



The Moral Dimensions of Teaching: Implications for Ethical Competence in Kenya's Primary Teacher Education

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Abstract

This conceptual paper examines the moral dimensions of classroom teaching and their implications for teacher education in Kenya. Drawing on Buzzelli and Johnston's six-dimension framework, Narvaez's classroom climate theory, Bernstein's theory of pedagogical discourse, and Campbell's account of teacher moral agency, the paper argues that classroom climate, language, power and authority, cultural representation, curriculum, and teacher moral agency constitute an essential professional knowledge domain that is absent from both Kenya's old Primary Teacher Education (PTE) programme and the new CBC-aligned Diploma in Education framework. Through critical literature review and document analysis of four key policy texts, the paper advances a theoretical argument that this structural absence is hypothesised to have significant consequences for the moral development of Kenyan primary school pupils, a hypothesis that requires empirical validation. A three-strand curriculum integration model is proposed as a structurally feasible conceptual blueprint for reform, and comparative analysis of South African, Ugandan, and Tanzanian teacher education confirms that such integration is achievable within African education systems. The paper further argues that Kenya's reform should be grounded in indigenous ethical frameworks, including *utu*, *heshima*, and *harambee*, to ensure cultural legitimacy and sustainability.

Introduction

Before a teacher says a single word to a pupil on the first day of a new school year, a series of decisions with significant moral implications have already been made: how the desks are arranged, whose cultural heritage is represented on the classroom walls, which rules are displayed and how they are framed, and whether the teacher's own positioning suggests openness or authority. Teaching, as Tom (1984) observed, is "a moral craft," and this moral character pervades every dimension of classroom life.

Scholars including Buzzelli and Johnston (2002), Narvaez (2006, 2008, 2010), Campbell (2003, 2008), Fenstermacher (1990), Hansen (2001), and Jackson et al. (1993) have established over four decades of scholarship that the moral dimensions of teaching are an ever-present and unavoidable feature of every teaching act. The classroom is a moral environment (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002), and teachers are moral agents (Campbell, 2003), whether or not they are conscious of this fact.

In Kenya, however, teacher preparation has been organised almost exclusively around technical knowledge: subject content, examination preparation, and classroom management routines. The moral dimension of teaching has never been integrated into the PTE programme as a distinct professional knowledge domain (Women Education Researchers of Kenya [WERK], 2015). This



represents not merely an academic gap but a failure of professional formation that this paper hypothesises to have significant consequences for the moral development of Kenyan primary school pupils, a hypothesis that requires empirical validation. This gap is now even more consequential in light of Kenya's ongoing transition toward a new Diploma in Education framework aligned with the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC), implemented progressively through Primary Teacher Training Colleges (PTTCs) and universities from 2019. Yet analysis of the new Diploma curriculum documents reveals that the moral dimensions of teaching remain as absent from the new framework as they were from the old PTE syllabus, even as the CBC explicitly mandates the formation of values-driven, holistic learners.

Against this background, the present paper pursues three conceptual objectives: to analyse the six moral dimensions of classroom practice identified by Buzzelli and Johnston (2002) and examine the professional knowledge each requires; to explore the ethical dilemmas that arise when teachers engage these dimensions seriously; and to consider the implications for Kenya's new CBC-aligned Diploma in Education framework. The paper employs a conceptual research design grounded in critical literature review and document analysis (Bowen, 2009) of four key policy texts: the 2004 PTE syllabus (RoK, 2004), Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2019 (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2019), the Basic Education Curriculum Framework (KICD, 2017), and the new Diploma in Education curriculum framework (MoE, 2021). Each document was examined for both what it explicitly states and what it systematically omits in relation to the moral dimensions of teaching.

Methodology

This study is situated within an interpretive-constructivist paradigm, treating policy documents and scholarly literature as meaning-laden texts whose significance lies not only in what they state but in what they structurally omit (Bowen, 2009). A conceptual research design is appropriate because the gap under investigation, namely the systematic absence of moral dimension formation from Kenya's teacher education frameworks, requires theoretical diagnosis and principled proposal before empirical intervention is possible. The four policy documents analysed were selected because they constitute the complete and current legislative and curriculum architecture governing primary school teacher formation in Kenya: the 2004 PTE syllabus represents the baseline from which all reform has proceeded; Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2019 establishes the current policy framework; the Basic Education Curriculum Framework (KICD, 2017) articulates the competency model teachers are required to implement; and the 2021 Diploma in Education framework is the instrument currently being institutionalised in PTTCs and universities. Together they form a coherent policy corpus whose analysis can reliably establish whether moral dimension formation has ever been structurally provided for in Kenyan primary teacher education.

The document analysis was conducted iteratively: each document was read in full, then re-examined using a structured protocol that searched for explicit references to moral agency, ethical dilemmas, classroom climate as a moral environment, and cultural representation as a professional knowledge domain. The analysis also attended to what the documents systematically omitted in relation to these concepts, following the principle that absence from policy texts can be as significant as presence (Bowen, 2009). Findings are presented in Table 2, which captures the binary presence/absence assessment; this approach, while offering clarity, does not capture the full depth of qualitative analysis and represents a limitation of the method, acknowledged in Section 7.1.

Theoretical Framework

Four complementary frameworks ground the analysis. Buzzelli and Johnston's (2002) account of the six morally charged dimensions of classroom life (climate, language, power and authority, culture, curriculum, and teacher agency), provides the organising scaffold for Section 3. This framework



remains the most comprehensive and widely cited taxonomy of the moral dimensions of classroom practice in the teacher education literature (Campbell, 2008; Hansen, 2001). More recent scholarship enriches rather than displaces it: Biesta's (2010) "subjectification" domain aligns directly with the teacher moral agency dimension, while Noddings' (2013) ethics of care deepens the analysis of classroom climate and relational language.

Narvaez's (2010) Integrative Ethical Education (IEE) model extends this account by identifying the psychological mechanisms through which classroom environments shape pupils' moral orientations through implicit learning, demonstrating that climate is not merely a background condition but an active and continuous moral force. Bernstein's (1990) theory of pedagogical discourse establishes that moral regulation is not a byproduct of instruction but its structural precondition, present in every classroom utterance. Campbell's (2003, 2008) account of teacher moral agency provides the integrating thread, distinguishing teachers as moral individuals who embody virtues in personal conduct and as moral educators who deliberately design environments that foster pupils' ethical development. Taken together, these frameworks demonstrate that the moral dimension of teaching is coextensive with teaching itself, a conclusion that carries direct implications for how teacher education programmes must be designed and assessed.

The Six Moral Dimensions of Classroom Practice

Table 1 below provides a structural overview of the six dimensions and their teacher education implications before each is developed in turn. The dimensions are presented sequentially for analytical clarity but are deeply interdependent in practice, functioning as interlocking components of an integrated professional knowledge domain.

Table 1: Summary of the Six Moral Dimensions and Their Implications for Teacher Education in Kenya

Moral Dimension	Core Moral Significance	Teacher Education Implication
Classroom Climate	Shapes moral orientations through implicit learning; promotes security, engagement, or imagination ethics (Narvaez, 2010).	Formation in designing sustaining classroom environments and understanding moral consequences of climate choices.
Language	Encodes moral values in discourse; moral regulation is the structural precondition of instruction (Bernstein, 1990).	Formation in inclusive moral language, ethics of classroom discourse, and dialogue as a moral development tool.
Power and Authority	Determines whether classroom relationships serve or harm pupil development; authoritative power is morally necessary (Formella, 2009).	Formation in ethics of assessment, moral use of authority, and cultivation of pupil voice and agency.
Cultural Representation	Determines whose knowledge and identity are affirmed or silenced; shapes civic identity (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002).	Formation in culturally inclusive curriculum design and ethics of cultural participation in diverse classrooms.
Curriculum	Carries assumptions of truthfulness, worthwhileness, and social justice (Jackson et al., 1993).	Formation in moral responsibilities of curriculum planning, content selection, and management of the hidden curriculum.
Teacher Moral Agency	Teacher as moral person and educator; agency exercised through manner, tact, and deliberate conduct (Campbell, 2003, 2008).	Formation in deliberate moral agency: reflective self-awareness, ethical decision-making, and professional courage.

Note. Adapted from Buzzelli and Johnston (2002), Narvaez (2010), Formella (2009), and Biesta (2010).



Classroom Climate as a Moral Environment

Classroom climate is perhaps the most pervasive of the six dimensions because it operates continuously and largely invisibly, shaping every pupil's experience of school. Narvaez (2010) identifies three climate types with distinct moral consequences: a competitive climate activates the security ethic, a fear-based orientation focused on avoiding failure; a caring climate promotes the engagement ethic, enabling genuine learning and prosocial development; and a sustaining climate cultivates the imagination ethic, the principled moral orientation that enables citizens to engage thoughtfully with ethical complexity. Pupils read messages about their worth and belonging continuously from physical arrangements, routines, and the emotional tone of the room (Jackson et al., 1993), through the process Narvaez (2008, 2010) defines as implicit learning. For Kenyan teachers managing overcrowded classrooms, often with pupil-to-teacher ratios exceeding 60:1 (Ole Katitia, 2015), the default response is frequently a competitive or authoritarian climate that prioritises order over relationship. Without explicit professional formation in the moral significance of climate, student teachers are unlikely to translate classroom management knowledge into the deliberate construction of a moral learning community (Bunyi et al., 2013; WERK, 2015).

Language as a Moral Medium

Language is the primary medium through which moral messages are conveyed in classrooms. Buzzelli and Johnston (2002) identify two mechanisms through which this occurs. The first operates through classroom discourse: decisions about whose contributions are recognised, who is invited to speak, and how responses are received communicate the teacher's beliefs about learners and who counts in the learning community. Inclusive, dialogic discourse positions each pupil as a knower with something valuable to contribute; exclusive, monologic discourse positions pupils as passive recipients, implicitly communicating judgements about their worth. The second and more structurally significant mechanism operates through what Bernstein (1990) calls regulative discourse: a moral discourse that creates moral regulation of the social relations of transmission and acquisition, determining rules of order, relation, and identity. Every classroom utterance simultaneously transmits knowledge and enacts a moral relationship between teacher and taught.

In Kenya's multicultural context, where teachers serve pupils from 42 distinct ethnic communities, Nash's (1997) concept of public moral language argues that classroom moral language must be nonfoundational, multifunctional, and nonexclusionary. Noddings' (2013) ethics of care extends this point: caring language, language that attends to the particular child rather than the generalised learner, is itself a moral act, not merely a pedagogical strategy. Without formation in the moral dimensions of language, teachers in Kenya's multilingual classrooms risk privileging dominant linguistic communities, inadvertently communicating to minority language speakers that their voice, and therefore their identity, is of lesser worth.

Power and Authority in the Classroom

Power relations in teaching are fundamentally moral (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002). The teacher's asymmetrical authority, derived from age, institutional role, expert knowledge, and the state's legal mandate, means that how power is exercised constitutes one of the most consequential and continuously recurring moral choices a teacher makes. Formella (2009) identifies three modes: authoritarian power, characterised by rigid rules, punishment for noncompliance, and suppression of pupil voice, which chronically activates the security ethic and is linked to aggressive behaviour and reduced moral reasoning capacity (Narvaez, 2010), and whose persistence in many Kenyan primary schools reflects a colonial educational legacy (Bogonko, 1991; Kafu, 2011); laissez-faire power, which abdicates the moral responsibility of structured guidance, leaving pupils without the ethical scaffolding that deliberate teaching can provide; and authoritative power, the only morally sustainable mode, which exercises authority in the service of pupil flourishing through genuine



participation in decision-making, transparent expectations, and modelled accountability. The distinction between authoritarian and authoritative power is not merely procedural: it determines whether classroom relationships serve or harm the moral development of every pupil in the room.

Cultural Representation and Participation

Kenya's primary school classrooms draw pupils from 42 ethnic communities with distinct languages, values, relational norms, and histories. Buzzelli and Johnston (2002) analyse the moral dimensions of culture through three interconnected lenses: participation, which concerns the conditions for authentic engagement and raises the question of whose ways of knowing and communicating are legitimised in the classroom; representation, which concerns how cultures are portrayed in curriculum materials, textbook illustrations, and classroom displays; and identification, which relates to the processes through which children's identities are affirmed or marginalised through schooling. Each lens carries specific moral implications. When a teacher selects whose stories are told, whose historical figures are displayed on the wall, and whose examples are used to illustrate concepts, they are making moral decisions about whose heritage counts as educationally significant. Teachers aware of these dimensions can use classroom diversity as a resource for moral learning, fostering perspective-taking and cross-cultural empathy; those who are not risk reproducing the hierarchies and exclusions that Kenya's civic education programme aims to overcome.

The Moral Basis of the Curriculum

The curriculum is morally laden at every level of its design and delivery. Jackson et al. (1993) identify three foundational moral assumptions embedded in all curriculum planning: the assumption of truthfulness, which holds that what is taught must be accurate and intellectually honest; the assumption of worthwhileness, which holds that content must genuinely benefit learners rather than merely satisfy examination requirements; and the assumption of social justice, which requires that assessment be fair and opportunities to participate be equitably distributed regardless of ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic background, or geographic location. Beyond the formal curriculum, the hidden curriculum, meaning the unintentional moral lessons conveyed through who is called on most frequently, how mistakes are treated publicly, and what the spatial organisation of the classroom communicates about power and care, operates as a moral force of comparable significance (Narvaez, 2010; Berkowitz, 2002). In Kenya, the hidden curriculum is particularly potent given the legacy of missionary and colonial schooling, which often embedded hierarchical, authoritarian norms (Bogonko, 1991), and the contemporary dominance of high-stakes examinations, which can subtly communicate that achievement matters more than integrity or care.

The Teacher as Moral Agent

All five dimensions converge in and are mediated through the person of the teacher. Campbell (2003, 2008) identifies two inseparable dimensions of teacher moral agency: as moral individuals, teachers embody the virtues they aim to cultivate: honesty, fairness, patience, and professional courage; as moral educators, they deliberately design environments that enable pupils to develop ethical knowledge, dispositions, and skills. Fenstermacher (1990, 1992) adds the dimension of deliberate self-consciousness: teachers inevitably send moral messages through their conduct, but they can choose to do so with awareness and intention rather than unreflectively. In Kenya, where teachers have received no systematic formation in any of these dimensions, moral agency is largely tacit and shaped by authoritarian norms inherited from colonial schooling. Biesta's (2010) "subjectification" domain reinforces this point: teachers cannot cultivate independent, ethically responsive learners without themselves operating as deliberate moral agents.



Ethical Dilemmas and Moral Stress in Teaching

Teachers who engage the six moral dimensions with professional seriousness will inevitably encounter ethical dilemmas: situations in which competing moral obligations cannot all be honoured simultaneously and no course of action is without moral cost. Campbell (2003, 2008) is unambiguous that ethical dilemmas are not failures of competence to be eliminated but an inescapable structural feature of teaching as a moral practice. Oser and Althof (1993) identify five types of ethical decision-making in teaching, forming a developmental progression from moral avoidance to full moral engagement. Discourse II (Complete Discourse), the most morally developed mode, involves collaborative moral problem-solving with pupils and stakeholders, modelling the ethical sensitivity, judgement, and motivation that the IEE model identifies as the core components of moral character education (Narvaez, 2006, 2008). Oser and Althof (1993) note that teachers' characteristic decision-making styles have "deeply rooted structural features" formed through apprenticeship of observation, and that changing these patterns requires sustained, structured professional formation.

Intrapersonal Dilemmas

Intrapersonal dilemmas arise when a teacher's own moral values conflict in a specific situation without external guidance clearly indicating which should take precedence (Colnerud, 2015). Fairness dilemmas are among the most common: the equality principle (equal treatment for all pupils regardless of background), the need principle (responses calibrated to individual circumstances), and the merit principle (rewards proportionate to effort) often conflict irresolvably. In Kenya, where pupil-to-teacher ratios can reach 80:1 in some regions (Ole Katitia, 2015; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019), these tensions are experienced daily and acutely. Without formation in the ethics of fairness, teachers navigate such dilemmas through habit and intuition rather than principled professional judgement. A third category arises at the boundary between school and home, generating dilemmas between the duty to safeguard pupils' wellbeing and the obligation to respect families' privacy and autonomy. The absence of professional training in ethics, child protection law, and mandatory reporting means that Kenyan primary school teachers must manage these high-stakes situations without the ethical frameworks or legal knowledge required to do so responsibly.

External Institutional and Legal Dilemmas

A second category arises from conflict between teachers' moral values and externally imposed institutional regulations. The grading dilemma: the tension between uniform standards and the teacher's relational knowledge of each pupil's individual developmental progress, intensifies in Kenya's examination-driven educational culture as the CBC's competency-based assessment ambitions are introduced into an environment shaped by decades of high-stakes testing (Ole Katitia, 2015). Confidentiality dilemmas arise when institutional reporting requirements conflict with a pupil's right to privacy. Teachers hold sensitive information about pupils in a position of professional trust analogous to that of healthcare professionals (Murray et al., 1996). Neither the old PTE programme nor the new Diploma framework provides any formation in the ethics of confidentiality, leaving teachers to manage high-stakes situations through intuition rather than informed professional judgement.

Policy Context: The Structural Absence in Kenya's Teacher Education Frameworks

Table 2 below presents the results of systematic document analysis of four key policy texts, examining whether any component addresses moral agency, ethical dilemmas, classroom climate as a moral environment, or cultural representation as a professional knowledge domain.



Table 2: Systematic Document Analysis: Presence or Absence of Moral Dimension Content in Four Key Policy Texts

Policy Document	Structural Architecture	Moral Agency?	Ethical Dilemmas?	Climate as Moral Environment?	Cultural Representation?
2004 PTE Syllabus (RoK, 2004)	Subject content methods; Educational psychology; School organisation; Teaching practice (Vol.1, pp.iii-xii)	No: no mention in any module descriptor or assessment criterion	No	No	No
Sessional Paper No.1 of 2019 (MoE, 2019)	Policy framework: competency goals, school structure reform, teacher quality pillars	No: values mentioned at system level only; no professional formation content	No	No	No
BECF (KICD, 2017)	Seven core competencies; Learning areas; Assessment framework	No: values listed as learner outcomes, not teacher formation content	No	No	No
Diploma in Education Framework (MoE, 2021)	Four specialisation tracks; Subject area competencies; CBC pedagogy modules; School-based practicum	No: absent from all four track descriptors and all assessment rubrics	No	No	No

Note. The binary format captures structural presence or absence but does not reflect the depth of qualitative analysis; see Section 7.1 for a full discussion of this limitation.

The systematic absence documented in Table 2 is verifiable: none of the four documents contains the terms 'moral agency', 'ethical dilemma', 'regulative discourse', or 'classroom climate' in relation to teacher professional formation. This structural absence is not merely historical: it is being actively reproduced in the architecture of the new framework at precisely the moment when Kenya's teacher education system is being redesigned. A national survey by WERK (2015) documented correlational consequences of this formation failure, including teachers' inability to address moral conflicts in classrooms (see also Bunyi et al., 2013). While these findings do not conclusively establish a causal link, the theoretical frameworks reviewed in Section 2 strongly support the hypothesis that integrating content on the moral dimension would improve classroom practice.

In a country where the CBC explicitly mandates holistic learner development, values education, and the formation of ethical citizens (KICD, 2017), this absence is both urgent and consequential. A mapping of the CBC's learner competencies to the six moral dimensions reveals a strong alignment: the citizenship competency requires the cultural awareness and ethical judgement discussed in Sections 3.4 and 4; self-efficacy depends on the authoritative power and supportive climate described in Sections 3.3 and 3.1; critical thinking requires the dialogic language and ethical dilemma competence outlined in Sections 3.2 and 4. Without explicit formation in these dimensions, the CBC's values will remain aspirational, taught as abstract content rather than lived as classroom realities.

The new Diploma framework is still being rolled out, with opportunities for revision through the KICD curriculum review cycle. This represents a critical policy window: it is structurally easier to



build moral dimension formation into a programme still being institutionalised than to retrofit it after the curriculum, its assessment instruments, and its teacher-educator culture have solidified.

Implications for Kenya's Diploma in Education Framework

Treating the Moral Dimensions as an Integrated Professional Knowledge Domain

The six dimensions are deeply interconnected: classroom climate depends on how language is used; language reflects how power is exercised; the exercise of power is shaped by the teacher's cultural awareness; cultural sensitivity guides curriculum decisions; and all five are integrated and enacted through the teacher's moral agency. Addressing one dimension in isolation, such as an ethics module or a single character-formation session, will not produce the integrated professional formation required. The reform required is therefore not the addition of a moral education module to an already crowded curriculum but the reorientation of existing professional knowledge domains, including classroom management, language teaching, curriculum studies, and teaching practice supervision, to explicitly foreground their moral dimensions. Shulman's (1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge provides a useful structural analogy: just as subject-specific pedagogical knowledge is woven throughout the teaching of each subject area rather than taught as a standalone module, moral dimension knowledge must be woven throughout teacher professional formation. This means that the moral dimensions framework does not compete with the CBC's subject area competency requirements but deepens them: a student teacher who understands the moral dimensions of language will teach Kiswahili differently; one who grasps the moral significance of power will manage a Mathematics classroom differently; and one who can read the moral messages embedded in curriculum materials will teach Social Studies with a critical awareness that no amount of content knowledge alone can produce.

A Three-Strand Curriculum Integration Model

Drawing on Shulman's (1987) framework and Oser and Althof's (1993) model, the following three-strand integration model embeds the moral dimensions across Kenya's new three-year Diploma programme within existing course structures. This model is presented as a conceptual blueprint requiring piloting and empirical evaluation, not a fully costed implementation plan.

Strand One: Conceptual Formation (Year 1, Semester 1)

Existing Foundation of Education and Educational Psychology courses should incorporate a 12-hour thematic module introducing Buzzelli and Johnston's (2002) six dimensions as a professional knowledge framework. The module would be structured as six 2-hour seminars, each dedicated to one dimension and grounded in a case study drawn from Kenyan primary school contexts, such as overcrowded classrooms in Nairobi's informal settlements, multilingual rural classrooms in the North Rift, or coastal schools navigating Islamic and civic value systems. This does not require creating a new course; the Foundation of Education course has sufficient contact hours to accommodate the reallocation of 12 hours, representing a modest adjustment well within the scope of KICD's curriculum revision authority.

Strand Two: Applied Dilemma Practice (Year 1 Semester 2 to Year 2 Semester 1)

Subject Methods courses should embed structured Discourse II seminars (Oser & Althof, 1993), collaborative moral problem-solving sessions where student teachers analyse dilemmas with peers and instructors, at a minimum of one per term, presenting locally grounded dilemmas. Assessment should use structured reflective journals evaluated against a rubric assessing moral sensitivity, reasoning quality, and willingness to act under uncertainty. Portfolio-based assessment of these journals is already part of KNEC's assessment repertoire for practicum components, making this the most feasible route to formalising moral agency assessment within the current examination framework.



Strand Three: Supervised Moral Practice (Year 2 Teaching Practice)

Teaching practice supervision should be restructured to include a moral agency observation protocol alongside the existing instructional skills checklist, assessing: (a) deliberate construction of an inclusive classroom climate; (b) use of dialogic, non-exclusionary language; (c) exercise of authoritative rather than authoritarian power; (d) culturally sensitive curriculum delivery; (e) critical engagement with the moral implications of content selection; and (f) responsiveness to ethical dilemmas. The principal additional cost is the teacher educator development programme, a prerequisite for sustainable implementation. A two-week intensive workshop on the six dimensions and Discourse II facilitation, coordinated by KICD and the TSC, represents the minimum required investment.

Comparative Perspectives: African Teacher Education Contexts

Three African cases demonstrate that the integration of moral dimensions is achievable within comparable systems. South Africa's post-apartheid Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, Republic of South Africa [DoE-RSA], 2000) designates teachers as "community, citizenship and pastoral role players," encoding moral agency as a core professional competency embedded across Initial Teacher Education courses rather than in a dedicated ethics module, confirming the argument of Section 6.1 that integration, not addition, is the correct structural approach. The South African case is instructive in a second respect: Waghid (2004) demonstrates that policy commitment without sustained teacher educator development produces superficial compliance rather than genuine formation.

Uganda's 2019 National Teacher Education Policy (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2019) introduced a Professional Development Framework that explicitly identifies ethical conduct, inclusive classroom practice, and learner-centred pedagogy as non-negotiable teacher competencies, assessed during pre-service supervision, demonstrating that assessment of moral agency is administratively feasible within an African teacher education system. Tanzania's Education and Training Policy (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2014) mobilises Ujamaa values of communal solidarity as the conceptual foundation for teacher formation, providing a direct precedent for Kenya's proposed grounding of reform in indigenous ethical frameworks. Across all three cases, the common thread is that the formation of moral dimensions is embedded structurally within the teacher education programme rather than confined to a standalone ethics course.

Indigenous Ethical Foundations for Reform

The most sustainable moral dimension reforms are those grounded in the ethical philosophy of the societies they serve. Metz (2007, 2011) has argued that ubuntu, the pan-African principle that personhood is constituted through relationships with others, provides a philosophically rigorous foundation for moral education. Kenya's ethical traditions share this relational ontology. Utu, the Swahili expression of ubuntu, holds that full humanity is achieved through one's relationships and responsibilities to others: a teacher who creates a sustaining, inclusive environment is enacting a fundamental ethical commitment to the humanity of each learner. Heshima, meaning reciprocal dignity regardless of age, status, or ethnicity, provides the ethical foundation for the power-and-authority dimension: a teacher who exercises authoritative rather than authoritarian power is enacting heshima in its fullest sense. Harambee, meaning collective pulling together, grounds the cultural representation and curriculum dimensions, though it must be acknowledged that harambee carries political complexity: the concept was mobilised by post-independence governments in ways that sometimes suppressed ethnic diversity (Bogonko, 1991), and the reform should engage this complexity honestly.



Implementation Feasibility and Stakeholder Considerations

Any curriculum reform of this scope requires attention to institutional actors and potential points of resistance. The key stakeholders with authority over the Diploma curriculum include the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), which holds a formal mandate for curriculum approval and revision; the Teacher Service Commission (TSC), which sets teacher competency standards; the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC), which governs assessment frameworks; and the individual PTTCs and universities that implement the programme. Potential resistance may arise from three sources: perceptions of an already overcrowded curriculum, a lack of teacher-educator preparation for facilitating the moral dimension, and the absence of assessment mechanisms for moral agency in the current KNEC examination framework.

Each of these concerns is addressable within the three-strand model. The issue of curriculum crowding is addressed by integration rather than addition. The issue of teacher educator preparation is addressed by the professional development workshop proposed in Strand Three. The issue of assessment is addressed by the portfolio-based reflective journal mechanism proposed in Strand Two. A phased implementation strategy, beginning with pilot cohorts in two to three selected PTTCs, accompanied by rigorous evaluation, and gradually expanding as evidence accumulates, can mitigate residual resistance while generating the local empirical evidence that this paper's conceptual argument explicitly identifies as the necessary next step.

The professional development of teacher educators deserves particular emphasis as the structural precondition on which the entire reform depends. Waghid's (2004) finding, cited in Section 7.3, that South Africa's policy commitment to moral agency produced superficial compliance rather than genuine formation precisely because teacher educators were not themselves equipped to model and facilitate it, is a direct warning for Kenya. Teacher educators in Kenya's PTTCs and universities were themselves trained under the old PTE system, which, as Table 2 confirms, contained no training whatsoever in moral agency, classroom climate as a moral environment, or ethical dilemmas. Without the two-week intensive proposed in Strand Three, the reformed curriculum will be delivered by teacher educators who, through no fault of their own, are unprepared to enact it. This is not a peripheral implementation concern; it is the condition of the reform's integrity, and it must be resourced accordingly.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the six moral dimensions identified by Buzzelli and Johnston (2002), namely classroom climate, language, power and authority, cultural representation, curriculum, and teacher moral agency, constitute an integrated professional knowledge domain that is essential for every primary school teacher but absent from both Kenya's old PTE programme and the new CBC-aligned Diploma in Education framework. Each dimension carries distinct and significant moral implications for the formation of pupils' character, and each requires deliberate professional formation that extends well beyond the technical CBC delivery skills currently prioritised by the new Diploma framework.

Four specific recommendations follow. First, Kenya's new Diploma curriculum should integrate the six moral dimensions as an explicit strand of professional knowledge, embedded across subject-area courses and teaching-practice supervision, through the three-strand model proposed in Section 6.2. Second, teaching practice assessment should include explicit evaluation of student teachers' moral agency using the differentiated rubric proposed in Strand Three. Third, professional development of teacher educators in PTTCs and university faculties should explicitly address moral character pedagogy. Fourth, the Diploma reform should be grounded in Kenya's indigenous ethical traditions,



including *utu*, *heshima*, and *harambee*, to ensure cultural legitimacy and sustainable integration into Kenyan teachers' professional identity.

The national aspiration to produce citizens who are both competent and good will remain aspirational until the teachers responsible for realising it have themselves been formed as deliberate moral educators. Integrating the six moral dimensions into the new Diploma framework, grounded in Kenya's own ethical heritage and implemented through the existing KICD curriculum review mechanisms, is the most culturally credible and cost-effective investment Kenya can make in the moral quality of its education system.

This study is a conceptual analysis whose claims require empirical validation. The paper has documented the systematic absence of moral dimensions in four policy texts using a binary presence/absence framework; it has not examined whether moral formation is informally addressed through Religious Education methods, Social Studies practicum components, or the informal culture of teacher training colleges, a significant limitation that future research should address directly. The hypothesised link between moral dimension formation and improved classroom practice requires direct empirical testing, ideally through quasi-experimental studies comparing student teachers who receive the reformed curriculum with those who do not. Future studies should employ ethnographic observation and structured interviews to examine how the six moral dimensions are currently navigated by practising Kenyan primary school teachers, and comparative studies with African countries that have integrated moral dimension knowledge into teacher education programmes will generate the evidence needed to translate this paper's conceptual argument into specific, sustainable, and context-sensitive policy reform.

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