Article

Applying Latent Allocation Topic Model to Explore the Policy Changes of Teachers' Morality Development for Teacher Educational Sustainability in China

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Abstract: The policy changes of teachers' morality development in Chinese colleges and universities have depicted the evolution of teachers' morality policy. However, there are few previous studies on applying the content analysis to examine the educational policy changes of teacher morality development from the insight of China's higher education system. Thus, this study applies the LDA topic model as one content analysis approach to provide high-frequency word analysis, analysis of centrality, and cluster analysis to explore the overall policy trends of teachers' morality development in China. It is found that the policy objectives and contents of teachers' ethics construction in colleges and universities are constantly clear and definite. The policy content of teachers' morality construction is continuously clear. The policy direction and policy value of the construction of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities have been continuously broadened and deepened. The policy evaluation and supervision of teachers' ethics construction in colleges and universities have been continuously optimized and improved. In addition, the conclusions and suggestions have been offered in the final section.

Keywords: teacher morality; teacher moral education; teacher educational sustainability; teacher education in China

1. Introduction

Teacher morality has always been a hot and sensitive issue in the research of teacher education worldwide [1]. The moral level of teachers directly affects the teaching outcomes. Improving teachers' morality is of great significance to improving the quality of education and making education satisfactory to various students. Improving the teachers' morality is needed for teachers' professional development and also needed for the healthy growth of students for promoting social civilization [2]. In 2019, the *National Education Work Conference* pointed out that the whole society should restore the dignity of teachers and promote teachers' ethics [3]. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, teacher-morality construction has always been contained in the work of national ideological and political education, which is one of the important parts of the category of national ideological and political work. In the past 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the policy changes of teachers' morality in colleges and universities have depicted the evolution of teachers' morality policy [4].

In addition, some previous studies indicated that the policy direction and value of the construction of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities have been widened and deepened [5]. The policy evaluation and supervision of teachers' ethics construction in colleges and universities are constantly optimized and improved. The trend of policy change in the construction of teachers' morality in universities is to grasp the direction of policy change and ensure (clarify) the strategic significance of the construction of teachers' morality in universities. Focusing on the layout of policy changes and leading the development direction of the construction of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities, we

should adjust the policy evaluation mechanism and improve the institutional guarantee for the construction of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities [6].

However, there are few previous studies on applying the content analysis to examine the educational policy changes of teachers' ethics for sustainable teachers' morality development from the insight of China's higher education system. Most previous studies concentrated on examining the ideas of teacher morality and practical institutional efforts on how to implement and assess various educational policies of promoting teacher morality [7]. The core research questions regarding the educational policy implementation of teacher morality concentrate on how to explore the historical policy changes of teacher morality development for teacher educational sustainability in China. Therefore, this study is divided into several sections: the first section explores the policy transition stages of teachers' morality construction in colleges and universities in China; the second part offers the high-frequency word analysis, analysis of centrality, and the cluster analysis to examine the policy changes of teachers' morality construction in Chinese colleges and universities; the third section provides the results and the conclusion; and suggestions have been offered in the final section.

2. The Historical Policy Changes of Teachers' Morality Construction in Colleges and Universities in China

2.1. The Policy Exploration Period of Teacher Ethics Construction (1949–1978)

The years from 1949 to 1978, for the Chinese government, were an exploratory period for the policy of teachers' morality construction in Chinese universities. In 1949, there was no policy content specifically aimed at the construction of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities. The contents about the construction of teachers' moral education were scattered in the comprehensive education policy document [8]. The moral construction of college teachers in this historical stage mainly rested on the correction and transformation of their political stand and ideological consciousness. In 1958, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council jointly issued the *Instructions on Educational Work (Directive)*, which emphasized the reform of teachers' morality development [9]. Although this document did not explicitly put forward the policy expression about the construction of teachers' ethics, it contained the requirements for the construction of teachers' moral education in the whole policy text. In this stage, the policy of teachers' morality construction experienced a gradual process from the focus on ideological reform to ideological construction and then ideological cultivation. Teachers' morality construction achieved a certain degree of development and gradually changed from fuzzy exploration to a clear development policy form.

2.2. The Policy of Teacher Ethics Construction (1978–2000)

Since the reform and opening, along with the comprehensive and thorough adjustments of economy and culture in the field of higher education, the construction of teachers' morality in colleges and universities has gradually become an important element of teachers' comprehensive evaluation [10]. Teachers' morality assessments in colleges and universities have been gradually included in the teacher evaluation system, which is mainly embodied in the ideological and political requirements without clear operational requirements [11]. In 1979, the Ministry of Education clearly proposed for the first time in the Interim Provisions on the Duties and Assessment of Teachers in Institutions of Higher Learning (The Interim Provisions) (abolished in 1989) that the assessment of teachers in colleges and universities should be divided into three aspects: "political performance, professional level and work performance. Among them, political performance includes the ideological and political performance of teachers, the requirements of moral quality and work attitude, and so on [12]. It requires college teachers to strengthen their dedication and sense of responsibility in their own teaching work. Active to undertake tasks, serious and responsible spirit; A scientific attitude of seeking truth from facts; Look at the overall situation, solidarity, mutual cooperation; To conscientiously participate in political studies and observe the socialist law and

work discipline." (pp. 11–13, [12]). It is the first time since China's reform and opening that the construction of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities has been explicitly included in the evaluation of teachers' performance as a core element of political performance. The policy value rights map of teachers' ethics construction in colleges and universities has gradually taken shape, and the policy rights pattern of teachers' ethics value evaluation has gradually taken shape from "fuzzy edge" to "clear center" (pp. 12–14, [13]).

2.3. Policy Attention Period of Teacher Ethics Construction (2000–2010)

The period since 2000 has been one of policy concern for the construction of teachers' morality in Chinese universities. With the rapid development of economy, science, and technology, the advent of the popularization of higher education, the rapid expansion of the number of teachers in universities, and the sensitive period of higher education's transition from elite education to popular education, teachers' ethics construction has gradually become a hot topic in the field of higher education [14]. The policy of the construction of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities has gradually moved towards the characteristics of standardized, targeted, and mandatory policy making [15]. The policy attention period of teachers' moral construction in Chinese universities is focused on 2000–2010, which can be reflected in two aspects: The country has started to issue various special policies and regulations on teachers' moral construction. In this period, the policy of teachers' morality construction is in the stage of concentrated attention. The national policy on teachers' morality construction for colleges and universities is issued intensively and the frequency of policy regulations is high. The policy of teachers' ethics construction in colleges and universities in this period gradually separated from the requirements of teachers' ethics norms in middle and primary schools and formed a policy orientation of teachers' ethics construction that focused more on the professional identity of teachers in colleges and universities and highlighted the norms of the academic ethics' dimension of the special professional group of college teachers [16].

2.4. The Policy Improvement Period of Teacher Ethics Construction (2010-Present)

Since 2010, it has been a period of policy improvement for the construction of moral education. The construction of teachers' ethics in Chinese colleges and universities has formed specific detailed requirements for the assessment of teachers' ethics and implemented the system of "teachers' ethics one vote veto" in all kinds of colleges and universities at all levels. Entering the new period, under the background of double first-class construction, teachers' morality construction in a university has become one of the key links of our country's higher education level. Through the promulgation of some policy documents, the formation of the one-vote policy of teachers' morality in our colleges and universities finally forms a series of policies about the one-vote policy of teachers' morality. Meanwhile, accelerating the "double first-class" construction puts forward higher requirements for our colleges' moral construction. In 2018, the Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and The State Council on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of the Construction of Teachers in the New Era pointed out that the "double first-class" construction puts forward higher requirements for the construction of teachers' ethics in universities and colleges. In this period, the policy of teachers' morality construction is in the perfect stage. In the new era, the state has issued a series of operational, mandatory, and institutional policies and implementation systems for the construction of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities [17] to further clarify the content, the standards, supervision, and punishment mechanism of the construction of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities, and to gradually improve the chain policy process of the construction of teachers' ethics [18].

To sum up, following the historical policy changes of teachers' morality construction in colleges and universities in China and from the perspective of policy implementation mode, we conclude that there are three kinds of policy implementation preferences in the current teacher morality policy, including the bottom line required by teacher morality, the advocacy of policy implementation, and the popularity of evaluation. The key to promoting

the construction of teacher morality policy implementation is to deeply explore the three policy implementation preferences that restrict the effectiveness of teacher morality policy and reflect on their impacts. The policy of teacher morality development in China has been in the process of transition from instrumental rationality to a value-rational pursuit which fully embodies the distinctive characteristics and strength of policy implementation.

3. Method

3.1. The LDA Topic Model as One Content Analysis Approach

The Latent Dirilicht Allocation (LDA) topic model is used to speculate on the topic distribution of documents and the word distribution of topics. In other words, this model actually solves the soft clustering of documents and vocabularies, and the topic distribution probability of documents can be used as the index of document clustering, and vocabularies belong to their subject to achieve the effect of soft clustering [19]. It is one of the content analyses approaches and one of the contents and methods of mass communication research. In the content analysis, researchers must exclude personal subjective color and pursue common values from existing materials [20,21]. It is necessary to regard all relevant materials as an organic whole and conduct a comprehensive and systematic study on them [22]. A mathematical statistical method is used to analyze the quantity of the studied materials. In addition, content analysis should not exclude qualitative analysis, that is, certain logical reasoning and philosophical speculations based on the obtained materials and data. Content analysis generally goes through three stages: selection, classification, and statistics. The following three methods can be adopted: recording or observing the communication content of a certain media in a certain period; analyzing and comparing the contents reported by the same media in different periods; analyzing and comparing the contents, ways, and methods reported by different media on the same event or subject in the same period to find out the similarities and differences. It can give the topic of each document in the document set in the form of probability distribution so that after analyzing some documents to extract their topic distribution, we can carry out topic clustering or text classification according to the topic distribution [23].

3.2. Study Design and Data Source

The documents on teachers' ethics in colleges and universities are generally issued by the Ministry of Education, the State Council, the National Development and Reform Commission, and other important institutions. They are proposed to deal with educational problems in different periods and have strong credibility and research value. The research object is a total of 68 documents related to teachers' ethics in colleges and universities on the official website as obtained on 23 April 2022. This research is mainly divided into four steps, including literature research, data acquisition and pre-processing, keyword and topic analysis, and result discussion. First, based on the existing results of literature and material research on teachers' ethics, we made an overall review of them and further searched for the official sources of panel data. Secondly, a Python multi-threaded automatic acquisition script and data processing tool was constructed to download relevant content and filter irrelevant text. At the same time, the data were aggregated as a segment based on the year to set the time slice as 1. Thirdly, the word segmentation was used and converted the text into the word frequency matrix to obtain the weights of all words in the bag of words model. The confusion index was used as the clustering basis to obtain the optimal number of classes and the results were introduced into the model for text clustering and evolution analysis. Finally, the results are discussed to determine whether the model has strong explanatory power and suggestions are put forward according to the content. As one of the three major databases in China, CNKI has a comprehensive coverage of fields, authoritative information, and strong representation. Therefore, the article set the search term as "teachers' ethics in universities" on CNKI, and selected 1183 articles on the theme of "teachers' ethics construction" and 624 articles on "Teachers' ethics in universities." The search time was 20 April 2022, with a total of 1803 articles. We classified the sampled

articles following several criteria, including the download rate, the CSSCI data resource, and Chinese core publication standards.

4. Results

4.1. High-Frequency Word Analysis

Following the above methods, we found that high-frequency word strings are the most frequent keywords in all the literature and these words can largely reflect the research hot spots in all the texts, as shown in Figure 1. In addition to the teachers' ethics construction of higher education, the main research object is the college teachers, and more specifically, the teachers' ethics. Most articles were dedicated to propose the countermeasure according to the problems, to find a long-term mechanism, and were linked to the socialist core values of this problem. The visible young teachers in colleges and universities should strengthen ethics construction in the new period, which is the focus of most articles. The distribution characteristics of the co-occurrence network and K-kernel analysis of high-frequency keywords are displayed. Among them are the center position and edge position with different colors representing different meanings. The most middle keywords are in the core position and belong to the research hot spot. Firstly, the teacher ethics and style text are sliced discretely according to a certain time series, and then the topic distribution and topic content on the time slice are assumed to evolve over time.
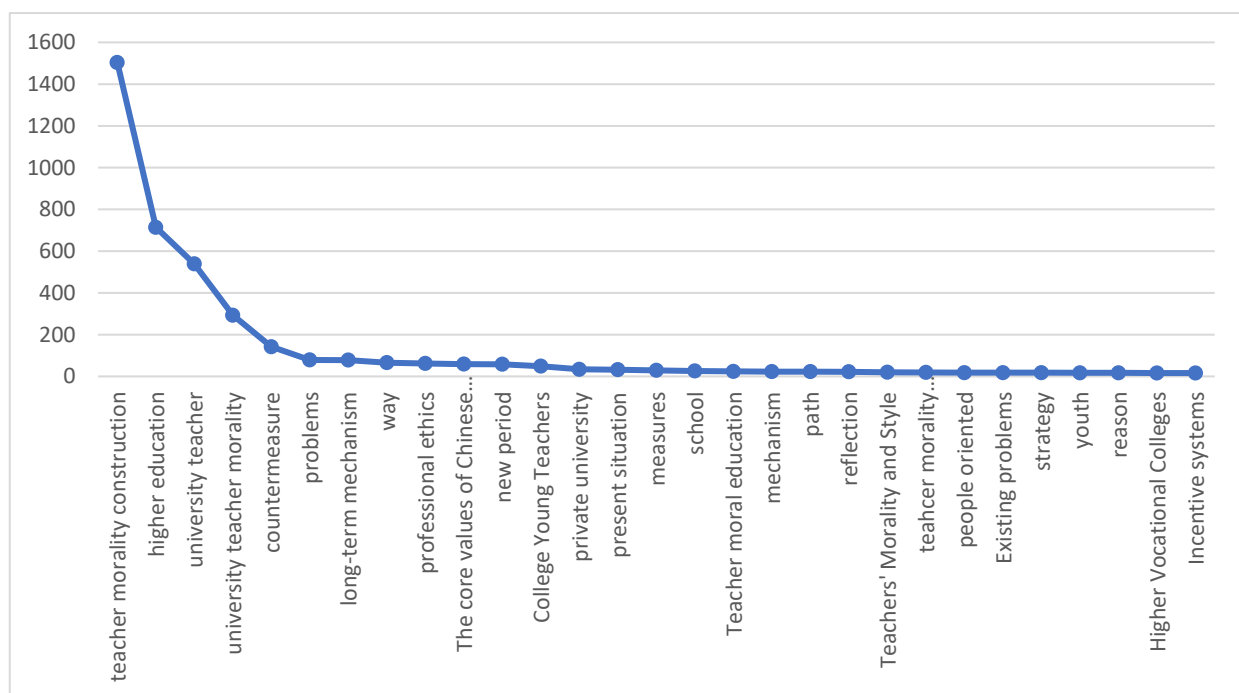

Figure 1. Top 30 high frequency words.

4.2. Analysis of Centrality

According to the network center potential of teachers' ethics, the centralization is relatively high at 30% and maintaining a low level of centralization is conducive to knowledge sharing. In this study, the network center is 6.96%, so the centralization degree of the knowledge exchange network built by teachers' ethics is relatively low. The point centrality, proximity centrality, and intermediary centrality of the high frequency word string of teacher ethics and teacher style are analyzed, where the descending frequency order is represented from left to right. The higher the centrality of the point degree, the higher the corresponding in-degree and out-degree, and the more the key word is in the core position. Proximity centrality is the distance from other nodes. The shorter the distance, the less constrained it is by other keywords. Mediation centrality is a keyword that can

control more other members—like a kind of bridge, the larger the value, the better. As the main body of teachers' ethics construction, teachers in colleges and universities have the highest degree of centrality, followed by the related content of teachers' ethics construction. Therefore, most Chinese scholars discuss the problems of teachers' ethics and the first point of view is to study teachers in colleges and universities. According to the meaning of the curve, proximity centrality and intermediary centrality are basically consistent with the reflection content of point-degree centrality (see Figure 2).
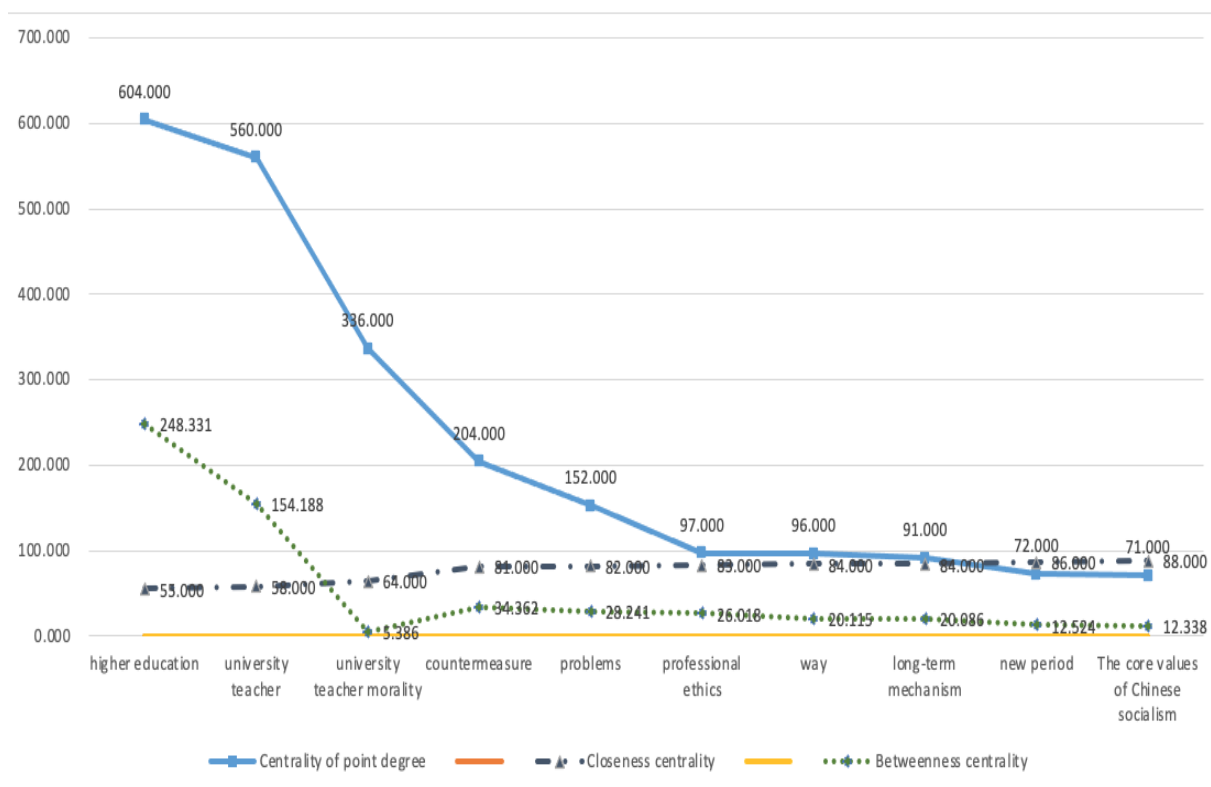

Figure 2. Analysis of centrality.

This paper analyzes the point centrality, proximity centrality, and intermediary centrality of the high frequency word string of teachers' ethics, where from left to right represents the descending order of frequency. The higher the centrality of the point degree, the higher the corresponding in-degree and out-degree, and the more the key word is in the core position. Proximity centrality is the distance from other nodes. The shorter the distance, the less constrained it is by other keywords. As the main body of teachers' ethics construction, college teachers have the highest degree of centrality, followed by the related content of teachers' ethics construction. Most Chinese scholars usually contact a few specific teachers and put forward suggestions around the content when discussing teachers' ethics. With regard to the proximity centrality, it is obvious that the rankings of countermeasures, problems, and other contents move down and the construction of teacher ethics becomes more core. In terms of intermediary centrality, more emphasis is placed on methods, so the keywords such as "long-term mechanism" and "professional ethics" are ranked higher. It is hoped that a long-term mechanism can be established through various ways, such as professional ethics construction and system construction. We can find that the key words of centrality included "higher education", "university teacher", "university teacher morality", "professional ethics", "long-term mechanism", which all play key roles to promote the quality of teachers' morality policies (see Figure 3).
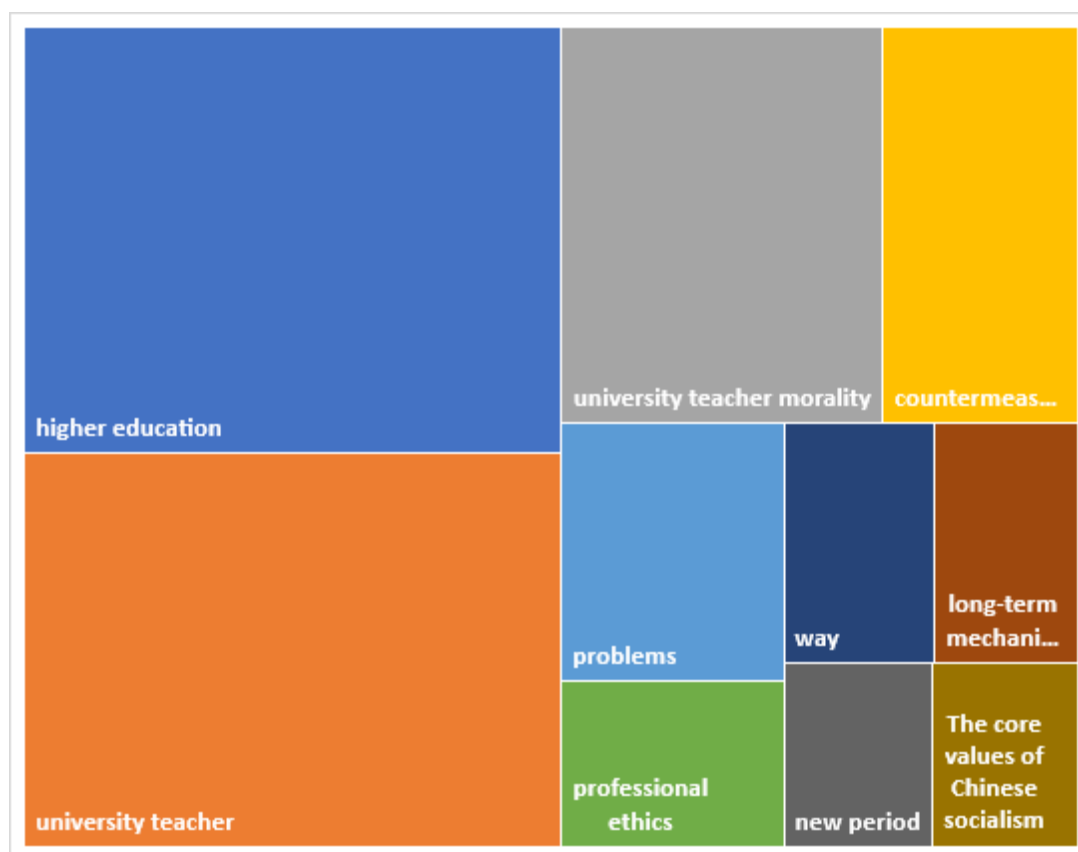
Figure 3. Top key words of centrality of teachers' morality policies.

4.3. The Cluster Analysis

 To further study the various attributes of teacher ethics construction, CONCOR cluster analysis was conducted on high-frequency vocabularies [24]. Figure 4 shows the results of CONCOR clustering. Based on the results, we found that there are three subgroups, including the national level, institutional level, and individual level regarding the measures and countermeasures, the teachers' morality development, and the socialist core values. All three subgroups contribute to exploring how to strengthen the teacher morality development contextually. The keywords of four subgroups are not only the requirement of the state and society, but also the teacher's own compliance [25].

 The national level teachers' morality development: The first subgroups mainly include higher education strategy, university teacher development, strategy of university, countermeasure of university, teachers' morality development, the core values of Chinese socialism, and evaluation of teachers' ethics. Some irrelevant keywords have been deleted to promote the concentricity. The key words in this part mainly describe some national level keywords of promoting teachers' morality development-related attributes and properties in the construction of teachers' ethics.

 The individual level teachers' morality development: The second subgroups mainly include the people-oriented teacher morality, professional ethics, private university, evaluation system, teachers' moral education, teachers' construction and moral values establishment, and people cultivation. This part is aimed at the historical background and social and economic environment of teacher ethics to put forward the principle of being people-oriented. The study of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities should not only include undergraduate colleges, but also cross-vocational colleges, private colleges, and other schools. The construction of teachers' ethics is not exclusive to certain colleges and universities, but the consensus education of all colleges and universities.

The institutional level teachers' morality development: The third subgroups mainly include the incentive system, long-term mechanism, teacher morality standardization, morality mechanism, institutional incentive system, scientific outlook on development, and teacher's morality policy. It elaborates on building incentive policies and mechanisms to address the problems of teachers' morality education (see Figure 4).
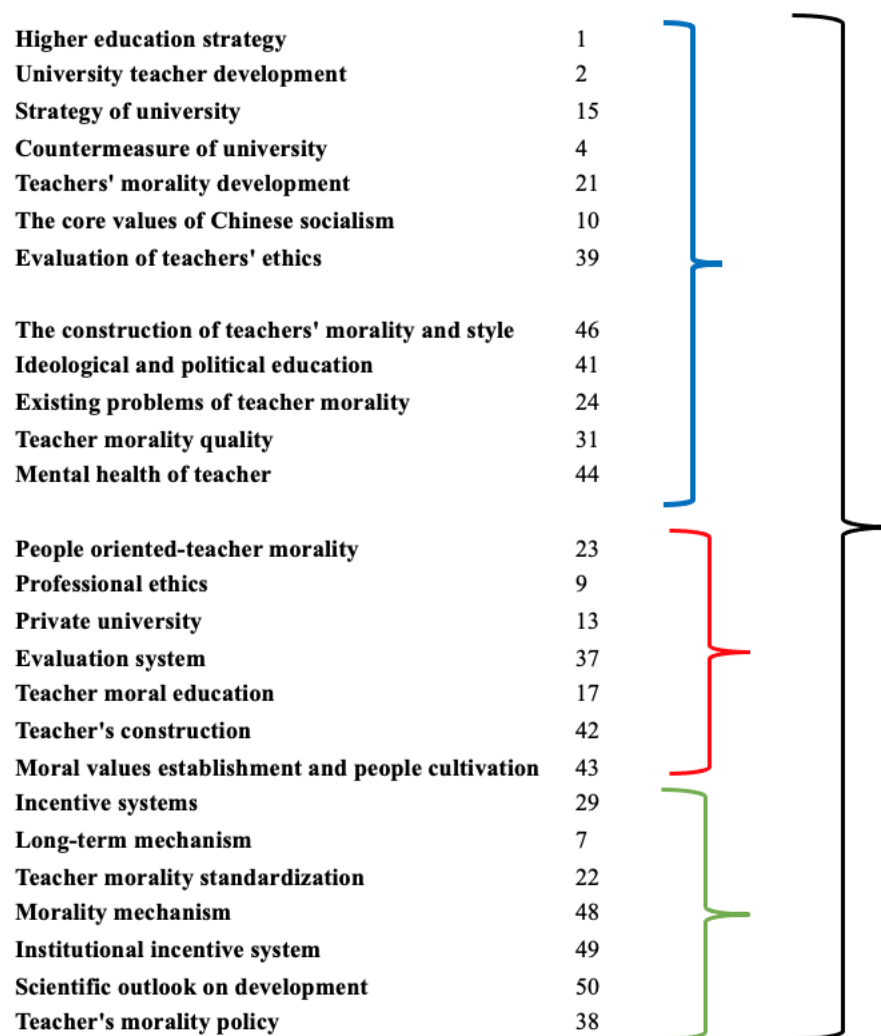
Higher education strategy	1
University teacher development	2
Strategy of university	15
Countermeasure of university	4
Teachers' morality development	21
The core values of Chinese socialism	10
Evaluation of teachers' ethics	39
The construction of teachers' morality and style	46
Ideological and political education	41
Existing problems of teacher morality	24
Teacher morality quality	31
Mental health of teacher	44
People oriented-teacher morality	23
Professional ethics	9
Private university	13
Evaluation system	37
Teacher moral education	17
Teacher's construction	42
Moral values establishment and people cultivation	43
Incentive systems	29
Long-term mechanism	7
Teacher morality standardization	22
Morality mechanism	48
Institutional incentive system	49
Scientific outlook on development	50
Teacher's morality policy	38

Figure 4. The cluster analysis of the key word distributions.

5. Discussions

Along with the above results and literature review, the policy trend characteristics of teachers' morality construction in colleges and universities are revealed as follows:

The policy objectives and contents of teachers' ethics construction in colleges and universities are constantly clear and definite. It was found that the policy goal of teacher ethics construction in Chinese universities has gradually shifted from focusing on the representational orientation of "intellectuals" to focusing on the specific academic occupation orientation of "university teachers" [26–30]. Based on the results of high-frequency word analysis, we found the policy content of teachers' morality construction is continuously clear [31–35]. We need to emphasize the cultivation of college teachers' serious, responsible, dedicated, and cautious attitude towards learning and teaching. Especially in the period of policy improvement, China has formulated a series of policy contents about the clear construction of teachers' morality in colleges and universities [36–38]. We also found that the policy direction and policy value of the construction of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities have been continuously broadened and deepened. In the exploratory period

of the policy, the *Instruction on the Education* for the first time clearly put forward that the policy value orientation of teacher's ethics construction in China is to carry out the mass line under the leadership of the Party, strengthen the unity between teachers and students, and adhere to the way of teachers' ethics construction of "combining teachers and students under the leadership of the Party committee" [38–45]. Since 2000, the policy value of teachers' morality construction in Chinese universities has stepped further into the period of policy concern. In this period of policy change, the policy value of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities has been more comprehensively defined and elaborated [46–50].

Based on the results of the cluster analysis and analysis of centrality, we found that in this period the implementation of the system of "teachers' morality veto" in colleges and universities at all levels has marked the policy evaluation of teachers' morality construction in Chinese colleges and universities in the process of optimization [51]. In 2011, the Ministry of Education, the Education, Science, Culture, Health, and Sports Union of China and the National Committee jointly issued the Code of Professional Ethics for Higher Education Teachers, which put forward institutional items on the construction of teachers' ethics in higher education institutions [52]. The policy supervision of the construction of teachers' morality in Chinese universities is constantly improved in different policy change stages [53,54].

6. Conclusions and Suggestions

This study has specific contributions on explaining and analyzing the current educational policy changes of teacher morality development in China's contemporary education system. In addition, we apply the LDA topic model as one content analysis approach to provide high-frequency word analysis, analysis of centrality, and the cluster analysis to explore the overall policy trends of teacher morality development in China. It provides an in-depth understanding of teacher morality politically and contextually. We should grasp the direction of policy change and clarify the strategic significance of the construction of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities [55].

Based on the results, we also should focus on the layout of policy changes, leading the development direction of the construction of teachers' ethics in colleges and universities [56,57]. The government should adjust the policy evaluation mechanism and improve the institutional guarantee for the construction of teachers' morality in colleges and universities. We need to constantly improve the policies and regulations of teachers' ethics construction in colleges and universities and improve the moral education construction system in colleges and universities. At the same time, we should further strengthen the self-evaluation and reflection mechanism of the moral education construction of teachers in colleges and universities, clarify the requirements of teachers' ethics in the running of colleges and universities, and issue timely, specific regulations regulating the construction of teachers' morality in all kinds of colleges and universities [58–60]. This study offers a specific lens to examine the overall educational policy changes of teacher morality development in China's contemporary education system through the perspective of Latent Dirilicht Allocation (LDA). Following the results of this study, we suggested that both the governmental and higher education institutional departments should pay more attention to implement effective approaches to promote teacher morality development. For example, we are expected to deepen reform of the evaluation system for college and university teachers' morality development and also adhere to the quality orientation, promote professional ability, and combine comprehensive assessment with emphasis on key areas. We should pay more attention to the comprehensive evaluation of teachers' ethics, teaching, scientific research, social services, and professional development. In addition, higher education institutions should grasp the key guidance of public opinion on teacher ethics, adhere to the institutionalization and normalization of teacher ethics' publicity, and take teacher ethics' publicity as an important part of the school propaganda ideological work. They should excavate, refine, and carry forward the cultural tradition of excellent teacher ethics of the Chinese nation, the spirit of great love for teachers, and that the famous teachers

of all dynasties of the school are for learning, activating the cultural education resources, and fully displaying the spirit of the outstanding teachers. For instance, we also should, through campus radio, newspaper, exhibition boards, website, Weibo, WeChat, and other platforms, publicize and report outstanding teachers' ethics in teaching and research, talent training, social services, and other fields.

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