity, vocation, and educational governance. The analysis revealed four emergent thematic categories: (1) the erosion of vocational identity in neoliberal systems, (2) the role of ethical frameworks in shaping teacher performance, (3) vocation as a dynamic construct developed through experience, and (4) deontology as a normative foundation for pedagogical action. Despite institutional codes of ethics, ethical education remains insufficiently integrated into teacher training in Peru. The study concludes that teacher vocation, grounded in deontological ethics, is essential for sustaining educational quality, professional responsibility, and social trust. Its findings offer actionable insights for educational governance, curriculum design, and teacher policy in developing contexts.

Keywords: *Deontology, Educational quality, Professional vocation, Teacher training, Teaching ethics.*

1. Introduction

The professional teaching vocation is a concept that goes beyond the simple choice of a career; it involves an internal orientation and a deep desire to serve society through education. In this sense, vocation is presented as an essential factor in the ethical formation of teachers, as it provides meaning and purpose to their professional work. This study focuses on analyzing professional vocation from a deontological perspective, which views ethics as a set of norms and principles that guide the teacher's actions in the exercise of their profession. The importance of this analysis lies in the fact that vocation and ethics are fundamental elements that ensure quality education, based on respect, responsibility, and honesty—qualities that should prevail in teaching practice.

Globally, the professional teaching vocation faces serious challenges due to the increasing commercialization of education, driven by globalization. Teachers in various contexts face a situation where economic motivation and academic competitiveness prevail over the ethical aspects of the profession, impacting educational performance and teaching quality. According to international reports, such as the National Educational Project (PEN) for 2036, many universities have been affected by this phenomenon, becoming lucrative businesses and relegating ethical and vocational training to a secondary level [1, 2]. This crisis in professional vocation is also linked to the lack of adequate ethical training, leading to a devoid of social commitment and moral responsibility.

In the Peruvian context, the problem is particularly evident. In Peru, teacher professional ethics has not been sufficiently addressed in the academic training of future teachers. Although the National Educational Project for 2036 mentions the importance of ethics in education, its implementation remains limited, and teacher training in deontology has been scarce [3]. This situation is exacerbated by cases of ethical violations and professionalism that have affected education, such as recent scandals in which teachers have been accused of abuse toward students. The lack of comprehensive training, which includes deep reflection on vocation and professional ethics, compromises not only educational quality but also the public's trust in the Peruvian educational system.

This study is essential for understanding the relationship between professional vocation and teacher ethics at a time when higher education is marked by a crisis of values and the predominance of economic interests over holistic training. The central question of this research is: *How does the professional teaching vocation, from a deontological perspective, influence the development of a solid ethics among educators in Peru?* This question is key as it addresses a gap in the ethical and vocational training of teachers and offers a deep reflection on how to improve educational quality by strengthening vocation and deontology in teaching. The research will provide significant contributions to the educational field by proposing concrete solutions for a more ethical education committed to society.

1.1. Conceptual Theoretical Definition

Teacher deontology, understood as the set of norms and ethical principles that guide the professional practice of teachers, plays a crucial role in the educational context. According to Arias [4] teacher deontology refers to the duties and responsibilities that educators must assume to ensure educational quality, with a focus on justice, respect, and honesty. This discipline is based on ethical principles aimed at ensuring appropriate professional conduct in interactions with students, parents, and colleagues [5]. Additionally, it is closely linked to teacher vocation, understood as the moral impulse that directs educators to perform their tasks beyond mere obligation [6]. Vocation is not just a personal desire or inclination, but an ethical responsibility that guides pedagogical actions and, according to Guayana [7] is connected to social transformation through education. Likewise, Gutiérrez [8] defines teacher vocation as a deep commitment to formation.

Previous studies have shown various correlations between teacher vocation and educational quality. For example, a study by Peñaranda and Casadiegos Santana [3] found that 75% of teachers who reported a strong sense of educational vocation achieved better results in their students' performance. Furthermore, the relationship between professional ethics and teaching effectiveness has been demonstrated in various studies, such as that of Buxarrais [9] who found that teachers with ethical and vocational commitment in their profession had a 65% higher probability of improving academic competencies in their students. Other studies, such as Ayala Garcia and Huamaní Huamán [6] have indicated that teacher vocation is significantly correlated with job satisfaction and emotional well-being, contributing to a more positive educational environment.

1.2. General and Specific Theories Related to the Study Variable

Regarding the theories that have addressed the variables of deontology and teacher vocation, various perspectives enrich the analysis of teaching practice. One of the most influential is Bentham [5] utilitarian ethical theory which proposes that the morality of an action should be judged based on its ability to maximize general well-being, which can be applied in the teaching context by considering that educators should act in ways that maximize benefits for their students and society. On the other hand, Mayer Granados, et al. [10] deontological ethical theory directly relates to teacher deontology, emphasizing that the teacher has a moral duty independent of consequences, which aligns with the ethical obligation to educate, as argued by Baltodano Enríquez [1]. Finally, Hirsch Adler [11] professional identity theory proposes that teacher vocation is not only a moral act but also a social and professional construction developed throughout the teaching career, enabling educators to develop a solid moral identity in their work.

Teacher deontology and professional vocation are two closely related concepts that define the ethical and professional behavior of educators. The review of theories and previous studies highlights the importance of these concepts in improving educational quality and the well-being of both teachers and students. Although studies have demonstrated the relevance of vocation and ethics in teaching practice, gaps still remain in how these aspects can be systematically integrated into teacher training and educational policies. This research aims to fill those gaps, providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between deontology, vocation, and educational quality, and offering recommendations to strengthen these principles in educational practice.

2. Methodology

The path taken to achieve the goal of this research is a systematic review article, addressing various scientific articles on professional vocation, ethics, and educational deontology. The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) method by Tricco, et al. [12] was followed.

2.1. Procedure

The research followed four stages of search. The first step in the methodology was to select the keywords, which were as follows: professional vocation, ethics, deontology, education, and globalized world. Scientific articles related to these keywords were sought in databases such as Scielo, Scopus, and Web of Science, resulting in 736 articles in the initial general search. The next figure will show the following data:

Table 1.

Process of Filtering Scientific Articles by Database, Area, Temporality, and Relevance to the Research.

Filtering Stage	Scielo	Scopus	Web of Science	Total Articles
First Filter: Keyword search	431	298	107	736
Second Filter: By thematic areas	141	202	21	364
Third Filter: By temporality (2020–2024)	49	21	7	77
Fourth Filter: Relevance to the research topic	14	5	4	23

2.2. Article Search Process

In the first stage of the article search, several sources were consulted, with the most important databases being: Scielo, Scopus, and Web of Science. A total of 736 articles were registered. In the Scielo database, 431 articles were obtained; in Scopus, 298 articles; and in Web of Science, 107 articles.

2.3. Second Criterion

The following areas were considered: medicine, social sciences, arts and humanities, and economics. A total of 372 articles were eliminated, leaving 364 in the second selection. The final count was: 141 articles from Scielo, 202 from Scopus, and 21 from Web of Science. The selected research articles were of a qualitative descriptive type, with a hermeneutic design. The selection focused on the problem of ethics in education, excluding articles that had no connection to deontological ethics. The problem has a social, economic, scientific, and educational context. To understand, analyze, and deepen this problematic reality, its causes, and consequences, serious, current, reliable, and scientifically valuable sources were sought.

2.4. Third Stage

In the third stage, temporal criteria were applied. Articles published between 2020 and 2024, with a maximum age of five years, were considered. To systematically organize the information, an Excel spreadsheet was created as the database, where the title of the article, the author's name, keywords, methodology, population, and sample were recorded. A Word document was also developed to select the scientific articles based on their importance and relevance to the research. A total of 77 articles were selected: 49 from Scielo, 21 from Scopus, and 7 from Web of Science. The selection criteria were based

on the PRISMA method. The most relevant and comprehensive concepts from the literature were sought and collected.

2.5. Fourth Filter: Relevance to the Topic

The selected articles were directly related to the research topic. The final result was 23 articles: 14 from Scielo, 5 from Scopus, and 4 from Web of Science. This stage followed a hermeneutic, descriptive criterion to analyze, understand, and critically interpret the scientific value of the research. The research article is built on philosophical, ethical, and deontological criteria, which will help in proposing an axiological framework that can be applied in the education sector.

To determine which articles had the most relevance and impact for the study, a flowchart was created.

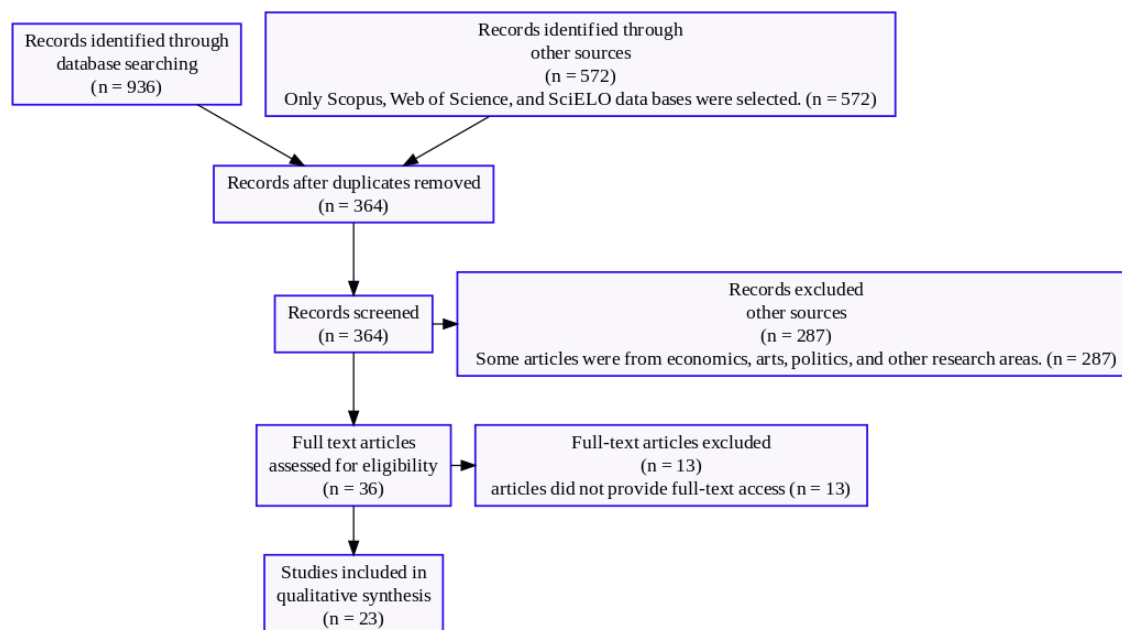


Figure 1.

Article Selection Process by Database, Area, Temporal Criteria, and Relevance to the Research.

Note: Diagram generated using the PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram Tool <https://hollyhartman.shinyapps.io/PRISMAFlowDiagram/>

Selection Process

For the selection of articles, they were reviewed by the researcher. The inclusion criteria were based on relevance to the topics of vocation, profession, deontological ethics, and education. Articles that did not relate to these themes were excluded from the selection.

The period considered for inclusion was from 2020 to 2024. Out of the 736 articles initially found, a rigorous selection process led to the inclusion of only 23 articles to support the research. The excluded articles were those that did not relate to professional vocation or educational deontology.

3. Results

This systematic review sought to reflect on the professional vocation of teachers from a deontological perspective, identifying key challenges and thematic patterns across 23 selected articles. These studies, extracted from Scopus, Scielo, and Web of Science, were filtered through a rigorous PRISMA process. They offer qualitative insights into how vocation and deontology manifest and intersect within the realities of contemporary education.

As part of the hermeneutic interpretation and thematic analysis of the 23 selected articles, several emergent thematic categories were identified, reflecting the most salient tensions, contributions, and

conceptual approaches related to professional teaching vocation and deontology in educational settings. These categories serve not only to organize findings according to conceptual affinity, but also to offer a critical reading of how contemporary academic literature addresses the ethical dimension of the teaching profession. The identification process followed an inductive qualitative strategy, triangulating recurrent key concepts, theoretical positions, and philosophical orientations expressed across the reviewed studies.

Among the most prominent themes are the crisis of vocational identity in globalized contexts, the role of professional ethics as the foundation of teaching practice, the progressive construction of vocation as a personal and social process, and the deontological framework as a normative and axiological axis in teacher education. These categories reveal that vocation should not be understood as an innate or isolated inclination, but rather as a complex construct shaped by cultural, institutional, and philosophical factors. Likewise, teacher deontology emerges not merely as a set of regulations, but as a lived ethical praxis guiding everyday decisions in educational environments. The resulting table synthesizes this thematic architecture and provides a solid foundation for designing more ethically grounded and vocation-oriented teacher training programs.

Table 2.

Selected studies and main findings.

Emerging Theme	Representative Authors	Description
Crisis of vocational identity	Baltodano Enríquez [1], Collaguazo & Santiago	Teaching is reduced to a functional act under neoliberal models
Vocation and educational effectiveness	Buxarraís [9]	Vocational commitment enhances ethics, responsibility, and student outcomes
Vocation as life project	Ortega and Gasset [13] and Hirsch Adler [11]	Vocation evolves as a combination of purpose and social construction
Deontology as ethical responsibility	Ayala García and Huamaní Huamán [6] and Caraguay Pullaguari and Quishpe Gaibor [14]	Ethical conduct goes beyond legal norms; it's a lived moral engagement

A recurring issue identified in the literature is the weakening of vocational identity in the face of globalized education systems. Authors such as Baltodano Enríquez [1] and Collaguazo Solis and Santiago Quishpe [15] argue that neoliberal policies have commodified education and transformed teaching into a functional rather than an ethical profession. This shift displaces intrinsic motivation, reducing the space for vocation as a driver of professional practice. The tension between external economic pressures and the educator's internal ethical mission is a consistent theme across the literature.

At the same time, the reviewed studies consistently emphasize the link between vocation and educational quality. Botía and Pérez-García [16] along with Buxarraís [9] affirm that teachers with a clear vocational commitment tend to demonstrate stronger ethical behavior, foster student development, and uphold values such as responsibility and integrity. These ethical dispositions are not incidental; they are central to professional effectiveness and student well-being.

The nature of vocation itself is subject to debate. While some authors [2] suggest that vocation is discovered progressively throughout the teaching journey, others like Ortega and Gasset [13] and Hirsch Adler [11] frame vocation as a philosophical and social construct that emerges from both personal projection and professional experience. This duality reflects a richer understanding of vocation—not merely as innate calling, but as a cultivated orientation toward service, grounded in moral purpose.

The notion of deontology is also consistently addressed. Authors such as Caraguay Pullaguari and Quishpe Gaibor [14] and Ayala García and Huamaní Huamán [6] argue that professional deontology must move beyond codified rules and instead encompass a lived commitment to ethical responsibility. Deontology, as discussed in these studies, is not just about knowing what is right but choosing to act

rightly within educational practice. The literature suggests that integrating ethical formation into teacher education is essential for sustaining this professional ethos.

Table 3.

Selected studies and main findings.

Author(s)	Year	Country	Journal/Source	Type of Study	Main Findings
Martínez Rodríguez, et al. [17]	2024	Spain	Cultura de los Cuidados	Empirical	Spiritual vocation influences teaching mission.
Nanjarí-Miranda and Fernández-Vergara [18]	2024	Chile	Retos	Empirical	Empathy and ethics guide vocational conduct.
Bentham [5]	2024	Colombia	Ciencia Latina	Policy analysis	Ethical evaluation in education requires deontology.
Tricco, et al. [12]	2023	Colombia	Dialnet	Legal	Law deontology parallels educational ethics.
Peñaranda and Casadiegos Santana [3]	2023	Honduras	REICE	Applied	Academic programs must include deontological principles.
Ayala Garcia and Huamaní Huamán [6]	2023	Peru	Rev. Fac. Med. Humana	Literature Review	Ethical vocation is essential in medical and educational fields.
Baltodano Enríquez [1]	2022	Spain	Revista de Educación	Theoretical	Vocation and ethics improve teacher performance and student outcomes.
Durán Chinchilla [19]	2022	Colombia	UFPS Publication	Theoretical	Ethical responsibility is central to humanistic education.
Rojas [20]	2021	Chile	Scielo Chile	Theological	Spiritual vocation supports teacher's moral mission.
Buxarraís [9]	2021	Spain	Springer	Conceptual	Moral and professional identity strengthens ethical teaching.
Baltodano Enríquez [1]	2020	Nicaragua	Rev. Educ.	Philosophical	Globalization challenges ethical teaching practices.
Candia García [21]	2020	Mexico	Scielo México	Essay	Vocational reflection supports national education goals.
Collaguazo Solis and Santiago Quishpe [15]	2019	Ecuador	Rev. Caribeña de Cs. Sociales	Essay	Economic pressures undermine vocational commitment.
Caraguay Pullaguari and Quishpe Gaibor [14]	2019	Ecuador	Observatorio Económico Latinoam.	Applied	Deontology guides ethical decisions in practice.
Mayer Granados, et al. [10]	2019	Ecuador	Redalyc	Empirical	Entrepreneurial mindset is vocationally shaped.
Murga Meler and Álvarez Galán [22]	2019	Argentina	Scielo	Sociological	Imaginaries influence vocational identity.
Lazcano Peña, et al. [23]	2019	Chile	Scielo	Sociological	Scientific communication reflects vocational values.
Candia García [21]	2019	Spain	Estudios sobre Educación	Empirical	Passionate teaching improves student outcomes.
Real Anzola and Geovannini [24]	2024	Colombia	UExternado Repository	Empirical	Vocational orientation impacts community engagement.
López de Herrera, et al. [2]	2020	Ecuador	Chakiñan	Case study	Vocation is built over time through reflection.
Hirsch Adler [11]	2013	Mexico	Perfiles Educativos	Empirical	Identity formation is linked to professional vocation.
Gutiérrez [8]	2020	Chile	Cinta de Moebio	Philosophical	Ortega's philosophy supports ethical teaching models.
Cerezo [25]	1984	Spain	Ariel	Philosophical	Excellence in teaching requires ethical vocation.

Despite the richness of conceptual contributions, the review reveals notable gaps. In the Peruvian context, the Ethical and Durán Chinchilla [19] remains largely unknown or underutilized, limiting its impact on teacher conduct. Furthermore, while the PEN 2036 emphasizes ethics in its vision for national education, there is a disconnection between this policy discourse and the practices implemented in teacher training programs. Only a few studies touch upon how ethical and vocational dimensions intersect with intercultural education—a crucial oversight given recent scandals involving teacher misconduct toward students from the Awajún ethnic group.

These findings underscore that vocation and deontology are not parallel ideas but deeply intertwined dimensions of the teaching profession. Their presence—or absence—profoundly shapes the quality, purpose, and ethical depth of education. Teachers who develop a strong moral identity through their vocation are better positioned to engage in transformative educational practices. Conversely, when these values are absent, the consequences are not only professional disengagement or burnout, but also ethical breaches that undermine public trust.

In conclusion, the reviewed literature affirms the urgency of reimagining teacher education to prioritize ethical-vocational formation. Moving beyond technocratic models of professionalization, the field must reorient itself toward a vision of teaching as a moral vocation, guided by responsibility, empathy, and social commitment.

4. Discussion

The contribution of this research is addressing the importance of vocation in choosing a profession. Professionals who do not feel identified with their profession tend to show disinterest and frustration, which affects the development of a good professional ethic. The articles reviewed and the consulted authors present a certain degree of similarity, with some differences. For López de Herrera, et al. [2] the debate revolves around whether a teacher is born with a vocation or discovers it during their teaching career.

In religious terms, vocation is seen as a calling from God for a mission, either to the priesthood or to a consecrated life, as Ranher asserts. Vocation is grace and freedom and extends to the mission of the laity. The distinction between religious vocation and professional vocation remains debated. Ortega y Gasset provides a philosophical view, where vocation is a projection of the human being in realizing their existence as they move towards their goal. Professional vocation should be understood as a mission that a trained individual must serve society.

Baltodano Enríquez [1] argues that universities are affected by globalization, which turns them into profitable businesses and reduces professionals to workers without vocation. Collaguazo Solis and Santiago Quishpe [15] and the Peruvian PEN 2036 agree that a crisis has emerged in the professional world, where the profession focuses more on academic and economic factors than on ethics and professionalism. For this reason, deontology needs to be incorporated into education. Peñaranda and Casadiegos Santana [3] agree that universities should not only focus on intellectual training but also on professional deontology. This article's contribution is to highlight the importance of personal and social ethics, which is being replaced by intellectual and economic pursuits in today's world.

Hirsch Adler [11] and Collaguazo Solis and Santiago Quishpe [15] define vocation as a strong personal desire, as does Ortega y Gasset, for whom vocation is an inner calling or a future-oriented project. Candia García [21] and Romero Sánchez, et al. [26] agree that vocation strengthens and provides ethical meaning to the profession.

Regarding deontology in professional vocation, Caraguay Pullaguari and Quishpe Gaibor [14] define it as doing what is ethically correct and necessary; Ayala Garcia and Huamaní Huamán [6] associate it with empathy and resilience in human beings. Buxarraís [9] affirm that ethics makes the profession highly effective, promoting honesty and responsibility. Buxarraís [9] agrees that ethics and vocation are the foundation of a profession that identifies the professional.

Given the interests of a globalized world seeking competent workers and filling teachers with academic knowledge, the research proposes that the value of vocation in individuals and the values of

their profession should be considered. Professional careers should develop a deontological code that identifies them.

5. Conclusions

After researching professional teaching vocation from a deontological perspective, the study identified several key problems: the influence of a globalized world on professional careers, lack of motivation in vocations, and the ignorance of deontological science in education. Since vocation and deontology are fundamental to developing excellent professionals, the study arrived at the following conclusions:

The current academic world offers professional careers focused on economic and competitive aspects, sidelining the vocational calling that gives ethical meaning to professionalism.

The study aimed to define key concepts. Vocation is an intrinsic desire to develop one's capacities and virtues within their profession, while in religious terms, it is a calling believed to be from God. Deontology is "the knowledge of what is just and proper" to act ethically within the profession. A profession is a specialized, permanent activity that provides economic sustenance for an individual.

In Peru, professional ethics in teaching has not received much attention. Although the Peruvian National Educational Project 2036 includes ethics in education, there has been insufficient teacher training in this regard. The Peruvian Teachers' College created the Ethical and Deontological Code in 2017, but it has not been well-known or widely applied. Teacher deontology in Peru has been tainted by over 500 cases of teacher misconduct against students from the Awajún ethnic group.

The vocational, ethical, and professional dimensions are intrinsically linked. Vocation is a call for individuals to carry out their life projects within their professions, and ethics ensures that the profession is highly effective in terms of responsibility and honesty, providing a vocational identity to the professional.

Transparency:

The author confirms that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

Author Contribution:

The author Jorge Luis Castillo Lamadrid was responsible for conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, research, methodology, resources, validation, drafting of the original manuscript, proofreading, and editing of the presented information. No public or private funding was received, and there is no conflict of interest.

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