

## **Authentic leadership: a paradigm for advancing ethical practices in teacher education**

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**Abstract:** The subject of authentic leadership continues to be largely unexplored, especially in the teacher education institutions, despite the reports of entrenched corruption, wastage of resources by leaders, and negative subordinate behaviours. This study aims to analyse how authentic leadership can promote ethical practices in primary teacher education in Kenya. Within the realm of phenomenological research design, semi-structured interviews were utilized as the data collection instrument. The respondents were 35 leaders from public primary teacher training colleges (TTCs) and regional education officers. The qualitative data of the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. The findings indicated that authentic leadership generates trusted role models who have the capacity to promote ethical practices within primary TTCs. Finally, the study proposed a philosophical paradigm of authentic leadership based on moral rightness and moral goodness to influence the mind-set of individuals within TTCs to internalize ethical practices as a routine lifestyle.

**Keywords:** Authentic leadership; Ethical practices; Moral goodness; Moral rightness.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership plays a crucial role in the success of any organization or institution of learning. Sound leadership is therefore required by the organizations or institutions of learning in order to attain the desired goals. It is on the basis of this premise that efficacious organizations are closely associated with their leadership. According to Gichuhi and Karuoya (2017), the success of organizations is dependent on the tone set by their leaders, who influence their subordinates to achieve the set goals. Nevertheless, leadership is a sensitive duty that calls for high expectations in terms of moral decency, ethical behaviour, and conduct, since the leaders' ideas and actions impact their followers' lives and attitudes in the workplace (Okanda, 2022). In that regard, it is critical that the leaders of teacher education attain the stated goals and objectives of their institutions together with the ethical practices. The implication is that leadership should be infused with ethics toward the attainment of the anticipated goals of organizations. It is hence inherent that ethics and organizational leadership cannot be detached from or divorced from each other.

Ethics is a subfield of philosophy that focuses on the moral principles that define what is morally fitting for both individuals and society as a whole. It is within the realm of ethics that the moral values and principles of human behaviour are gauged as either good or bad, right or wrong (Okanda, Mwinzi, & Gunga, 2021). The researcher observes that leaders of learning institutions should not only focus on the attainment of the set goals but also be guided by the ethical values and principles that promote morally fitting conduct among the leaders and their subjects.

Nevertheless, Ferrell and Fraedrich (2015) assert that at the core of the world-wide crisis that has dogged humankind these days is a deficiency of ethical leadership in organizations,

including educational institutions. Ishak, Haron, and Ismail (2019), for instance, observe that the managerial unethical practices in educational institutions have sanctioned a culture of corruption, wastage of resources, lack of accountability, and negative subordinate behaviours. In the same vein, Supermane, Tahir, and Aris (2018) have suggested that the current ethical problems in the field of teacher education are to a greater extent attributed to the absence of ethical leadership that can integrate leadership with ethical practices. Furthermore, Wood and Nevarez (2014) have noted the rising cases of unethical conduct committed by leaders in college education, with a number of leaders being linked to unethical behaviour and corruption. It is against this background that this study seeks to analyse how authentic leadership can promote ethical practices in primary teacher education in Kenya.

In Kenya, unethical practices perpetrated by institutional leaders have led to ethical challenges that have infiltrated all the precincts of the economy, including the education sector. For instance, cases of corruption pertaining to education funds, where heads of institutions of learning have occasionally been indicted for embezzlement of education support funds with the consequence of instigating an inherent risk to further funding to support education, have been reported (Wanyama, 2016). Further, the report presented in the National Assembly by the Auditor General raised questions concerning the millions spent to cover construction and repairs in some public teacher training colleges in Kenya. The auditors' report also revealed that the tender evaluation committees never complied with the regulations of procurement (Gekonge, 2021). From the perspective of the researcher, the Auditor General's reports are a pointer to managerial unethical practices within the public TTCs, which could endorse a

culture of corruption, wastage of resources, and a lack of accountability. It is against this backdrop that a call for a new kind of morally disposed leadership, known as authentic leadership, is becoming more relevant. Okanda, Mwinzi, and Gunga (2021) have further observed that studies on authentic leadership have seen a surge of interest in the twenty-first century to promote management that promotes the realization of the desired organizational goals with ethics.

### **Authentic leadership**

The philosophical notion of authenticity is traced back to the early Greek period, when it was understood as "being yourself" and also entailed the development of the four cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude in a leader (Rouse 2018). Authentic leadership, according to Luenendonk (2016), emanates from early Greek philosophy, which focuses on leaders taking control of their destiny while being genuine and true to themselves and their followers. In that regard, authentic leadership entails a leader being self-aware and having the capability to acknowledge and recognize their own strengths and weaknesses. Riggio (2014), on the other hand, points out that authentic leadership is about leadership with an ethical foundation where leaders deal in an honest and straightforward way with their subordinates.

A study by Northouse (2016) in the USA disclosed that authentic leadership generates positive moral effects on subjects. It is further articulated in Northouse (2016) that the subordinates are likely to emulate authentic leaders who are exemplars of good moral conduct, feel capacitated to make ethical choices themselves without the guidance of the leader, and are more likely to act boldly. Further, this leadership is based on openness, truth, and moral principles, which are crucial ingredients for the promotion of ethical practices. However, the extent to which leaders of primary

teacher training colleges in Kenya act as role models that influence their subordinates to make good ethical choices on their own and promote ethical practices is not clear and needs further explication.

As highlighted in Sales (2018), authentic leaders are best positioned to motivate loyalty, trust, and strong performance from subordinates. In addition, authentic leaders have integrity and are guided by morals, while also displaying strong ethical personalities. Authentic leadership is hence critical since it is not only goal-oriented but also underscores the significance of ethical practices in the process or ways of attaining organizational goals. In the view of the researcher, the foregoing assertion reveals that genuine and morally laden authentic leadership is becoming more apparent in learning institutions. In an endeavour to address the concern of unethical leadership in teacher education, the researcher resolved to conduct a study that illuminates the paradigm of authentic leadership to promote ethical practices in primary teacher education in Kenya.

As stated by Grant (2019), authenticity involves the choice of being real, honest, and letting one's true self be seen. Grant indicates that authenticity implies choosing to be real over being liked and putting one's true self out in the public, which could be both daunting and uncomfortable. In this sense, there are risks involved, but there are also benefits that could be gained. Grant further explains that authenticity is critical for building trust, expediting better communication, believing in oneself, and fostering genuine human connection. These features are vital in learning institutions as they seek to nurture within subordinates a healthy sense of what it entails to be human and ethical. In line with Grant (2019), these qualities of authentic leaders enable them to be passionately connected to their purpose, which drives them on a daily basis. It is within these features of authenticity in

leaders that ethical practices could thrive within the primary TTCs in Kenya.

In relation to Pavlovic (2015), the notable fundamentals for authentic leadership are sensitivity to others' intentions, the ability for moral reasoning, and self-knowledge. Pavlovic (2015) further articulates that authentic leadership is conceived as a new model of leadership concerned with morality and ethics, particularly when deciding on what is significant, what is worthwhile, and what is right. This leadership, according to Pavlovic (2015), is a metaphor for professionally effective leadership that is morally conscious and intentionally reflective of ethical practices in educational administration. The concept of authenticity was first applied in the field of education more than three decades ago, and various studies, for instance, Pavlovic (2015), have supported the authenticity of leaders in learning institutions. In the context of this research, authentic leadership can therefore not be undervalued in advancing ethical practices in primary teacher education in Kenya.

#### **Ethical practices**

Ethical practices encompass moral codes that guide leaders and their subordinates in an organization with regards to work-related facets (Gaitho & Awino, 2018). Turyakira (2018) holds the view that ethical practices are the deliberate standards of morality that guide individuals to stick to specified standards of behaviour when handling individuals inside and outside the organization. Ethical practices in the context of leadership are a set of principles of moral conduct and judgment that steer and control leaders in an organization from abusing offices or positions when discharging work-related duties. The principles should also restrain conflicts of interest among leaders (Chesterton, 2016). From the perspective of Chesterton (2016), these principles also regulate the professional conduct of

members of staff in any line of work, especially those who serve the public.

In this study, the focus is directed at the ethical practices enshrined in the legal provisions of Chapter Six of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution, the Public Officers Ethics Act of 2003, and Mwongozo: The Code of Governance for State Corporations (Okanda et al., 2021). These legal provisions require leaders of public institutions to uphold personal integrity, good governance, and the national values as fundamental ethical practices (Republic of Kenya, 2010; Republic of Kenya, 2015). Personal integrity implies the ethical principle of always doing what is right, even when there is an opportunity to do wrong and get off scot-free or gain from the malpractice (Chesterton, 2016). Good governance, in line with KASNEB (2022), entails creating systems and structures for institutional leaders so that their authority and power could be held to account or controlled. It also refers to the sound management of institutions and resources by leaders given the responsibility of overseeing them. The national values as one of the ethical practices in this study comprise upholding patriotism, the rule of law, national unity, human rights, transparency and accountability, participation of the people, non-discrimination, and human dignity (Republic of Kenya, 2010). The ethical practices articulated in the aforementioned legal provisions are the regulatory ideologies of leadership that are envisioned to bring about public trust and honour to leaders in charge of public organizations (Katiba Institute, 2016).

#### **Authentic Leadership and Ethical Practices**

Northouse (2016) of the USA revealed that authentic leadership generates positive moral impact on the followers. This is achieved when the subordinates imitate authentic leaders who are exemplars and role models in ethical standards. Another insight from Northouse (2016) is that authentic

leaders are open individuals who are sincere to themselves and to their values. They blend their characters with their values to be effective leaders and act right, centred on moral principles for the common good. In this way, the subordinates are prone to emulate authentic leaders who are exemplars in moral values and are more likely to act boldly and feel empowered to make ethical choices themselves without the direct guidance from their leaders. These attributes are necessary ingredients for the inspiration of ethical practices. Nonetheless, the extent to which leaders within primary teachers' training colleges (TTCs) in Kenya act as exemplars and role models who inspire subordinates to make apt ethical choices on their own and promote ethical practices through their characters is not clearly evident and needs further interrogation.

In the recent studies, Riggio (2014) points out that authentic leaders are keen on honesty and straightforwardness when dealing with their subordinates. Cianci, Hannah, Roberts, and Tsakumis (2014), in the same vein, highlight that authentic leadership is anchored on a strong ethical foundation, which substantially inhibits subordinates from making morally wrong decisions when confronted with temptations. On the other hand, those subordinates of less authentic leaders were more likely to concede to temptations of unethical behaviour. The researcher deduces from Riggio (2014) and Cianci et al. (2014) that authentic leadership restrains subordinates from making immoral decisions and instead advances the virtues of sincerity and straightforwardness, which create a conducive environment for promoting ethical practices. In the views of the aforesaid studies, authentic leadership needs further explication regarding how virtues of sincerity and straightforwardness can be utilized by leaders in teacher training colleges in Kenya to promote ethical practices.

In the milieu of South Africa, Nair (2017) contends that authentic leaders foster personal attachment with their followers. This close link between leaders and their followers arises from the leaders being genuine, consequently building trust with their subordinates as they honestly take care of them. It is deduced from Nair (2017) that this leader-follower link within the organization could positively influence the followers' conduct since their leaders get along with them. It is the researcher's view that authentic leadership that creates a personal connection with subordinates should be explored in order to find out how it inspires upright subordinates' behaviour towards the attainment of ethical practices in the realm of primary teacher education in Kenya.

Concerning the challenges of the adoption of authentic leadership in learning institutions in Kenya, Taaliu (2017) highlighted corruption perpetrated by leaders of learning institutions. This comprises a lack of transparency in school supplies and admission of students, using tribalism and ethnicity as the basis for promotion and recruitment of staff, in addition to cheating in national examinations. Taaliu (2017) further explicates that the recent recommendation by the Ministry of Education sanctioning the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) to investigate alleged corrupt principals is an important case where administrators' authentic leadership is compromised. The leaders are hence questionable as agents for promoting the ethical practices outlined in Chapter Six of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution, Mwongozo: The Code of Governance for State Corporations, and the Public Officers Ethics Act of 2003. In the opinion of the researcher, incidences of the leaders' abuse of authority for personal and material gain suggest that they are morally unconscious and are not reflecting the needed ethical practices in educational leadership. In an attempt to

fill the above-mentioned gaps, this study analyses how authentic leadership strategies can bolster ethical practices in primary teacher education in Kenya.

In seeking solutions to address these ills of institutional unethical practices in teacher education institutions, many leadership models for promoting ethical practices have been touted as panaceas for the leaders of learning institutions (Okanda et al., 2021). However, it is the view of this study that those models perceived to be a remedy for promoting ethical practices have not integrated the fundamental aspects of the utilization of authentic leadership. Therefore, in that regard, the study proposes a philosophical model of authentic leadership based on moral duty and moral goodness to promote concrete ethical practices within primary teacher education in Kenya.

#### **Theoretical framework**

The theories adopted in this study are the deontological ethical theory and the teleological ethical theory. According to deontological ethical theory, the rightness or wrongness of an action is based on the obligations, rules, or duties an individual attempts to fulfil and not the outcome of the action (Perala, 2019). In the perspective of the researcher, leadership practices that go along with deontological theory lay emphasis on the observance of obligations and rules to establish whether the actions are right or wrong as a matter of duty. This theory conforms well to authentic leadership since authentic leaders, being genuine with a deep-seated ethical base, would conduct themselves on the basis of moral principles as an obligation when undertaking their roles. Deontological ethical theory, consequently, provides a moral framework that could steer the behaviour of leaders and their subjects within primary TTCs to fulfil their duty obligations in conjunction with the promotion of ethical principles of good governance, national values, and integrity as a moral duty.

In contrast, teleological ethical theory states that morally right actions generate good outcomes for the majority of people (Kumari, Sinha, & Prasad, 2013). It can be inferred from Kumari et al. (2013) that leadership grounded in teleological ethical theory (consequentialism) gives emphasis to morally right actions that generate good outcomes on the basis of predetermined principles or rules. The consequentialism theory aligns with authentic leadership, where leaders perceive actions as producing good results in view of the laid down rules or principles. To advance ethical practices within TTCs, the moral decisions and actions of leaders must be based on the greatest good for the majority in light of the laid-down moral principles. Adoption of authentic leadership in the context of teleological ethics would ensure that personal integrity, national values, and good governance are promoted with honesty and truth as a matter of moral goodness. In view of the abovementioned discussion, the two ethical theories are utilized due to their complementary value.

#### **Objectives**

The objectives that steered the study were:

- i) To analyse how authentic leadership promotes ethical practices in primary teacher education in Kenya.
- ii) To suggest a philosophical paradigm of authentic leadership that advances ethical practices in primary teacher education in Kenya.

#### **METHODS**

##### **Design**

In this study, a phenomenological research design is espoused to explore how authentic leadership promotes ethical practices in primary teacher education. This research design is qualitative, and it entails a candid description of a phenomenon while abstaining from any preconceived mind-

set concerning the lived experiences of the respondents (Abakpa, Agbo-Egwu, & Abah, 2017). Using the design, the researcher can delve into the authentic and deep sources of lived experiences of the respondents (Qutoshi, 2018). The application of the phenomenological research design was motivated by the collection of sensitive and intricate qualitative data about the lived experiences concerning the human habits and behaviours of the participants involved. Koopman (2017) then again contends that the design is suitable for gathering, analysing, and interpreting qualitative data pertaining to educational issues. A further insight from Qutoshi (2018) is that the design is in favour of the utilization of purposive sampling and the collection of qualitative data through the analysis of texts and in-depth interviews.

Within the phenomenology design, the analytic method of philosophy is employed to clarify the meanings of each phenomenon of the research in its entirety (Qutoshi, 2018). In line with Andafu (2019), the analytic method in education helps in understanding the terms and concepts used in education. As regards this study, the analytic method is utilized in examining the sensibility, meaning, and logical consistency of educational concepts and ideas pertaining to authentic leadership and ethical practices.

### **Respondents**

Through the purposive sampling method, forty-two participants were selected for the study: seven respondents each from the population categories of principals, deputy principals, deans of students, leading student leaders, Regional Teachers Service Commission (TSC) officers, and Regional Quality Assurance Officers (QASO). These participants were chosen because of their better understanding of the study, and they could also give rich data related to how authentic leadership could advance ethical practices in primary teacher education in Kenya.

However, out of the 42 respondents sampled for the interviews, only 35 of them were interviewed, resulting in a response rate of 83.3%. This response rate is deemed fitting for the study as per the perspective of Sekaran and Bougie (2016), who indicated that a response rate of over 85% is excellent, 70–85% is very good, 60–70% is acceptable, 50–60% is satisfactory, and below 50% is unacceptable.

### **Instrument**

The primary source of data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that it gives room for asking the respondents in-depth questions as well as re-asking questions if the responses are incomplete or unclear. The interview schedule consisted of two open-ended questions related to authentic leadership and ethical practices. The first interview question was concerned with how traits of sincerity and honesty among leaders in primary teacher training colleges (TTCs) can promote ethical practices. The second question was about the current status of the adoption of sincere and honest leadership in promoting ethical practices by leaders of TTCs. The authorization and permit for data collection were granted by the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). The respondents were briefed about the confidentiality and purpose of the research data before the one-on-one interviews were conducted.

The validity and the reliability of the interview data was also cogitated. In keeping with Anand (2021) validity and reliability are terms that are mostly applicable in quantitative research. Nevertheless, in qualitative studies, credibility, confirmability, neutrality, dependability, consistency, and transferability or applicability are to be the criteria for the validity and reliability of data collection instruments. In order to attain these aspects of validity and reliability in this qualitative study, the interview questions were presented to

the relevant academic experts for their professional input regarding their validity and reliability. The research questions were adjusted by these experts, who also tested their clarity. In addition, the data analysis process was a collaborative effort between the researcher and the experts before a consensus was reached in each case. This was intended to increase the validity and reliability of the collected data.

### Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was done using the thematic analysis method. According to Caulfield (2019), the thematic analysis technique is appropriate for analysing qualitative data of the respondents' experiences, views, or opinions generated from the interviews. This is due to its flexibility and mode of interpretation, buttressed by data. The transcription of interview data was done, and it entailed the conversion of discussions and audio recordings to texts. The study then adhered to the six steps of thematic analysis. The steps involved were: acquaintance with the transcribed information, coding the data, creating themes, evaluating themes, defining and naming themes, and finally producing the report. The interpretation of the data was conducted according to the research questions. The coded themes were presented in tables to facilitate understanding by the readers. The research findings were corroborated by the quotations from the interview responses. During this analysis, the interviewed participants were coded as R1, R2,... R35.

### RESULT

The study examined how authentic leadership can promote ethical practices in primary TTCs in Kenya. The research findings were organized into themes reflecting the views and thoughts of the respondents in table format and quotation narratives. The first theme is how traits of sincerity and honesty by leaders of TTCs can promote ethical

practices. The codes for this theme were created and summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Generated responses on how traits of sincerity and honesty by leaders of TTCs can advance ethical practices.*

Codes	f
It results in trustworthy leaders who connect with subordinates to foster a positive ethical climate that establishes ethical practices.	35
Promotes respect for leaders, which creates an enabling environment in which ethical practices could thrive.	34
Develops leaders who are free and open to receiving feedback for the improvement of services provided and ethical practices.	34
It creates leaders who are role models in professional careers and in lifestyles that foster ethical practices.	31
It gives rise to ethically upright leaders who raise the bar of morals and promote ethical practices within the TTCs.	28
It inspires subordinates to be disciplined and follow the codes of conduct within TTCs which, advances ethical practices.	24
It contributes to an ethical culture in which positive ethical conduct is self-regulated as a daily life habit.	23
It leads to dependable leaders who uphold confidentiality and build mutual rapport with their subjects to advance ethical practices.	18

When Table 1 is analysed, the respondents point out that traits of sincerity and honesty in TTC leaders can contribute to the advancement of ethical practices such as personal integrity, good governance, and national values. It was noted by 35 respondents that the display of sincerity and honesty traits can give rise to leaders who can be trusted and have good relationships with subjects, which cultivates a positive ethical environment that entrenches ethical practices within the TTCs. Besides, thirty-four participants enunciated that authentic leadership stimulates respect for leaders, which creates enabling conditions where ethical practices thrive. Other views voiced by another thirty-



four respondents were that authentic leadership produces leaders who are free and open to accept feedback for the enhancement of services offered and areas of concern pertaining to ethical practices within the confines of TTCs.

Thirty-one interviewees further noted that this leadership generates leaders who are role models not only in professional jobs but also in their way of life, which strengthens ethical practices with regard to personal integrity, good governance, and national values. Twenty-eight respondents were of the view that authentic leadership develops morally upright leaders who raise the bar of moral standards within the precincts of TTCs, which expedites ethical practices. Twenty-four participants voiced that open and sincere leadership inspires subjects to be disciplined and comply with the codes of behaviour in TTCs, which strengthens ethical practices. The other opinion expressed by twenty-three participants was that authentic leaders yield an ethical culture in which positive ethical conduct is self-regulated as a daily lifestyle. Eighteen respondents were of the opinion that authentic leadership generates dependable leaders who uphold confidentiality and build mutual rapport with their subordinates, which advances ethical practices. One of the chosen responses concerning how traits of sincerity and honesty by TTC's leaders can promote ethical practices is as follows:

*R16: "Honest leaders honour their promises in agreements made. Such leaders are dependable and respected by their subordinates as well as the student body at large. They are recognized as reliable and trustworthy and are therefore in a better position to influence individuals within TTCs to accept ethical practices such as integrity and national values."*

*R10: "Sincere leaders discuss issues openly and present them on the table, they are not regarded as fishy persons. They let the subordinates be part and parcel of what is going on within the college. They can build trust and loyalty that influence their subordinates to value ethical practices."*

As regards the second theme, the respondents were requested to give out their views on the current status of the implementation of authentic leadership in promoting ethical practices within teacher training colleges. The results are coded and reported in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Respondents' views on the status of the adoption of sincere and honest leadership in promoting ethical practices.

	Codes	f
Positive views	The leaders freely discuss with the subordinates the core values of college, which align with ethical practices.	10
	Leaders welcome visitors and allow them to comment and sign the visitors' book to receive feedback for improving services and ethical practices.	8
	Leaders respond to issues affecting subordinates, which provides a better working environment that strengthens ethical practices.	7
	Leaders genuinely encourage openness and sincerity in their deliberations during official meetings.	5
	Leaders are sincerely interested in other people, along with their opinions and ideas, which strengthens ethical practices.	3
	Sincere leaders develop higher levels of trust with their staff and students, creating an atmosphere within which ethical practices thrive.	2
	Leaders are open and are not hiding their true feelings about issues, which contributes to a positive working tone that promotes ethical practices.	1

	Codes	F
	Leaders are non-committal regarding identifying with the attributes of authentic leadership that could advance ethical practices.	33
Negative Views	Limited transparency concerning financial transactions and the purchasing of goods and services by administrators negates the spirit of ethical practices.	32
	A superficial display of sincerity and openness by leaders regarding issues within TTCs hampers the genuine advancement of ethical practices.	28
	Limited involvement of subordinates by leaders in various TTC activities is against the spirit of integrity, good governance, and national values.	27
	There is no clear indicator that the leaders are ensuring adherence to the obligations indicated in the TTC service charters.	22

In table 2, both the positive and negative opinions about the adoption of authentic leadership are highlighted. Concerning the positive views, ten participants stated that their leaders freely talk about the core values of college with followers who support ethical practices. Another important positive finding by the eight participants was that their leaders are welcoming and give visitors the chance to write comments and sign the visitors' book in order to receive the necessary feedback towards the improvement of services and strengthening of ethical practices. In addition, seven respondents are of the view that leaders often communicate and respond to issues affecting the staff, thus providing a better working environment that promotes

ethical practices. It can also be observed that five respondents thought that their leaders sincerely encouraged openness in discussions during official meetings.

Further, it is noted that three respondents were of the view that their leaders were genuinely interested in other people and their opinions and ideas, which could inspire ethical practices. Still on a positive note, another remarkable response from two participants is that authentic leaders established higher trust relationships with their subordinates, thus building an atmosphere in which ethical practices thrived. On the other hand, one respondent noted that their leaders were open and were not concealing their real feelings about issues, hence providing a positive working environment that advances ethical practices. One of the responses about the positive views of the participants is quoted as follows:

*R27: "Within our college, some leaders do involve individuals to know what is going on within the college and, as such, develop a trust relationship with the subordinates. This, I believe, creates a good working condition that strengthens and guarantees the realization of ethical practices."*

It was by and large noted that the negative views had higher numbers than the positive ones. The outstanding among them is that thirty-three respondents said that their leaders were generally non-committal towards relating to authentic leadership to create the necessary atmosphere for advancement of ethical practices within TTCs. Another frequent code is that thirty-two participants enunciated that their leaders were perceived as lacking transparency with regards to financial transactions and the purchasing of goods and services within TTCs, which was contrary to the spirit of ethical practices. Twenty-eight respondents articulated that the phony display of sincerity and

openness by leaders was a deterrent to the genuine promotion of ethical practices. An additional negative thought shared by twenty-seven participants was that administrators of TTCs were not fully reflecting openness through the involvement of subordinates in various TTC activities that could advance ethical practices in colleges. Twenty-two respondents were of the view that there was no clear indicator of ensuring compliance with the obligations indicated in the TTC's service charters. An illustration of one of the quoted responses is given as follows:

*R25: "The challenge we have is that our college administrators are opaque in the college's financial management and, hence, do not have the courage to stand firm for ethical practices within the TTC. Sometimes they indulge in suspicious leadership deals, which are against the ethical principles of integrity, good governance, and the inculcation of national values."*

## DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to receive the opinions of respondents on how authentic leadership can promote ethical practices in primary teacher education in Kenya. From the research findings, it was affirmed by nearly all respondents that authentic leaders are transparent, trusted, uphold confidentiality, and are respected by the individuals they are leading, which fosters a positive ethical environment where ethical practices can flourish. These findings are in agreement with the study of Sang (2016), who revealed that administrators demonstrating authentic leadership make their motives, values, and goals completely transparent to their subordinates; they lead by example and walk the talk; they say what they purport and mean what they say. It can be inferred that this transparency connection between authentic leaders and their subordinates forms a crucial

catalyst for enhancing ethical practices within TTCs. Nair (2017) also concurs that authentic leaders create personal connections with their subordinates. This strong link between leaders and their followers arises from the leaders' being sincere, which builds trust with their subordinates as they genuinely care for them. The implication is that this leadership can inspire respect, trust in good governance, national values, and integrity among individuals within TTCs in their daily endeavours.

The study's findings further revealed that authentic leaders often seek feedback about the services offered within colleges with the aim of improving service delivery and ethical practices. This implies that authentic leaders listen and have the capacity to address the problems affecting staff, non-teaching staff, students, and stakeholders, which is vital in advancing ethical practices in the college. This finding is in line with that of Pavlovic (2015), who disclosed that authentic leaders accept other people's views and opinions, even those with contrary thoughts, before making decisions. As such, an atmosphere of cultivating ethical practices with honesty and sincerity is generated. In addition, Pavlovic (2015) emphasizes that the key significant qualities of effective leadership are the ability and readiness to address the problems experienced by the subordinates. According to the researcher, these traits enable leaders to create positive connections with followers that can stimulate the subjects to embrace national values, good governance, and integrity when undertaking the tasks related to their duties.

The results also revealed that authentic leaders are acknowledged as upright role models in both their professional careers and lifestyles. This could elevate the bar of morals within the institutions they serve. It is also inferred that authentic leaders contribute to an ethical culture in which positive ethical behaviour is promoted as a daily lifestyle

in the precincts of TTCs. This finding is in line with the literature of Northouse (2016), who inferred that authentic leaders are open individuals who are sincere to themselves and to their values; they blend their characters with their values to be effective role models. They set positive examples that the subordinates can emulate and follow both professionally and character-wise. The findings by and large also corroborate with the findings of Azanza, Moriano, and Molero (2013), who disclosed that the moral uprightness of authentic leaders usually flows through to the followers and eventually grows into the organizational framework of an ethical culture, which could raise ethical practices.

The respondents also articulated that this leadership motivates followers to be disciplined and adhere to the code of conduct within TTCs, as well as creates an ethical culture in which positive moral behaviour is self-regulated as a daily life routine. The findings were also buttressed by Omo (2020), who asserted that authentic leaders build an ethical culture that is predictable, straight-forward, and safe by creating the necessary atmosphere of trust. It is further posited in Omo (2020) that their clear expectations motivate subordinates to relate well with the institutional code of conduct to avoid being on the wrong side of the law. This ensures that the college's morality and ethos are raised.

Both positive and negative findings concerning the status of the promotion of ethical practices through authentic leadership in TTCs were given. Regarding positive responses, a few respondents articulated that their administrators freely discussed the core values of their TTCs. This conclusion is found in the findings of Gavin (2019), who indicated that authentic leaders support their subordinates' faith in the organizational core values. This result also concurs with the conclusion of George (2015), who stated that authentic

leaders are individuals who believe in and are true to the organizational core values in order to meet the needs of their community and to be mindful of their service to society at large.

Another positive outcome of the research was that authentic leaders permitted visitors to comment and sign the visitors' book. They are also sincerely concerned about other people and their opinions and ideas. As a result, ethical practices and college services could be strengthened and improved. The finding corroborates the views of Taylor (2021), who posited that authentic leaders do listen to and accommodate contrary ideas from others, and they even agree to take those opinions into consideration with an open mind as they make decisions. Further, these leaders trust in open communication, which naturally advances and improves ethical practices. Similar conclusions can be inferred from Okinyi, Kwaba, and Nyabuto (2015), who specified that authentic leaders are more likely to be proactive, nurture positive environments, and carry out their duties in an ethical and socially responsible way, which reinforces ethical practices in institutions. In that sense, they can bring about a change of mind-set toward doing the right thing based on ethical principles and for the greater good of society at large.

On the other hand, the responses given by the majority of the respondents acknowledged minimal commitment to the adoption of authentic leadership qualities. The nature of most leadership in TTCs did not fully reflect openness and transparency in matters of financial management and their daily encounters. This view is supported by Wanyama (2016), who reported a lack of transparency by heads of learning institutions in Kenya resulting in the embezzlement of education funds, which could trigger an inherent risk to further funding to aid education activities. This negative response is contrary to the views of Fraser (2014), who opines that administrators of colleges should strive

to be open and ready to listen and take into account the subordinates' ideas and opinions before making key decisions. The implication is the loss of trust, confidence, and good interpersonal relationships amongst leaders and subordinates, which may be detrimental to the promotion of ethical practices in colleges.

It was also reported that most college leaders had no clear evidence of ensuring compliance with service charter provisions. There was also limited involvement of subordinates by leaders in various activities within the college, which was against the spirit of integrity, good governance, and national values. The implication is that the significance of ethical practices in college was not a priority for such leaders. The findings agree with the results of Johnson (2019), who indicated that authenticity, integrity, and honesty seem to be in short supply in leadership. So much so in recent times, when highly publicized cases of political and corporate corruption have resulted in greater demand for authentic leadership and an appeal for a more ethical approach to leadership.

### **A philosophical paradigm of authentic leadership that advances ethical practices**

The suggested philosophical paradigm is an intellectual homily, anchored on ethical principles of moral rightness and moral goodness in the milieu of authentic leadership. This model interrogates the concept of authentic leadership as an ethical paradigm that can inspire morally right judgments and actions. The ethical principles of moral rightness and moral goodness are derived from deontological ethics and teleological ethics, respectively. Deontological ethics emphasizes moral rightness directed by rules and duties (White, 2017), whereas teleological ethics underscores moral goodness based on actions or decisions whose outcome is good and beneficial to the majority. (Benlahcene, Zainuddin,

Syakiran, & Ismail, 2018). This study analyses how authentic leadership in the light of moral rightness and moral goodness facilitates the attainment of ethical practices in primary teacher education in Kenya. It is therefore necessary that teacher education leaders be guided by the philosophical principles of moral goodness and moral rightness when making decisions and taking actions so as to promote sustained ethical practices within colleges.

Institutional leaders who incorporate authentic leadership have the capacity to attain college goals while taking into account the ethical principles of moral rightness and moral goodness. The leaders would also be guided by these ethical principles when making decisions and taking actions within TTCs. Consequently, authentic leaders could cultivate and reinforce a dependable organizational moral culture that stimulates staff and students to appreciate ethical inclinations that could be demonstrated through personal integrity, good governance, and the national values in colleges. Further, authentic leaders who are open, trustworthy, role models, and morally sound are better placed to build an enabling environment of moral rightness and moral goodness in which ethical practices can thrive. Such leaders can positively influence the subordinate's ethical behaviour by being exemplars of morally right and good conduct that subordinates can emulate within the college. That is to say, subordinates esteem model leaders whom they observe and follow in their actions and conduct.

The atmosphere of trust created by authentic leaders can help develop an ethical framework established on moral rightness and moral goodness that is straight forward, predictable, and safe. Authentic leadership, being morally grounded, can inspire subordinates to consider actions and decisions to be morally right when they arise from a sense of obligation and duty. Further, the

leader can also endeavour to transform their followers' behaviour, attitudes, values, and ethical practices using the empowering influence of moral goodness in the interest of the majority. The trust relationship created by authentic leaders inspires followers to adhere to college codes and regulations and stay away from contravening the established rules, in addition to thinking about the common good of other individuals. As a result, authentic leaders can transform the mind-set of individuals within TTCs to be consistent with a culture of moral rightness and goodness, which are critical ingredients for promoting and fortifying ethical practices in TTCs.

### CONCLUSION

Phenomenology and analytical methods were utilized in this study, whereas the theoretical frameworks adopted were the deontological and teleological ethical theories. In line with the objectives and findings of the study, it can be concluded from the first objective that authentic leaders can develop an enabling setting of ethical culture in which ethical practices can thrive because they are genuine, role models, value-based, morally sound, trustworthy, reliable, and respected by their subordinates. Based on these traits, authentic leaders are hence better placed to develop and maintain a reliable institutional ethical culture that stimulates the subordinates within TTCs to appreciate and advance ethical dispositions that are exhibited through personal integrity, good governance, and national values. It was however revealed that the commitment of leaders towards the adoption and identification with authentic leadership traits was not clearly apparent in most colleges. The consequence being the endorsement of a culture of corruption, wastage of resources, lack of accountability, and negative subordinate conduct within TTCs.

With reference to the second objective, this research has proposed the adoption of authentic leadership based

on deontological and teleological paradigms of moral rightness and moral goodness to entrench a favourable ethical atmosphere that cultivates concrete ethical practices as a matter of moral duty for the common good. Within this authentic leadership, attainment of college goals can be realized in the milieu of moral rightness and moral goodness that sustains a reputable organizational ethical culture, which consequently advances ethical practices within the teacher training colleges. Morally motivated authentic leadership is therefore vital towards advancing sustainable ethical practices based on the moral rightness and goodness of the thoughts and actions of individuals within TTCs.

### IMPLICATIONS

Regarding the research findings, discussions, proposed philosophical paradigm, and conclusion, the following implications are deduced:

1. The authenticity of leadership anchored on moral duty and moral goodness should replace the current empirical methods of instilling ethical practices. In the empirical approach, the individuals within the college are literally told how to behave and are warned against the infringement of the ethical expectations on the basis of the punishments attached, without considering the intrinsic moral goodness and moral rightness of the regulations. Leaders within TTCs should therefore adopt a morally inclined authentic leadership model to foster concrete ethical practices because of their rightness and goodness for the common good of individuals within TTCs.
2. A philosophical research project should be carried out to find out how authentic leadership can inspire ethical practices, based on the responses of the members of the parent associations, the board of management, and leaders from private teacher training colleges who

were not selected as respondents in this study.

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