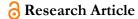
# Journal of Research in Education and Pedagogy

ISSN 3047-7131 (online) & 3047-6410 (print) August 2025, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 405-417





# Exploring Professional Ethics in a Competence-Based Curriculum Implementation at a Teacher's College in Rwanda

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#### Abstract

Professional ethics are crucial for implementing quality education within any society, as they play a vital role in deploying educational programmes in learning institutions. With this in mind, the researchers identified challenges related to professional ethics faced by staff at a Teacher Training College in Rwanda while implementing a Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC). These observations prompted the researchers to investigate the impact of professional ethics within the implementation framework, alongside various other potential factors. A qualitative approach and a single case study design were employed. Participants were purposively selected from the chosen Teacher Training College(TTC) in the Eastern Province for semi-structured interviews with six tutors. Ten student teachers were also purposively sampled for a focus group interview. Observations of tutors' daily routines were conducted, and document analysis was utilised. The data generated were analysed thematically. The study was guided by Rogan and Grayson's (2003) theory of Curriculum Implementation (CI) and Rest's (1983) four-component model (FCM) of morality. The findings revealed that tutors' professional conduct influenced their commitment to duty, preparation, methodology, and punctuality. Furthermore, the study established that tutors were not adequately equipped with professional ethics to interpret and implement the CBC in line with 21st-century trends. Additional findings indicated that tutors rarely related their teaching actions to ethical principles. Last but not least, student teachers had expectations of modelling best practices from their tutors. Fulfilled expectations would see effective CBC implementation. The study concluded that a lack of professional ethics in tutors affects effective CBC implementation in the TTC. Some recommendations include ongoing professional development to enhance the tutors' cognitive and dialogical competencies necessary for reflecting on their actions, and equipping them with ethical reasoning and professional responsibility. Finally, the Government of Rwanda is urged to revisit the Tutors' training curriculum to enhance professional undertakings.

Keywords: Competence-based Curriculum, Competences, Professional Ethics, Quality Education, Tutors

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Received January 16, 2025 Accepted May 5, 2025 Published August 1, 2025

Citation: Dzavo, J., Musaniwa, O., Maizere, J., Mutseekwa, C., & Nduwayo, E. (2025). Exploring professional ethics in a competence-based curriculum implementation at a teacher's college in Rwanda. Journal of Research in Education and Pedagogy. 2(3), 405-417.

DOI: 10.70232/jrep.v2i3.74

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Professional ethics are a critical component in the achievement of organisational goals. Several authors have various views on the impact of professional ethics in an organisation. This introduction reserves time to explore a few of these views. In China, the emphasis is on cultivating professional ethics in teacher education. Professional ethics greatly contribute to the quality of education in China (Guo, 2022). Why does China prioritise teacher education? One might conclude that teacher educators must nurture ethical teachers who will shape the nation's future. College tutors should embody the same moral values. Consequently, quality education can be realised in the colleges and schools where student teachers are



placed. Supporting this view, Liu and Xu (2018) assert that college teachers should possess higher self-discipline and professional ethics. This expectation ensures quality education in colleges and universities. Liu and Xu (2018) further assert that for college teachers, possessing noble professional ethics is fundamental to all their work and a source of ongoing improvement. This empowers college teachers to establish sound values, ideals, and beliefs, devote their efforts to refining teaching methods and content, and continually enhance their skills. Additionally, college teachers can prioritise their students. In contrast, teachers lacking professional ethics tend to disregard student development in favour of their career prospects. Thus, this lack of concern has a significant impact on the quality of college education.

Professional ethics directly influence the training at teachers' colleges, affecting the overall quality of national education. A study conducted in Ethiopia by Mekonnen and Golga (2023) revealed that teachers' ethical professional practices play a crucial role in ensuring respect and prestige within the education profession. The preceding study highlighted numerous unethical professional practices, such as a lack of transparency regarding assessing students' achievements, habitual lateness or absence from class, threatening students due to the teacher's failings, inadequate communication with students, and neglecting students' issues. Consequently, the status of professional ethics in colleges warrants close attention; aligned with this perspective, Boon (2011) asserts that since the 1970s, a campaign for ethics has emerged to address the deficiency of ethics in tertiary institutions. This campaign appeared conspicuously absent in Australia and the United States during the period described by Boon. Boon (2011) further emphasises that quality teachers should exhibit high standards of professional ethics. Implementing a well-designed curriculum in the hands of an unprofessional and unethical teacher can lead to disaster (Ayenalem et al., 2023; Mahajan et al., 2016). Ayenalem et al. (2023, p. 1) state:

Teachers are pivotal in achieving social progress and preparing a generation to meet the community's goals. Their commitment to upholding the professional code of ethics by demonstrating responsibility, respect, decency, integrity, and trust is the hallmark of the teaching profession and is crucial for effective teaching and learning.

Given this background, the government of Rwanda issued Presidential Order No. 45/01 of June 30, 2015, which established the code of professional ethics for public servants in Rwanda. These provisions outline general principles of conduct for public servants in and outside the workplace. This document is the foundation for the laws and policies regulating professional practice in Rwanda's public institutions. According to Gofton et al. (2008), a profession is a public trust, and each profession upholds this trust by maintaining an ethical code that is more stringent than society's legal standards.

Coincidentally, Rwanda's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) was introduced in the same year as the Presidential Order No. 45/01 of 30/06/2015. The introduction of the CBC facilitated a shift from an information-based curriculum to a competence-focused approach, addressing the future business needs of Rwanda and the global economy (Rwigema & Andala, 2022). However, the CBC adopted by the government for Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) is encountering challenges in implementation (Kizito & Murasira, 2019; Ndihokubwayo et al., 2020; Takavarasha & Uwamariya, 2024). The reasons for these challenges vary, encompassing issues of quality, pedagogy, teachers' mindset shifts, and the utilisation of resources. Limited research has highlighted the role of professional ethics in facilitating the implementation of the CBC. Insufficient implementation of the CBC undermines the Rwandan government's commitment to establishing a robust educational policy to eradicate illiteracy and realise a middle-class economy by the year 2030 (Nkundabakura et al., 2024). To this end, the researchers aimed to explore the impact of professional ethics on the implementation of the CBC at a TTC in the Eastern Province of Rwanda.

## 1.1. Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study was guided by the following objectives;

- To examine tutors' views on professional ethics and CBC implementation in a TTC.
- To establish student teachers' views on how their tutors' professional ethics impact the implementation of CBC in the TTC.
- To suggest measures for enhancing professional ethics in effective CBC implementation in the TTC.

#### 1.2. Theoretical Framework

This study situates itself at the interface of two theoretical frameworks. The theory of Curriculum Implementation (CI), which was coined by Rogan and Grayson in 2003, and Rest's (1983) four-component model (FCM) of morality. The ability of the individual teacher to navigate the three constructs of the theory of Curriculum Implementation (CI) depends on the conceptualisation and strength of their ethical professional identity as seen through the lens of Rest's (1983) FCM.

The four components of moral sensitivity, moral judgement, moral motivation and commitment, and moral character relate to teachers' perceptual clarity and empathy, implicit processes, and tacit knowledge, professional identity formation, and moral pragmatic competences, respectively (Vozzola, 2017). Accordingly, implicit processes and tacit knowledge for applying moral reasoning rely on three complex schemas: (i) reasoning dominated by self-interest, fear of authority, and lack of autonomy or personal responsibility; (ii) reasoning focused on existing norms, rules, codes, and laws; and (iii) reasoning involving concepts of justice, fairness, duty, and the evolutionary nature of morality in society (Bebeau & Monson, 2008; Vozzola, 2017). The third level constitutes the apex of the teacher's professional identity formation. Thus, the teachers' consciousness of justice, fairness, duty, and the evolutionary nature of morality in society is expected to guide them through curriculum implementation in a transformative manner.

The CI theory is made up of constructs, which are Profile of Implementation (PI), Capacity to Support Innovation (CSI), and Support from Outside Agencies (SOA) (Dzavo,2020; Rogan & Aldous, 2005). The thrust of the theory is on the learning environment, for this is where learners, teachers, the curriculum, and educational resources converge. The theory also considers the administrative and governance roles (Dzavo,2020; Rogan & Aldous, 2005). Profile of Implementation (PI) is concerned with what defines good practice and what this looks like in the classroom. It recognises that there are as many ways of implementing the curriculum as teachers teach it. The PI construct is made to show a way of the learning area and several channels that could lead to several destinations. The PI enables teachers and administrators at schools to participate in drawing plans to implement change in a way that is appropriate and feasible for the schools' context and culture.

The CSI illuminates the school-based factors that support or hinder the implementation of novel ideas and practices (Rogan & Aldous, 2005). Indicators of the CSI construct include physical resources, teacher factors, learner factors, and the school ethos and management (Rogan & Aldous, 2005). Support from Outside Agencies (SOA) focuses on how agencies outside the school interact with the school to facilitate innovation and influence curriculum implementation. Respective departments are charged with making major policy decisions. Outside agencies, however, include a wide range of organisations, with vastly differing agendas, all vying for or collaborating to play a role in implementing educational innovation.

#### 1.3. Literature Review

#### 1.3.1. Professional Ethics

Professional ethics are important because they dictate to professionals a series of rules related to how a professional acts towards the people with whom he/she relate professionally. From a philosophical point of view, ethics has to do with morality and how people act in the sense of goodness or badness. Professional ethics are constituted by all the moral standards that govern the behaviour and actions of professionals. The concept of professional ethics arises from the impulse to keep human performance in order and under rules (Barraza, 2021). In particular, professional ethics seeks to support and improve the service provided by a professional. In value, professional ethics ensure that the professions follow the positive paths established in each society. Professional ethics implies compliance with values. It presents the virtues with which professionals practice. In principle, professional ethics are based on beneficence, autonomy, non-maleficence, and justice. In summation, professional ethics refers to principles and criteria that regulate the actions of a professional. Guo (2022) states that teachers' professional competence and ethics can be enhanced through teacher education and new education models oriented to teachers' individual needs.

In the literature, professional ethics have had diverse interpretations. Edubirdie (2021) defines professional ethics as attempting to live a just, virtuous life in both vocation and personal life. Professional

ethics were established and continue to be a guiding set of principles that help dictate what constitutes good behaviour of a person in authority. It is how we judge the authority's validity. Garcia et al. (2015) aver that ethics reflect what we are about to do and our motive for doing it. According to these authors, ethics is more of a reflection of our actions and justification of such actions. In light of this definition, professional ethics would then focus on the degree of reflection on a professional's actions in line with his/her profession and the rationale attached to such actions. Thus, the ethics of the teaching profession are the moral beliefs and rules about right and wrong that influence teachers' behaviour, attitudes, and ideals (UNESCO, 2019).

Professional ethics mostly corresponds with responsibility, rather than accountability. However, Cronqvist (2020) posits that responsibility is difficult to measure because it allows for several ways of acting. First, moral ethics include honesty, loyalty, discipline, not smoking in the presence of students and public places, not drinking alcohol in the presence of students and public areas, dressing neatly and decently to school, sexual comportment, and punctuality. Secondly, work ethics include continuous learning, regular preparation of lesson plans, serving in loco parentis of students, regular assessment of learners, reporting on learners, being cooperative with other teachers at work, and obedience to authority.

## 1.3.2. Ways of fostering professional ethics in CBC implementation

Perez-Garcia et al. (2015) believe that professional ethics are not innate, but should be developed in teacher training colleges. The authors further argue that professional competencies are a result of ethical competence. Therefore, through deliberate teacher development, teachers become effective in their work in their workplaces. Well-groomed teachers become well-informed in their profession and subsequently make good professional decisions when doing their job. Competent professionals are therefore expected to be morally upright or ethically mature. Ultimately, this implies going beyond possession of knowledge but involves knowing how to relate to others, and knowing how to be (attitude). In addition, one has to be mindful of the other person's dignity and the limits that need to be imposed to make a legitimate educational intervention.

UNESCO (2019) proposes that, besides adequate teacher development, teachers should enjoy academic freedom, particularly in deciding what to teach, materials, and the appropriate methodology. Teachers should be developed to respect children's rights and dignity without any prejudice to sex, race, colour, creed, or religion. The teachers should also ensure the confidentiality of personal information and other learner records disclosed to them. The teachers should have the right to fair remuneration. Teachers should be trained to avoid any form of malpractice in the examination. Teachers should also be made aware that it is unethical to give corporal punishment unless duly authorised.

According to Edubirdie (2021), teachers should be able to uphold the reputation and good name of the profession and ensure they protect students under their supervision, to ensure their safety and welfare. Teachers should know relevant legislation and regulations and comply with national and school policies, procedures, and guidelines that promote student welfare and child protection. Effective communication with students, colleagues, and school management is important as part of professional behaviour in an institution of education.

Jayamma and Sumangala (2012) encourage teachers to further their education by being professionally competent and ethically conscious. Training programmes on dealing with moral dilemmas, moral code of conduct, and ethical values should be performed for teachers to highlight the significance of professional ethics since teachers serve as role models to students. Liu and Xu (2018) agree with Jayamma and Sumangala (2012) that teachers need continual training in professional ethics to improve their practice. Similarly, Boon (2011) avers that besides teachers' continual learning of professional ethics, they should also teach professional ethics in the classroom. Teaching the ethics themselves makes them internalise the same ethics, driving them to implement the curriculum effectively. In contrast, Guo (2022) feels that teachers should only be consumers of professional ethics regulations but should participate in formulating the professional ethics that affect them. The involvement of the teachers would ensure compliance with the application of professional ethics, subsequently leading to the possible effective implementation of the curriculum.

#### 2. METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1. Research Design

The study uses a qualitative approach and a single case study design. This approach is critical for answers to questions on the complex nature of a phenomenon from the participant's point of view (Creswell, 2017). In this study, a qualitative approach made it possible to generate data on the role of professional ethics in CBC implementation at the selected TTC in the Rwandan Eastern Province. Tutors and student teachers in the TTC were interviewed to get their views on professional ethics, and the approach provided methods that allowed interrogation of the views.

A single case study gave the researchers a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study, and a more careful study was done (Gustafsson, 2017). In this study, a focus on one TTC made it possible to generate important data that researchers consider useful to the readership and policymakers. There was adequate time to create data without pressure to travel to another sample. The TTC chosen was within reach of the researchers without much cost and time, and therefore enabled the researchers to have more time to do the research. Out of five TTCs in the eastern province of Rwanda, one was conveniently selected for semi-structured interviews with 6 tutors and 10 students in a focus group interview. Tutors were purposively selected based mainly on their teaching experience. High-performing students were sampled. Interviews with tutors lasted 40 minutes. The focus group interview lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes. Gender was well balanced among tutors and student teachers, though the responses did not reflect gender bias. The age range of tutors was 35 to 50, and student teachers were 19 to 24. The participants had rich information required for the study as serving members of the TTC. Convenience sampling involves choosing the nearest sample or individuals to serve as participants, provided they have the rich information the researcher requires. The sample, however, does not represent any group apart from itself and does not seek to generalise to the wider population (Cohen et al, 2011; Denscombe, 2010). In addition, observation was also employed on how tutors responded to their daily activities at work and critical college assignments, like examinations and clubs. Document analysis was done on Presidential Order Gazette no 10 of 16/03/2020, and the College Policy to establish the general expectations of the TTC. Triangulation, peer briefing, and member checking were adopted for the trustworthiness of the generated data.

#### 2.2. Data Analysis

Generated data were analysed thematically, informed by Braun and Clarke's (2013) six-phase model. We read through the data, generated codes, developed themes, reviewed themes in line with our objectives, defined and named the themes, and finally wrote up the analysis. The themes came from the major issues raised by participants that aligned with the study objectives during data generation. The evaluation ensured trustworthiness through 'member-checking, where selected participants determined the accuracy of the findings (Sandstrom, 2018). Confidentiality of information and anonymity of participants and the school were ensured by coding in this study.

#### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study. The four themes that emerged and were used to report the findings are: Moral motivation and commitment to duty, Moral character and competence for the fidelity of implementation, Adherence to statutory and legal provisions, and Care ethics as a guide to student-centred pedagogy.

#### 3.1. Tutors' Views on Professional Ethics and CBC Implementation in a TTC

## 3.1.1. Moral Motivation and Commitment to Duty

The first theme was a summary of codes related to the teachers' views on motivation for the job and commitment to duty. The theme demonstrated that the issue of professional ethics revolves around discipline, motivation, and commitment to duty. However, there were slight variations in how participants responded to these issues. P6 said:

Commitment to duty as a professional entity is doing things on time, in planning and responding to the timetable. In this institution, around 90% of tutors are punctual to the institution's activities, like lessons, and submission of the required information. Commitment to duty means knowing what I am expected to do without consideration of the authority. Performing tasks without pressure.

## P4 had this to say:

At our TTC, punctuality is around 60%. This affects curriculum implementation and performance as workers fail to manage time.

The variation among the participants within the same institution indicates how they value punctuality in curriculum implementation. A discrepancy of 30% on the same subject may suggest carelessness in numerical usage, lack of concentration, or insufficient monitoring of the institution's events. Regardless of the situation, there was no total adherence to the requirements for order and punctuality, which are vital for the effective implementation of a CBC, in the TTC. Professional ethics should give serious consideration to this need if an institution is to achieve its goals of teaching and managing students' behaviours. Managing students' behaviour in teaching and learning is crucial for successful curriculum implementation. Many participants' perspectives align with Guo (2022) regarding the enhancement of teachers' professional competences and ethics. This also corresponds with Rogan and Grayson's (2003) theory on teacher factors, especially the context and culture of the institution that hinder effective curriculum implementation. The ethical aspect of punctuality in the institution contrasts with Rest's FCM first schema theory, regarding the lack of fear of authority when taking the right action(Vozzola,2017). Such behaviour plunges an institution into a state of incompleteness, as less committed individuals seldom compensate for time lost, potentially resulting in the underdevelopment of student teachers. This has negative consequences for the quality of teacher development.

P5 thought that Commitment to duty meant even having extra hours to cover time lost when one has been away during official duty or any other reasonable excuse. It also meant using ICT tools as a sign of commitment, as it requires more time and precision. He highlighted that a sign of commitment is the proper assignment of student tasks and effectively marking them, and that a lack of commitment on the other end would also involve teaching without assessment, which affects effective curriculum implementation. To P5, commitment was therefore a critical ingredient in preparation, punctuality, and adopting modern trends in lesson presentation. The participant further mentioned the need for tutors at the institution to improve punctuality and meet deadlines for accomplishing tasks at hand.

The other participants perceived motivation as central to commitment. They argued that motivation precedes commitment; for a person to be committed, they are supposed to be motivated. A student teacher said about the commitment of Tutors at the institution:

Duty consciousness in some tutors is lacking in terms of punctuality and modelling of critical aspects of invigilation. Whilst some tutors do well on these attributes, others still need a change of mindset to understand the essence of this, for they were seen to respond to the acceptable behaviour when they see authority coming where they will be.

## Remarking about the behaviour of his fellow Tutors, P3 said:

Some tutors are committed, whilst others are not. Usually, the amount of motivation a teacher has determines their level of commitment. I observed that teachers who often complain about many issues, including low salaries, lack commitment. They need encouragement to improve. Punctuality is needed by all in the institution as it affects the accomplishment of tasks. We therefore need to improve on this one. It is just mixed; some are punctual, whilst others are not. The institution should acquire a login machine to help push those lacking motivation to be punctual.

P3's views align with Türk and Korkmaz (2022), who examined the relationship between teachers' levels of dedication and commitment to their profession and their attitudes towards it. The authors concluded that levels of dedication and commitment varied based on factors such as motivation, gender, seniority, and level of duty. Furthermore, Bebeau and Monson (2008) assert that moral motivation is driven by an internal need for self-consistency and efficacy. This finding raised questions on the effectiveness of tutors who were found to lack commitment, as research conducted by Cerit (2013) indicates that classroom teachers' self-efficacy significantly correlates with their willingness to implement curriculum reform. FCM theory highlights personal responsibility as a driving force that shapes one's fair adjudication of duties. One must act following existing codes of conduct to achieve the intended goals of curriculum implementation (Vozzola,2017). A lack of such a mindset leads to a lack of effective implementation of CBC, which requires deep competencies in student teachers. Rogan and Grayson, CI, theory profile of SOA(Dzavo,2020) suggest policies and administrative roles play a critical part in a hands-on curriculum implementation despite negative professional ethical conduct.

## 3.1.2. Moral character and competence for the fidelity of implementation

This sub-theme is related to responses that showed the need for resilience for effective CBC implementation despite the challenges. This finding meant that such courage and conviction to overcome challenges required pragmatic competences and self-discipline to achieve fidelity in curriculum implementation.

The participants lamented the challenges that they met in implementing a CBC. They seemed to agree that the biggest challenge was a congested timetable that did not allow time to implement the competency-based, time-consuming approaches. Asked what they did to overcome such challenges, P1 said:

Commitment to duty means even having extra hours to cover time lost when one has been away during official duty or for any other reasonable excuse. Using ITC tools is also a sign of commitment as it requires more time and precision. Another sign of commitment is the proper assignment of student tasks and effectively marking them. Lack of commitment on the other end would also involve teaching without assessment, which affects effective curriculum implementation.

P4 explained how the institution endeavoured to develop discipline among student teachers for the effective implementation of a CBC in difficult situations. He said:

We use clubs to develop discipline in students. Itorero (Rwandan pedagogy on humanism) helps in the sensitisation of taboos and cultural values in Rwanda. Students are put into groups with names that students strive to identify with. This controls the behaviour of the students as the brand names help motivate students to behave well. On Sundays, students engage in boys' and girls' private talks, which regulate the behaviour of students, hence positively minimising discipline issues. Each student has a rule book that helps guide students on the appropriate behaviour. We also make use of Boys/Girls space dialogues to minimise bad behaviour.

Contrary to Nzahabwanayo et al.'s (2023) assertion that excessive pursuit of this citizenship model (Itorero training) only helps to produce uncritical and docile citizens, the participants in this study thought the practice aided the development of virtues such as courage, self-sacrifice, patriotism, connectedness, and discipline that were crucial in creating conducive environments for effective curriculum implementation. Empirical evidence shows a strong correlation between orderliness and discipline among students in effective schools (Way, 2011). FCM theory (Vozzola,2017) calls for autonomy with reasoning into actions done rather than fear for authority, which is not sustained. Implementation based on understanding or justification of actions has the potential to produce a quality teacher.

Some participants, such as P1, P2, P5, and P6, seemed to suggest that teaching in a CBC required more than just ordinary skills in teaching but a combination of ethics and other twenty-first-century teaching competences. Participants were asked about ethical practices central to an effective competency-based curriculum implementation. They were also asked to give their views on what needs to be improved in TTC

tutors to reap the best from their professional conduct in the 21st Century. Research and technological literacy were highlighted as skills that gave teachers an edge in the implementation of a CBC. P2 said:

In this Teacher Training College, tutors must improve their professional ethics to implement the CBC curriculum fully. They also need advanced modern ICT skills to address the needs of the student teachers: This brings about Effective use of ICT to align with the 21st-century demands, for example, Google Classrooms, Google Forms for evaluation, and others. They should be able to summarise notes onto slides, using pictures and videos as well. This package helps them go beyond the projector and adopt various ICT tools needed to implement CBC.

These sentiments highlight the essence of staff development to enhance content mastery, use of technology, and clear misconceptions of professional ethics. In the same vein, the participant highlighted the significance of various tutor skills to ensure compatibility with 21st-century requirements to realise effective curriculum implementation, an aspect the participant felt was missing within the institution. These views are in tandem with Guo's (2022) views that focus on the use of education for facilitator improvement. There should be a deliberate move to ensure facilitators are abreast with current trends and are practising the right thing. Codes of conduct to this end help force the less motivated to do the right thing, as propounded in the Rogan and Grayson, (2003), SOA dimension of the theory of curriculum implementation and Rest's FCM (Vozzola,2017). The administration in this regard becomes pivotal to ensure all are actively and effectively involved in line with their job description in the deep CBC implementation.

## 3.1.3. Adherence to Statutory and Legal Provisions

The findings in this sub-theme showed that Tutors did their best to adhere to statutory and legal provisions. Many feared reprisal and loss of jobs, hence they thought every government employee needed to follow the regulations. P4 said:

The Rwandan government sets rules or statutory instruments on how teachers should operate. For example, the college policy is an extract from this statutory instrument. This guides the ethical operations of the workers in the institution. The importance of preparation, student-centred approaches, relevant assessment procedures, appreciation of the community of practice approach, co-teaching, and adopting the project approaches.

The respondent felt that proper curriculum implementation was hinged on a professional code of conduct communicated to staff and implemented. According to this response, all other activities of implementers are determined by institutional rules and regulations to shape professional practice. Adding to P4's remarks, P1 also retorted:

REB always provides training to workers, where there is conflict on expected professional ethics, it could be just due to a lack of commitment to duty. We are always reminded of the statutory provisions so that we are not caught offside. Our Tutors nonetheless need leadership training, career guidance and counselling skills, skills on the implementation of CBC, and subject skill improvement. This should go hand in hand with the training in professional ethics.

The analysed documents showed some provisions that public workers needed to abide by. Workers, as part of their professional ethics, were expected to exhibit good morals, attitudes, and behaviour that identify a professional civil servant as a holder of public trust. Such conduct should be exhibited in and outside the workplace. Articles 5, 6, and 7 of Presidential Order No. 45/01 of 30/06/2015 reveal a code of professional ethics for public servants that specifies accountability, impartiality, and integrity. That implies that a civil servant should be principled and do the right thing and therefore should not do actions blindly; observe order, and practice fairness in interacting or working with others regardless of gender, race, ethnic group, origin, religion, political affiliation, or any other channel of discrimination; and present him/herself in a dignified manner in conformity with the morally accepted standards and values of Rwanda respectively. In Rwanda, the Presidential Order Official Gazette No. 10 of 16/03/2020 and Rwanda Basic Education (2020) consider professional ethics as good morals, attitudes, and behaviour that characterise a

professional public servant as a holder of public trust. Such conduct must characterise tutors at and outside the workplace. This definition highlights the expected standard behaviour of a public worker inside and outside the workplace in Rwanda. The description is not much different from the central view of UNESCO (2019) and Cronqvist's (2020) description of professional ethics already presented. This corresponds with Rogan and Grayson, CI theory profile of SOA(Dzavo,2020), on providing the necessary legal instruments to guide implementation. Having these instruments, however, and not adequately enforcing them, may not make much difference in the application of the professional codes.

The findings that a number of the TTC Tutors observed and adhered to the Statutory and legal provisions of Articles 5, 6, and 7 of Presidential Order No. 45/01 of 30/06/2015 aligned with findings from Tetti et al.'s (2023) study. Tetti et al. (2023) sought to determine adherence to the national code of ethics and conduct by public employees in four selected Tanzania Local Government Authorities (LGAs). Using Ordinal logistic regression, the authors measured loyalty, diligence, integrity, accountability to the public, and respect for the law. The study established that loyalty to the government and diligence were significant at the 5% level (0.05) of significance, and the code was highly adhered to in both rural and urban LGAs, although in some aspects the level of adherence was a bit higher in rural LGAs (Tetti et al., 2023).

#### 3.2. Student Teachers' Views on Their Tutors' Professional Ethics in a TTC

#### 3.2.1. Care Ethics as a Guide to Student-Centred Pedagogy

Codes such as care, support for learning, student collaboration, human rights, respect, ethical understanding, modelling good behaviour, role model, equal opportunity, student-friendly approaches, and student-friendly environments characterised the theme on students' views on professional ethics. Under this theme, participants seemed to agree that professional ethics embeds care ethics. Suggesting, among other things, that teaching in the CBC needed Tutors to respect the students' diversity and rights. Participants were asked about ethical practices central to an effective competency-based curriculum implementation. They were also asked to give their views on how their tutors' professional ethics impacted the implementation of CBC in the TTC. Finally, participants were asked their views on discipline and order in the teaching and learning environment in the Teacher Training College. This part of the paper explores the responses.

Many students thought it was vital for their Tutors to create conducive environments for teaching and learning. They suggested that respect for students' rights was at the center of all strategic goals to achieve student-friendly environments. A student (S2) in the first FGD said:

We appreciate what our Tutors are doing presently. Tutors who are endowed with professional ethics model good behaviour to student teachers. Similarly, they research what they teach and apply student-friendly approaches.

## Another student (S5) in the same group remarked:

Professional tutors should talk to students to resolve disciplinary issues in the framework of positive discipline. If there is a problem with a student, whether it is some kind of disruptive behaviour, it should be referred to the disciplinary department to resolve such issues. This should be within the regulatory framework of the professional ethics in Teacher Training Colleges. This approach should help in the smooth implementation of the curriculum as it is thought to reduce conflict between tutors and student teachers.

The students regarded the ability to research and create student-friendly learning environments as critical professional behaviour in curriculum implementation. The fact that TTC's mission is to develop teachers, therefore, Tutors should research and model the best practice to student teachers. Research increases tutors' confidence and effectiveness as they master their content and apply student-friendly pedagogy. This view aligns well with UNESCO's (2019) idea on the impact of the facilitator's behaviour on the learners. FCM theory(Vozzola,2017) emphasises reasoning which should result in just application of moral decision, which is critical in curriculum implementation, which can be enhanced by self-reflection and further learning on pedagogy and student management. Tutors who operate at a high level of moral

reasoning serve as a model to student teachers on how they should also work when they graduate from college.

One student from the second FGD thought there were still ethical challenges with some Tutors who did not show respect to students and disregarded their voice in the learning process. The student (S1) lamented:

I observed that many tutors regard student teachers as small kids. The command language is common. Orders are given in a more threatening manner than one would do to an adult, above all to student teachers. In the classes, the common approach is to give us notes and notes, without time for group or individual opinions. CBC teaching should allow us time to interact with others, listen to their ideas, and work together. We feel so much respect when we are allowed to do group projects and presentations. Co-teaching and the collaboration of teachers make learning good for us, and it serves as a model of how we should also cooperate with others.

## The other one (S3) retorted diplomatically:

If I were to become a tutor at this TTC, I would prefer to use student-centred approaches, and avoid segregating students, but aim to develop each student. I will ensure I demonstrate how things are done to my students. I will focus on developing competencies without skipping certain content in our syllabus because the Ministry of Education put it there for a purpose. I will be punctual when coming for lessons so that I can cover more content at a given time.

Student teachers highlighted the importance of respect and their desire for free space where they are allowed to ask questions, participate freely, collaborate, and enjoy equal treatment by their tutors. Where collaboration and hard work are done, as espoused by the student teachers, learning becomes interesting and in the process leads to a more enhanced curriculum implementation process. Professional ethics impact the quality of college education and, subsequently, the national development of education (Liu & Xu,2018; Mekonnen & Golga,2023). The student teachers' views also mirror the two types of practitioners in the same institutions implementing curriculum differently, one tutor creating time to teach and the other tutor skipping content, and most probably under pressure, as alluded to by P6, in the next Tutors' views section. This is the case averred under the Rogan and Grayson PI, theory of curriculum implementation, where tutors interpret situations differently within the same institutions, hence needing an intervention to bridge the gap (Dzavo,2020).

A student in the second group of FGDs, S3, echoed similar sentiments to P2. She said:

We expect our Tutors to engage us in learning that involves the use of technology. E-learning platforms bring flavour to our learning. We feel so much respect when we are allowed to do library research. Co-teaching and the collaboration of teachers make learning good for us, and it serves as a model of how we should also cooperate with others.

Many students concurred on the importance of technology, research, and collaborative presentation of knowledge and learning as approaches that aligned with the requirements of CBC. It was suggested that tutors should display a high standard of practice to student teachers to remain motivated to learn. Less of this hinders implementation. This adherence to high standards also equipped student teachers with similar skills (Liu & Xu,2018). Though participants 2 and 5 (tutors' views) concurred on the essence of professional ethics, Participant 2 highlighted that at the institution, more has to be done to improve professional ethics. He further indicated the role of digital tools in enhancing the professional practice of educators to ensure the effective implementation of CBC. In short, the respondent had reservations about the adequacy of the professional ethics of educators in the TTC. This claim is implied by the phrase 'tutors need to improve their professional ethics. According to Garcia et al. (2015), Continuous improvement of the Tutor's practice helps tutors deal with new situations and professional challenges. The implication is that a facilitator who goes beyond the ordinary does much for effective curriculum implementation.

Despite these conflicting views on how the tutors' professional ethics impacted the implementation of CBC in the TTC, the importance of care ethics was evident. Care is an ethic grounded in respecting the

student's voice, the importance of everyone having a voice, and being heard respectfully and on one's terms (Carter et al, 2019). Thus, in line with Kangalawe and Maina's (2019) views, care ethics in education come in handy as a critical consideration since holistic formation and rendering education as a right calls for substantial moral conduct. This entails respecting the learners and protecting them from physical, psychological, and spiritual abuse as well as cultural in curriculum implementation (Kangalawe & Maina, 2019). With professional ethics practice, institutions and the world at large will never remain the same.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that a lack of adherence to professional ethics hinders effective CBC implementation at the TTC. The TTC is responsible for the development of teachers; hence, if teachers are not well groomed, the future of the country is in jeopardy. Products from schools should be ethical in practice, and this plays a crucial role in economic development. The study further confirmed that tutors' professional conduct affected their commitment to duty, preparation, methodology, and punctuality. Lack of commitment to work affects the process of teacher development, leading to poorly trained teachers who, in turn, fail to exercise their duties effectively in their final deployment. The study also established that tutors were not adequately capacitated with professional ethics to interpret and implement the CBC in line with 21st-century trends. Tutors' capacitation, only without application, may not be adequate for the effective implementation of CBC. What is critical is the ability to rationalise over professional conduct and take the right action at the right time for effective curriculum implementation. Students highlight a gap existing in the tutor's endeavour to exhibit professional conduct, hence hindering effective CBC implementation. Tutors need to realise that teaching is not only what is said in the classroom but also what is modelled during the process of teacher development. Further findings showed that the tutors rarely related their teaching actions to ethical principles. This study is critical for all education stakeholders, for it illuminates weaknesses and strengths that educators need to attend to support curriculum implementation in institutions.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Tutors are encouraged to engage in personal and continuous professional development.
- The government of Rwanda is urged to continue in-service Tutors to capacitate them on ethical reasoning and professional responsibility.
- The Government of Rwanda is urged to revisit the Tutors' training curriculum to enhance professional undertakings.
- Policy makers are urged to enact ethics evaluation criteria to assist in curbing unethical practices in public institutions.

**Acknowledgment.** The authors extend their sincere appreciation to the College administration and all the teachers and students whose invaluable contributions were essential for the successful completion of this study. In addition, we thank the college for providing the necessary facilities and resources to conduct our research.

**Research Ethics.** This study was conducted in accordance with applicable laws and institutional regulations, with ethical approval obtained from the Teachers' Training College. The approval was granted on 20/03/2024.Ref No....ttck530414/2024 All procedures adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring participant confidentiality and voluntary participation.

Data Availability Statement. All data can be obtained from the corresponding author.

**Conflicts of Interest.** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding. The research received no external funding.

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