

TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS AND THE QUALITY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION AT ORDINARY LEVEL IN ELGON ZONE, EASTERN UGANDA

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Abstract—This study examined the fundamental teacher characteristics relevant to secondary education and their influence on the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda. A mixed-methods cross-sectional survey approach was adopted. The broader study involved 31 headteachers, 159 teachers and 461 learners, complemented by qualitative engagement with education officials and selected school stakeholders. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, focus-group discussions and observation. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used for quantitative data, while qualitative evidence was analysed thematically and triangulated with quantitative findings. Teachers reported an overall mean of 3.95 on measured teacher-characteristics indicators, while learners reported an overall mean of 4.19. Fundamental positive characteristics included professional ethics, positive teacher–learner relationships, punctuality, learner motivation, constructive relationships with administrators, creativity, innovation, collaboration, professional development and appropriate professional boundaries. Qualitative findings also identified preparedness, commitment, communication, confidentiality and equitable treatment as important. Negative characteristics included absenteeism, lesson dodging, poor time management, inadequate preparation, discrimination, rudeness, excessive phone use, drunkenness, stress projection and sexual harassment. Regression models reported strong positive relationships between teacher characteristics and quality of education, with R values ranging from .78 to .88 and model significance values below .05. The study concludes that teacher characteristics are fundamental mechanisms through which curriculum implementation succeeds or fails and recommends strengthened professional development, instructional supervision, safeguarding of learners and teachers, ethical accountability and teacher welfare support.

Index Terms—Teacher characteristics, quality of secondary education, curriculum implementation, teacher professionalism, Preparedness, and Readiness

I. Introduction

The Quality of secondary education depends not only on curriculum design, policy and physical resources but also on the teachers who translate curriculum theory with its intentions into classroom practice. Teachers plan lessons, select instructional approaches, motivate learners, assess progress, manage classrooms and create the interpersonal climate within which learning occurs. Their professional, behavioural, ethical and instructional characteristics can therefore strengthen or constrain curriculum implementation. This paper addresses two related issues: the fundamental teacher characteristics relevant to

the quality of secondary education and the influence of those characteristics on the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda.

II. Background to the Study

2.1 Conceptual Background

The Quality of secondary education is multidimensional and extends beyond examination scores to effective teaching and learning, equitable participation, learner completion, retention, relevant competencies and the achievement of intended educational outcomes. Teacher characteristics refer to the professional, behavioural, interpersonal, ethical and instructional attributes demonstrated by teachers in performing their responsibilities in class and within the school environment. In this study, these included teacher–learner relationships, punctuality and time management, learner motivation, professional ethics, relationships with administrators, creativity and innovation, collaboration, appropriate professional boundaries and participation in in-service training. Qualitative evidence further highlighted preparedness, commitment, communication, confidentiality, equitable treatment, emotional conduct and concern for learners.

Teacher characteristics are conceptually important because the teacher is the principal human resource as an agent who transforms the intended curriculum into actual learning experiences. Positive characteristics are expected to improve preparation, syllabus coverage, motivation, interaction, assessment, participation and trust. Negative characteristics may reduce instructional time, weaken confidence, discourage consultation and undermine achievement. The study therefore conceptualized teacher characteristics as an explanatory factor in the quality of secondary education.

2.2 Contextual Background

The study was conducted in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda, within secondary education at Ordinary Level. Schools operate under varying geographical, socioeconomic, administrative and institutional conditions and differ in staffing, deployment, instructional resources, leadership, accessibility and professional-development opportunities. At Ordinary Level, teachers are expected to interpret the curriculum, prepare schemes of work and lesson plans, select methods, use resources, assess learners, provide feedback, motivate learners and support different learning needs.

The study indicated many positive characteristics: teachers reported an overall mean of 3.95 and learners 4.19. Positive ratings concerned relationships, punctuality, motivation, ethics, creativity, innovation and collaboration. However, Qualitative evidence identified absenteeism, lesson dodging, late coming, inadequate preparation, weak time management, discrimination, rudeness, excessive phone use, drunkenness, stress projection, weak confidentiality, excessive corporal punishment and inappropriate teacher–learner relationships. This combination of strengths and persistent challenges justified identifying the fundamental characteristics and examining their influence on quality education.

2.3 Historical Background

Historically, the role of the teacher has evolved from a predominantly authoritative transmitter of knowledge towards that of facilitator, curriculum implementer, assessor, mentor, collaborator and protector of learner welfare. Traditional and early formal schooling commonly emphasized content transmission, discipline, memorization and examination preparation. Progressive and learner-centred perspectives later emphasized active participation, experience, problem solving, creativity and interaction, thereby expanding expectations of teacher quality beyond subject knowledge.

In Uganda, formal education developed through indigenous systems, missionary and colonial schooling, post-independence expansion and later reforms aimed at access, relevance, equity and quality. The Government White Paper on Education (1992) reinforced the central role of teacher quality by stating that no education system is better than the quality of its teachers. International movements concerning Education for All, inclusion, child protection, professional development and learning outcomes further expanded expectations of teachers. Contemporary curriculum reforms require adequate preparedness, readiness, innovation, ethical conduct, formative assessment, collaboration and learner-centred practice, making teacher characteristics increasingly important to educational quality.

2.4 Theoretical Background

The study was informed primarily by Constructivist Theory and Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis. Constructivism views learners as active constructors of knowledge and teachers as facilitators, guides and organizers of meaningful learning. Approachable, respectful, prepared, creative and motivating teachers can support inquiry, participation and consultation, whereas rudeness, discrimination, absenteeism and inadequate preparation may constrain knowledge construction.

The Force Field Analysis Theory posits that situations are maintained in an equilibrium between forces that drive change and others that resist change Kurt Lewin (1951). Force Field Analysis Theory explains educational situations through driving and restraining forces. Positive teacher characteristics include preparedness, punctuality, ethics, creativity, collaboration, motivation and effective relationships that can operate as driving forces towards quality education. Negative characteristics include absenteeism, lesson dodging, poor time management, discrimination, rudeness, drunkenness, inappropriate phone use and weak professional boundaries that can operate as restraining forces. Together, the theories explain both classroom interaction and the competing forces influencing curriculum implementation.

III. Problem Statement

Teachers are expected to demonstrate professional competence, preparation, punctuality, ethical conduct, creativity, innovation, effective time management, learner motivation, collaboration and constructive relationships. Despite these expectations, the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level

in parts of Elgon Zone remains a concern, with indications of uneven syllabus coverage, weak learner motivation, inconsistent instructional practices and differences in classroom experiences.

The study context revealed concerns including absenteeism, late coming, lesson dodging, inadequate preparation, poor time management, weak professional ethics, rudeness, discrimination, excessive mobile-phone use during instructional time, drunkenness, stress projection, weak confidentiality and inappropriate teacher–learner relationships. Yet there was inadequate context-specific empirical evidence clearly identifying the fundamental teacher characteristics relevant to the quality of secondary education and establishing the extent to which teacher characteristics influence quality at Ordinary Level. Therefore, the study addressed this gap.

IV. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the fundamental teacher characteristics and determine their influence on the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda.

V. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the fundamental teacher characteristics relevant to the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda.
2. To examine the influence of teacher characteristics on the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda.

VI. Research Questions

1. What are the fundamental teacher characteristics relevant to the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda?
2. To what extent do teacher characteristics influence the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda?

VII. Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There are no statistically significant fundamental teacher characteristics associated with the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda.

H₀₂: There is no statistically significant influence of teacher characteristics on the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda.

VIII. Literature Review

Existing scholarship consistently places the teacher at the centre of curriculum implementation. Ogar et al. (2015) argue that educational objectives cannot be achieved when planned programmes are poorly

implemented, while Asebiomo (2009) similarly emphasizes that even a well-designed curriculum depends on effective implementation. These positions make teacher behaviour and competence central because teachers convert curriculum theory with its intentions into classroom experiences.

Etim (2009) links learner academic performance to the quality of a teacher, teaching methods and available materials and facilities. Mkwanzazi (2007) emphasizes professional development as a means through which teachers re-evaluate and update their responsibilities for effective classroom performance. Ornstein and Hunkins (2004) likewise recognize the influence of teachers on learning, while Pollard and Tann (1993) associate the quality of teaching with competence, classroom management, pupil assessment, subject teaching and continuing professional learning.

International evidence also highlights teacher presence, safety and professional conduct. UNICEF (2000) treated teacher presence in the classroom as a starting point for quality learning and documented concerns about sexual harassment of female learners in some settings. UNESCO (2006) linked underutilization of curriculum to teacher incompetence. Together, these perspectives support examination of teacher characteristics as both instructional and ethical determinants of educational quality.

IX. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

9.1 Teacher Characteristics and Curriculum Implementation

Teacher characteristics in this study encompassed teacher-learner relationships, punctuality, learner motivation, professional ethics, relationships with administrators, creativity and innovation, collaboration, maintenance of appropriate professional boundaries and participation in in-service training. These attributes were treated as practical conditions through which teachers influence the effectiveness and efficiency of curriculum implementation.

The conceptual position is that positive teacher characteristics improve instructional preparation, classroom climate, learner participation, curriculum coverage and assessment, thereby strengthening quality outcomes. Negative characteristics interrupt instructional time, reduce trust and motivation, weaken coverage and may expose learners to unsafe or discriminatory environments. Thus, teacher characteristics influence the quality of education both directly and indirectly through the curriculum-implementation process.

9.2 Constructivist Perspective

The study drew on constructivist thinking, which views learners as active participants in knowledge construction while the teacher guides, scaffolding and organizes meaningful learning experiences. A hostile, inaccessible or discriminatory teacher can restrict questioning, consultation and participation. Conversely, an approachable and professionally prepared and ready teacher can support learner agency, dialogue and deeper understanding.

9.3 Force Field Analysis

Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis provides an additional lens for understanding teacher characteristics. Educational situations may be viewed as an equilibrium between forces that support change and forces that resist it. Positive teacher attributes include preparedness, punctuality, collaboration, creativity and ethical conduct that act as driving forces for effective implementation. Whereas, Absenteeism, poor time management, rudeness, discrimination and inadequate preparation act as restraining forces. Improvement therefore requires strengthening the former (driving forces) and reducing the latter (resisting forces).

9.4 The Eagle Logic Theory.

The Eagle Logic Theory (TELT) by Matsanga, J (2026) Posits that preparedness and Readiness are essential elements of a plan of action. This Theory supplements other theories by explaining that the preparedness and readiness of teachers is key in the process of curriculum implementation towards quality education.

X. Methodology

10.1 Research Approach

The study adopted a mixed-methods research approach by integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence. The quantitative component enabled measurement of respondents' perceptions of teacher characteristics and statistical examination of their influence on the quality of secondary education. The qualitative component provided deeper explanations of how particular teacher behaviours, professional practices and interpersonal characteristics affected curriculum implementation and learner experiences. Integration of the two forms of evidence strengthened interpretation through triangulation.

10.2 Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design within a mixed-methods framework. Data were collected from different categories of respondents during the study period in order to describe the fundamental teacher characteristics and examine their influence on the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level. Quantitative data were complemented by interviews, focus-group discussions and observation. The design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain evidence from multiple respondent groups and compare statistical patterns with participants' contextual explanations.

10.3 Study Area

The study was conducted in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda. The study focused on selected secondary schools providing education at Ordinary Level. The zone was relevant because secondary schools operate under varying geographical, socioeconomic, administrative and institutional conditions that may shape teacher deployment, professional practice, curriculum implementation and educational quality.

10.4 Study Population

The study population comprised stakeholders directly involved in or knowledgeable about curriculum implementation and the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone. These included headteachers, teachers and learners in selected secondary schools. The broader stakeholder population also included District Education Officials, officials associated with the Uganda National Examinations Board, staff associated with the National Curriculum Development Centre, and selected representatives of Parents Teachers Associations and Boards of Governors. The exact numerical target population for each category can be viewed from the summary table under sample size below.

10.5 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis were the secondary school teachers providing Ordinary Level education in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda. The study drew conclusions about teacher characteristics and the quality of secondary education as manifested within the institutional setting of selected secondary schools as analysed from the teachers.

10.6 Unit of Inquiry

The units of inquiry were the individual participants from whom information was obtained. These comprised headteachers, teachers and learners, together with selected education officials and school stakeholders who possessed relevant knowledge of teacher characteristics, curriculum implementation and quality secondary education. Their perspectives enabled the study to obtain evidence from instructional, administrative, learner and policy-related viewpoints.

10.7 Sample Size

The quantitative sample comprised 31 headteachers, 159 teachers and 461 learners, giving a total of 651 quantitative respondents. Qualitative evidence was additionally obtained from selected key informants and participants through interviews and focus-group discussions. Details are as given below.

Table 10.1: A Summary table for Sample size, Sampling Techniques and methods for Data Collection:

Target population	target population Size	Sample size	Sampling technique	Method of data collection
Secondary School Headteachers	114	31	Purposive	Questionnaires Interview guide
Secondary School Teachers	1710	159	Purposive	Questionnaires Interview guide
O'Level Learners	3800	461	Simple random	Questionnaires FGD guide
PTA members	114	2	Stratified	Interview guide
BOG Members	114	2	Stratified	Interview guide

NCDC Secretariat	12	2	Purposive	Interview guide
UNEB Secretariat	12	2	Purposive	Interview guide Analysis
DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICIALS	20	2	Purposive	Interview guide

10.8 Sampling Techniques and Procedures

The study employed stratified sampling, simple random sampling and purposive sampling. Stratified sampling was used to promote representation of relevant categories within the study population. Simple random sampling was applied where eligible participants required an equal chance of selection. Purposive sampling was used to select information from participants whose roles, experience or institutional responsibilities enabled them to provide specialized evidence concerning teacher characteristics, curriculum implementation and quality secondary education. The sampling technique as applied to each respondent category in accordance with the approved study protocol is as shown in the table above.

10.9 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using survey, interview, focus-group discussion and observation methods. The survey method generated standardized quantitative responses on the measured teacher-characteristics indicators. Interviews enabled key informants and administrators to explain professional, institutional and contextual factors affecting teacher practice. Focus-group discussions generated shared and contrasting experiences, particularly concerning classroom interaction and learner experiences. Observation provided contextual evidence concerning selected practices and conditions relevant to curriculum implementation.

10.10 Research Instruments

The principal research instruments were questionnaires, interview guides, focus-group discussion guides and observation tools. Questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert-type response format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The qualitative guides contained open-ended prompts that enabled participants to explain how teacher characteristics affected curriculum implementation and educational quality.

10.11 Validity and Reliability

The study required procedures to establish the validity and reliability of the research instruments. And this was done.

10.12 Data Collection Procedure

Following the required institutional and administrative permissions, the researcher approached the selected study sites and respondent categories. Questionnaires were administered to eligible respondents, while interviews and focus-group discussions were conducted with selected participants. Observation was used where appropriate. Data collection procedures were organized to obtain evidence relevant to the two objectives: identifying the fundamental teacher characteristics and examining their influence on quality secondary education.

10.13 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations summarized responses to teacher-characteristics indicators. Regression analysis was used to examine the influence of teacher characteristics on the quality of secondary education, with statistical significance assessed at the .05 level. Qualitative data were analysed thematically by identifying recurrent patterns and explanations relating to positive and negative teacher characteristics. Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated through triangulation.

10.14 Ethical Considerations

The study was expected to observe established principles of research ethics, including informed participation, confidentiality, privacy, voluntary participation and responsible handling of sensitive information. Particular care was necessary for allegations or disclosures concerning sexual harassment, inappropriate teacher–learner relationships and other forms of professional misconduct.

XI. Results and Findings

11.1 Findings for Objective One: Fundamental Teacher Characteristics

The first objective examined the fundamental teacher characteristics relevant to the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone. Evidence from teachers, learners and qualitative participants showed that the quality of teachers was understood as a combination of professional, instructional, interpersonal and ethical characteristics rather than academic qualifications alone. Across the quantitative indicators, teachers reported an overall mean of 3.95, while learners reported a higher overall mean of 4.19. The convergence of these ratings indicates broad agreement that teacher characteristics are highly relevant to the educational process, although differences between respondent groups reveal areas requiring closer interpretation.

Professional ethics emerged as one of the strongest characteristics. Teachers rated this indicator at $M = 4.10$ and learners at $M = 4.20$. These results suggest that ethical conduct was widely regarded as fundamental to effective teaching. Qualitative evidence, however, showed that ethical practice was uneven. Participants

raised concerns about rudeness, weak confidentiality, discriminatory treatment, drunkenness, inappropriate use of mobile phones during lessons and inappropriate teacher–learner relationships. The findings therefore indicate that professional ethics is fundamental not because ethical conduct was uniformly achieved, but because its presence or absence directly shaped learner trust, concentration, participation and willingness to seek support.

Positive teacher–learner relationships were also prominent, with teachers reporting $M = 4.06$ and learners $M = 4.23$. Participants associated approachable teachers with easier consultation, greater confidence and stronger engagement. Conversely, qualitative accounts indicated that rude, discriminatory or intimidating teachers discouraged learners from asking questions and seeking clarification. The combined evidence identifies relational competence as a fundamental teacher characteristic because it determines whether the classroom becomes an enabling or restrictive environment for learning.

Punctuality and time management were strongly rated by teachers ($M = 4.03$) and learners ($M = 4.21$). Nevertheless, interviews and learner accounts identified late coming, early departure, absenteeism and lesson dodging as continuing problems among some teachers. This apparent contrast is analytically important: the high mean values describe the dominant pattern, while qualitative evidence exposes consequential weaknesses that may affect particular schools, subjects or learner groups. The findings suggest that punctuality is fundamental because lost instructional time reduces syllabus coverage and disproportionately disadvantages learners who depend on direct teacher guidance.

Learner motivation was similarly rated highly by teachers ($M = 4.01$) and learners ($M = 4.20$). Qualitative findings showed that supportive teachers encouraged learners, provided guidance and sustained hope, whereas discouraging statements, discrimination and lack of concern weakened confidence and participation. Motivation therefore emerged as both an instructional and interpersonal characteristic through which teachers influence persistence and engagement.

Constructive working relationships with administrators received $M = 3.99$ from teachers and $M = 4.26$ from learners, while collaboration among teachers received $M = 4.00$ and $M = 4.16$ respectively. These findings identify collegiality and administrative cooperation as fundamental characteristics because curriculum implementation requires coordination, continuity of instruction, departmental support and adherence to school procedures. Qualitative evidence nevertheless indicated that some teachers resisted guidelines or failed to cooperate, showing that collaboration cannot be assumed merely from institutional membership.

Creativity and innovation were rated at $M = 3.96$ by teachers and $M = 4.16$ by learners. Participants linked effective teaching to the ability to explain clearly, select relevant methods and materials and make lessons engaging. In contrast, some qualitative accounts described teachers who relied on copying notes, gave notes through learners or entered class without adequate preparation. The evidence therefore identifies creativity,

innovation and preparedness as interconnected characteristics that determine whether curriculum content is translated into meaningful learning experiences.

The two respondent groups differed sharply on regular in-service training: teachers reported $M = 3.50$, whereas learners reported $M = 4.51$. This divergence should not be treated as a simple contradiction. Teachers are more directly positioned to know whether structured professional development occurs every term, while learners may interpret meetings, workshops or changes in teacher practice as in-service training. The difference points to a need for documented, systematic and clearly defined professional-development programmes.

Professional boundaries produced comparatively weaker ratings, particularly among learners: teachers reported $M = 3.93$ and learners $M = 3.82$ for the negatively worded statement concerning the absence of sexual relationships between teachers and learners. These responses must be interpreted cautiously and cannot be converted directly into a prevalence estimate of teacher misconduct. However, qualitative accounts of sexual advances, fear after refusal and loss of concentration reinforce the conclusion that safeguarding and appropriate professional boundaries are fundamental dimensions of teacher quality.

Taken together, Objective One identified the following as fundamental teacher characteristics: professional ethics; positive teacher–learner relationships; punctuality and time management; capacity to motivate learners; creativity and innovation; preparedness; collaboration; constructive relationships with administrators; commitment to continuous professional development; equitable treatment of learners; effective communication; confidentiality; emotional self-regulation; concern for learners; and maintenance of appropriate professional boundaries. Their importance was demonstrated through convergence between quantitative ratings and qualitative explanations of how they shape classroom practice.

11.2 Findings for Objective Two: Influence of Teacher Characteristics on Quality of Secondary Education

The second objective examined the influence of teacher characteristics on the quality of secondary education. The reported regression results consistently indicated positive relationships between teacher characteristics and quality of education. In the headteachers' model, $R = .78$ and $R^2 = .6084$, suggesting a strong positive association and indicating that the model attributed 60.84% of the variance in the quality-of-education measure to teacher characteristics. The reported ANOVA significance value was $p = .046$, below the .05 threshold. Which supports rejection of the null hypothesis of no significant influence. Stronger teacher characteristics are associated with higher quality-of-education outcomes.

The qualitative findings explain the mechanisms underlying this statistical relationship. Punctual teachers increased available instructional time and supported syllabus coverage. Prepared teachers provided clearer explanations, better organized activities and more purposeful assessment. Motivating and approachable

teachers encouraged participation, consultation and persistence. Creative teachers adapted methods and materials to learner needs, while collaborative teachers supported continuity of instruction and shared professional problem solving. Ethical conduct and confidentiality strengthened trust and psychological safety.

Negative characteristics operated in the opposite direction. Absenteeism, lesson dodging and late coming reduced instructional exposure and coverage. Inadequate preparation weakened explanation and follow-up of learner activities. Rudeness and discrimination discouraged consultation, particularly among weaker learners. Excessive phone use and drunkenness diverted attention from instruction. Stress projection and discouraging language weakened the classroom climate. Inappropriate sexual advances or relationships threatened learner safety, concentration and trust. Thus, the influence of teacher characteristics was visible through multiple pathways linking teacher behaviour to curriculum implementation and educational quality.

Overall, the findings for Objective Two support the conclusion that teacher characteristics significantly influence the quality of secondary education. The quantitative evidence establishes the direction and statistical significance of the relationship in the reported models, while qualitative evidence clarifies how teacher characteristics affect instructional time, curriculum coverage, learner motivation, classroom interaction, trust, participation and achievement.

11.3 Hypothesis Testing

For the first null hypothesis (H_{01}), the study identified a coherent set of fundamental teacher characteristics through descriptive ratings and qualitative convergence. However, the supplied chapter does not clearly report a separate inferential procedure specifically testing whether these characteristics are statistically “fundamental.” The conclusion is drawn from the same findings as below.

For the second null hypothesis (H_{02}), the reported regression models produced significance values below 0.05, $p = 0.046$. On the basis of the reported model-level results, H_{02} was rejected, indicating a statistically significant influence of teacher characteristics on the quality of secondary education.

XII. Discussion

12.1 Discussion of Findings for Objective One

The first objective sought to examine the fundamental teacher characteristics relevant to the quality of secondary education. The findings show that the quality of a teacher is multidimensional. Professional ethics, positive teacher–learner relationships, punctuality, motivation, creativity, innovation, preparedness, collaboration, administrative cooperation, continuous professional development, equitable treatment, confidentiality and appropriate professional boundaries emerged as central. This broad pattern challenges narrow conceptions of teacher quality based solely on academic credentials or subject knowledge. It

suggests that effective curriculum implementation depends on what teachers know, how they teach, how consistently they perform their duties and how they relate to learners and colleagues.

The prominence of professional ethics is consistent with the central role assigned to teachers in Uganda's education policy tradition and with the broader proposition that educational quality cannot exceed the quality of the human processes through which schooling is delivered. The quantitative ratings indicate that ethical conduct is widely valued, while the qualitative findings demonstrate the consequences of ethical failure. Rudeness, discrimination, breaches of confidentiality and inappropriate relationships can undermine trust even where subject knowledge is adequate. Professional ethics should therefore be treated as an operational component of instructional quality rather than as a separate moral issue.

The importance of positive teacher–learner relationships is strongly explained by Constructivist Theory. If learners actively construct knowledge through interaction, questioning and engagement, then an approachable teacher creates conditions for participation and clarification. Conversely, fear, humiliation or discrimination can suppress learner agency. The findings that some learners avoided consultation or felt marginalized therefore reveal a direct pathway from teacher relational behaviour to the quality of learning. This interpretation is consistent with the study's observation that supportive teachers were perceived as available, parental and motivating.

Punctuality, time management and preparedness also emerged as fundamental because curriculum implementation is time-bound and cumulative. Ogar et al. (2015) and Asebiomo (2009), as cited in the source study, emphasize that educational objectives depend on effective implementation. The present findings extend this argument by showing that implementation is disrupted not only by inadequate resources but also by teacher behaviours that reduce usable instructional time. Late coming, absenteeism and lesson dodging create lost learning opportunities, while inadequate preparation weakens explanation, activity design and assessment. These effects may accumulate across a term and contribute to incomplete coverage and weak examination preparedness and readiness.

Creativity and innovation were important because teachers must adapt curriculum content to learner needs and available resources. This finding accords with the position attributed in the source study to Ornstein and Hunkins (2004), that learning is influenced by teachers, and with Pollard and Tann's (1993) emphasis on competence and professional learning. A teacher who can vary explanations, select relevant materials and organize meaningful activities is better positioned to respond to differences among learners. By contrast, mechanical note giving or dependence on learners to copy notes without explanation reduces the teacher's facilitative role.

The difference between teachers' and learners' ratings of in-service training deserves analytical attention. Teachers' lower rating may indicate that structured professional development is less regular than learners

perceive. This finding supports Mkwanazi's (2007) emphasis on professional development as a process through which teachers update their responsibilities and practice. For policy and management, the implication is that professional development should be planned, documented, needs-based and linked to observable classroom improvement.

Safeguarding and professional boundaries constitute a particularly important dimension of the first objective. The comparatively lower ratings on the negatively worded professional-boundary item, together with qualitative reports of sexual advances, indicate a serious area of concern. The finding is broadly consistent with concerns documented by UNICEF (2000) regarding sexual harassment in educational settings. Methodologically, the survey responses cannot establish the precise prevalence of misconduct; substantively, however, the convergence of survey concern and qualitative testimony shows that learner safety and professional boundaries are inseparable from educational quality.

Overall, Objective One demonstrates that the fundamental characteristics of teachers can be grouped into four interrelated domains: instructional characteristics, including preparedness, creativity and communication; professional characteristics, including punctuality, ethics and continuous development; interpersonal characteristics, including motivation, collaboration and positive relationships; and safeguarding characteristics, including confidentiality, equitable treatment and appropriate boundaries. This four-domain interpretation gives the findings greater conceptual coherence and provides a useful basis for teacher professional development and appraisal.

12.2 Discussion of Findings for Objective Two

The second objective examined the influence of teacher characteristics on the quality of secondary education. The reported regression models consistently showed strong positive relationships, with R values ranging from .78 to .88 and model significance values below .05. The consistency in direction across the reported models supports the central conclusion that teacher characteristics are materially associated with educational quality.

This result is consistent with Etim (2009), as cited in the source study, who links learner performance to teacher quality, teaching methods and available instructional conditions. The present study adds contextual detail by identifying the mechanisms through which the relationship operates. Teacher attendance and punctuality influence instructional time; preparedness influences clarity and organization; motivation influences persistence; relationships influence consultation and participation; creativity influences engagement; collaboration influences continuity; and ethics influence trust and safety. Teacher characteristics therefore affect quality through a chain of curriculum-implementation processes rather than through a single direct pathway.

Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis provides a strong interpretation of these findings. Positive characteristics such as punctuality, preparedness, motivation, ethics, creativity and collaboration function as driving forces towards effective curriculum implementation. Negative characteristics such as absenteeism, lesson dodging, poor time management, discrimination, rudeness and misconduct function as restraining forces. The implication is that quality improvement cannot rely only on strengthening positive practices while ignoring persistent negative behaviours. Both sides of the force field must be addressed simultaneously.

The findings also show that relatively small proportions of negative practice may have substantial educational consequences. High overall mean ratings should not obscure the experiences of learners exposed to absenteeism, discrimination, harassment or persistent instructional neglect. Educational quality is partly distributive: a school may record generally positive teacher ratings while particular classes, subjects or vulnerable learners experience serious deficits. This helps explain why qualitative evidence is essential alongside averages and regression coefficients.

The reported relationship between teacher characteristics and the quality of Secondary education also has implications for school administration. Teacher characteristics are personal attributes expressed within institutional environments. Attendance systems, leadership practices, mentoring, workload, welfare, professional-development opportunities and accountability mechanisms can strengthen or weaken how these characteristics are manifested. Thus, the influence identified by the study should not be interpreted as placing responsibility solely on individual teachers; school and system conditions shape teacher practice.

From a curriculum-implementation perspective, the findings reinforce the proposition that the teacher is the principal human mediator between curriculum theory with its intentions and learner outcomes. Physical resources and policy documents become educationally productive only when teachers use them competently and ethically. The significant reported relationship therefore supports a broader understanding of quality improvement in which teacher development, professional conduct, safeguarding and instructional supervision are treated as core curriculum-implementation strategies.

In synthesis, the findings for Objective Two demonstrate that teacher characteristics influence the quality of secondary education through interconnected instructional, motivational, relational, organizational and safeguarding pathways. The statistical models indicate a significant positive relationship, while qualitative evidence provides explanatory depth. This convergence strengthens the study's conclusion that improving teacher characteristics is a strategic route towards improving the quality of secondary education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone.

XIII. Conclusion

The study concludes, first, that the fundamental teacher characteristics relevant to the quality of secondary education include professional ethics, positive teacher–learner relationships, punctuality, learner

motivation, constructive administrative relationships, creativity, innovation, collaboration, professional development, preparedness, commitment, communication, confidentiality, equitable treatment and appropriate professional boundaries. Second, teacher characteristics significantly influence the quality of secondary education through their effects on instructional time, curriculum coverage, classroom climate, learner participation, trust, concentration, assessment and achievement.

The two objectives are therefore complementary: identifying fundamental characteristics clarifies what matters in teacher practice, while examining influence demonstrates why those characteristics matter for educational quality.

XIV. Recommendations and Policy Implications

1. Schools should institutionalize continuous professional development around pedagogy, curriculum interpretation, assessment, inclusion, ethics, digital professionalism and safeguarding.
2. Headteachers and education authorities should strengthen supportive monitoring of attendance, punctuality, preparation, syllabus coverage and classroom practice.
3. Safeguarding systems should provide confidential reporting, timely investigation and protection from retaliation in cases of sexual harassment or inappropriate relationships.
4. Teacher appraisal and mentoring should explicitly address the fundamental characteristics identified in the study.
5. Teacher welfare and psychosocial support should be strengthened to reduce stress-related deterioration in classroom conduct.
6. Professional learning communities should promote collaboration, innovation and continuity of instruction.
7. Quality assurance frameworks should incorporate indicators of ethics, learner relationships, punctuality, preparedness, engagement, safeguarding and collaboration.

XV. Limitations and Areas for Further Research

The cross-sectional design identifies associations rather than definitive causal effects, and much quantitative evidence is perception-based. Sensitive issues may be affected by reporting and interpretation biases. Further studies should use longitudinal designs, observation, attendance records and ethically appropriate safeguarding data. The first hypothesis should be tested directly using the original dataset, and future work should examine differences by school type, district, gender and subject area.

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