

Teacher Character Development Through Virtue and Eudaimonia: Insights from Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

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ABSTRACT

The importance of character development in educators has garnered increasing attention within the field of education as it is closely linked to the ethical and effective delivery of teaching. Character traits such as honesty, courage and respect not only shape the personal and professional traits of teachers but also significantly influence the learning environments they create for their students. This study aimed to explore expert consensus on teacher character development by integrating the philosophical concepts of virtue and eudaimonia, which are essential for fostering ethical and effective teaching practices. This study aimed to explore expert consensus on teacher character development by integrating the philosophical concepts of virtue and *eudaimonia* which are essential for fostering ethical and effective teaching practices. The study employed the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) to elicit and synthesise the perspectives of educational experts regarding the key elements that constitute teacher character development. The participants comprised nine panels of educational experts with diverse backgrounds in teaching, teacher education and educational psychology, thereby ensuring a comprehensive range of perspectives. The findings revealed a strong consensus among experts on the importance of cultivating specific virtuous character traits in teachers including honesty, courage, wisdom, generosity, justice, respect and humility. Furthermore, the study highlighted the critical role of *eudaimonia* in teacher character development encompassing aspects such as finding deeper meaning in one's work, continuous personal and professional growth and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of research on character based approaches to teaching and offers valuable insights for the development of more holistic and sustainable strategies to support teacher well-being and teaching effectiveness.

Keywords: Character Development; Teacher Character Development; *Eudaimonia*; Virtue; Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the development of character among educators has received increasing scholarly attention within the field of education, particularly in relation to the ethical and effective delivery of teaching. This growing interest reflects broader concerns about the moral dimensions of teaching, professional integrity and the responsibility of educators in shaping not only students' academic outcomes but also their values, attitudes and behaviours. As teaching is inherently a moral practice, the character of teachers plays a central role in influencing classroom interactions, decision-making processes and the overall moral climate of educational environments (Sockett, 2012; Campbell, 2008). Character development in educators encompasses a range of moral and professional traits that guide behaviour and judgment in complex educational contexts. Traits such as honesty, courage, respect and justice are widely recognised as foundational to ethical teaching practice as they enable teachers to act with integrity, fairness and sensitivity towards students and colleagues (Arthur et al., 2017). These character traits do not merely reflect personal moral qualities but are closely intertwined with professional identity, shaping how teachers respond to ethical dilemmas, manage relationships and fulfil their educational responsibilities. Research suggests that teachers who consistently demonstrate positive character traits are more likely to establish supportive, respectful and trust-based learning environments that promote student engagement and moral development (Nucci, 2017).

The significance of teacher character is particularly evident within the context of character education and moral education. Scholars have long argued that students learn moral values not only through formal curricula but also through the implicit messages conveyed by teachers' conduct, attitudes and interaction which a process often described as the "hidden curriculum" (Jackson et al., 1993; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006). Teachers serve as daily role models whose actions may reinforce or undermine the moral values promoted within educational programmes. Consequently, the cultivation of teacher character is increasingly viewed as a critical component of effective character-based education. Despite this recognition, contemporary teacher education and professional development programmes have often prioritised technical competencies, pedagogical skills and measurable performance outcomes, sometimes at the expense of moral and character development (Biesta, 2015). While such competencies are undeniably important, an overemphasis on technical effectiveness risks reducing teaching to a purely instrumental activity, neglecting its ethical and relational dimensions. This has led to growing calls for more holistic approaches to teacher development that integrate professional skills with moral character formation and personal well-being (Day & Gu, 2014).

Within this discourse, the philosophical concepts of virtue and *eudaimonia* have emerged as important theoretical foundations for understanding teacher character development. Virtue refers to stable moral dispositions that enable individuals to act ethically and appropriately across various situations, while *eudaimonia* is commonly understood as human flourishing or living well (Kristjánsson, 2015). In educational contexts, these concepts highlight the idea that ethical teaching is not merely about following rules or fulfilling external standards but involves the ongoing cultivation of character traits that support meaningful and morally grounded professional practice. Integrating *eudaimonia* into discussions of teacher character development also draws attention to the relationship between ethical practice and teacher well-being. Teaching is widely recognised as a demanding profession characterised by emotional labour, increasing workload pressures, and complex interpersonal challenges (Hargreaves, 2000). In this context, teacher well-being has become a growing area of concern, particularly in relation to burnout, stress and attrition. From a character-based perspective, teacher well-being is not solely a matter of individual resilience but is closely connected to finding meaning in one's work, engaging in continuous personal and professional growth and maintaining a healthy balance between professional and personal life (Day & Gu, 2014). These dimensions align closely with the concept of *eudaimonia* suggesting that flourishing teachers are better positioned to teach ethically and effectively.

Research Aim

Although theoretical literature has extensively discussed the importance of virtues and flourishing in teaching, there remains a need for empirical research that clarifies how these concepts are understood and prioritised by educational experts. Existing studies often focus on specific character traits or isolated aspects of teacher ethics, resulting in fragmented understandings of teacher character development (Campbell, 2008; Sockett, 2012). Moreover, limited attention has been given to achieving expert consensus on the key elements that should constitute teacher character development particularly through systematic and structured methodologies.

In response to this gap, the present study seeks to explore expert consensus on teacher character development by integrating the concepts of virtue and *eudaimonia*. By employing the Nominal Group Technique (NGT), the study provides a structured platform for educational experts to articulate, discuss and prioritise the character traits and flourishing-related elements considered essential for ethical and effective teaching. The use of NGT enhances the rigor of the study by promoting equal participation, minimising dominance effects and enabling the systematic synthesis of expert perspectives (Delbecq et al., 1975).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review includes the concept of character development in the teaching profession, core virtue and *eudaimonia* for teacher well-being.

Character Development in the Teaching Profession

Teaching is no longer understood merely as a technical or instructional activity; rather, it is widely recognised as a moral and ethical practice in which teachers' character plays a central role (Campbell, 2003; Sockett, 2012). Teachers' personal virtues shape their professional judgment, interpersonal relationships, and the moral climate

of the classroom, thereby influencing both student learning and holistic development. Research in moral and character education consistently highlights teachers as moral exemplars whose actions, attitudes, and decision-making processes implicitly transmit values to students (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006). Carr (2007) argues that effective moral education cannot be detached from the moral character of teachers themselves, as students learn ethical conduct not only through formal instruction but also through daily observation of teachers' behaviour.

Consequently, character development is increasingly viewed as a foundational dimension of teacher professionalism rather than an optional or peripheral attribute. In both local and international contexts, heightened work demands, accountability pressures and ethical dilemmas have intensified concerns regarding teachers' integrity, resilience and well-being (Day & Gu, 2014; OECD, 2021). Within this context, philosophical perspectives grounded in virtue and *eudaimonia* offer a coherent and robust framework for understanding teacher character development.

Core Virtue

Virtue ethics, deeply rooted in Aristotelian philosophy, plays a crucial role in the character development of teachers, who are not only responsible for the academic instruction of their students but also for modeling ethical behavior (Kristjánsson, 2015; Sockett, 2012). The virtues, such as courage, honesty and compassion, are essential qualities that teachers must cultivate to create a morally and emotionally supportive learning environment (Hursthouse, 1999; Annas, 2011). Teachers who embody these virtues are better equipped to handle the diverse and often complex challenges of the classroom, thereby fostering a positive educational experience for their students (Arthur, 2016). Moreover, the cultivation of virtue in teachers is seen as a foundational element in promoting moral education as it directly influences their ability to guide students in developing their own moral compass (Carr, 2011; Kristjánsson, 2013). This alignment between a teacher's personal virtues and professional responsibilities ensures that their actions consistently reflect ethical principles which is crucial in maintaining the integrity and trust essential in the educational process (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013).

Empirical studies further support the relevance of virtue in teacher development. Osguthorpe (2008) found that teachers who demonstrate strong moral character are more likely to exhibit professional commitment, ethical sensitivity and trustworthiness. More recent research suggests that virtue-based teacher education programs enhance reflective capacity, moral reasoning and ethical awareness among pre-service and inservice teachers (Wong, Kristjánsson, & Darnell, 2021). These findings indicate that virtue is not merely an abstract philosophical ideal but a practical and observable dimension of professional teaching practice.

Kristjánsson (2020) argues that virtue ethics is particularly well suited to education because it integrates cognition, emotion and action within a coherent account of moral agency. From this perspective, teacher character development is understood as a lifelong process involving continuous self-reflection, moral growth and identity formation. Such an approach aligns with contemporary views of teacher professionalism that emphasise ethical judgment, relational responsibility and personal authenticity. Researchers also argue that the character of teachers not only significantly impacts their teaching effectiveness but also give impact on the moral development of their students (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006). This holistic approach to character development underscores the importance of integrating virtue ethics into teacher education programs, ensuring that teachers are not only knowledgeable but also virtuous individuals capable of making ethical decisions in the best interests of their students (Arthur, 2016; Kristjánsson, 2020).

Eudaimonia

Eudaimonia, a central concept in Aristotelian ethics often translated as "flourishing" or "the good life," represents the highest human good achieved through the cultivation of virtue and rational activity (Norton, 1976; Kristjánsson, 2020). It emphasises personal growth, moral integrity and meaningful engagement, in contrast to hedonic well-being which focuses on pleasure and satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 2013). In teacher character development, *eudaimonia* highlights the importance of aligning professional practice with intrinsic ethical values which contributing to personal fulfilment and effective guidance of students' moral and intellectual growth (Carr, 2011; Seligman, 2011). Teachers pursuing *eudaimonia* engage in reflective practice, continually improving their moral and professional conduct, thereby fostering educational environments supportive of both teacher and student development (Walker, 2005; Sherman, 1997; Kristjánsson, 2015).

Research shows that teachers experiencing meaningful work are more resilient, motivated, and committed, even in challenging environments (Day et al., 2011). Eudaimonic well-being is linked to reduced burnout and emotional exhaustion, persistent concerns in teaching (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011). Key dimensions include continuous personal and professional growth, autonomy, reflective practice, and a healthy work– life balance (Parker et al., 2012). Autonomy-supportive and values-oriented school climates further enhance eudaimonic well-being, improving instructional quality and teacher retention (Slemp, Field, & Cho, 2020).

Teachers' *eudaimonia* has broader implications for students and school communities. Flourishing teachers form positive relationships, demonstrate empathy and patience, and create supportive learning environments grounded in mutual respect (Hansen, 2001; Wong, Lau, & Lim, 2023). *Eudaimonia* thus functions as both a personal outcome and a relational and institutional good within educational settings. Pursuing *eudaimonia* requires teachers to embody and demonstrate the virtues they wish to instill in students, viewing teaching as a vocation rather than merely a job (Sokkett, 2012; Arthur, 2016; Kristjánsson, 2020; Carr, 2006). Cultivating practical wisdom enables sound ethical decisions in complex classroom scenarios (Nussbaum, 2001; Hursthouse, 1999). Fostering eudaimonic well-being positions teachers to create learning environments that are academically rigorous and ethically rich supporting the holistic flourishing of the educational community (Seligman, 2011; Kristjánsson, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) to gather and synthesize expert opinions on the integration of core virtue and *Eudaimonia* into teacher character development. NGT was chosen for its structured approach, which facilitates idea generation, discussion and consensus among experts on complex issues (Srivastava, Satsangi & Satsangee 2019; Delbecq, Van de Ven & Gustafson, 1975).

Participants

The study involved a purposive sample of nine educational experts, whom are experienced teachers with specializations in various educational fields, including moral education, Islamic education, counseling and guidance, and sciences and scholars in educational philosophy, were selected to participate in the NGT sessions. Participants were chosen based on their profound expertise in teacher development and their familiarity with the philosophical constructs central to the study. According to Booker and McNamara (2004), experts are knowledgeable individuals who have achieved their level of proficiency through a combination of classroom study, practical application and independent study. The inclusion criteria for participants emphasized their extensive teaching experience and domain-specific expertise. As Cantrill, Sibbald, and Buetow (1996) define, an expert is someone who has demonstrated exceptional knowledge within a particular field. The varied specializations of the participants ensured a comprehensive examination of the philosophical constructs, facilitating a richer and more nuanced interpretation of their application across different educational contexts.

Procedure

The research was conducted through a face-to-face Nominal Group Technique (NGT) session, lasting 1.5 hours. The session was designed to facilitate structured brainstorming, discussion and prioritization of ideas related to the integration of *Eudaimonia* and Core Values in teaching practices. The NGT process was divided into several key phases:

Idea Generation:

At the outset, each expert was asked to individually generate ideas and suggestions on how the identified philosophical constructs could be integrated into teacher character development. This phase was conducted silently to ensure that each participant's ideas were uninfluenced by others, fostering independent and original thought.

Round-Robin Sharing:

Following individual idea generation, participants took turns sharing their ideas with the group in a round-robin mode. Each idea was recorded and displayed to the entire group to ensure transparency and clarity. During this phase, no evaluation or discussion of ideas was permitted, allowing for the uninterrupted flow of contributions.

Group Discussion:

After all ideas were presented, the group engaged in an in-depth discussion of each idea. This phase allowed participants to clarify their contributions, elaborate on the ideas presented by others, and explore the practical implications of each suggestion. The discussion aimed to build a shared understanding of the ideas and their potential impact on teacher character development.

Prioritization and Ranking:

In the final phase, participants were asked to rank the ideas based on their perceived importance and feasibility. Each expert assigned a numerical value to each idea, reflecting its priority within the context of the study. These rankings were then aggregated to produce a prioritized list of ideas and suggestions.

Data Analysis

The data collected during the NGT sessions were analyzed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Perry and Linsley (2006) define NGT as an evaluation method that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. The qualitative data from the discussions were coded and categorized into themes, while the quantitative data from the ranking process were analyzed using NGTPLUS software by Ramlan (2021) and also were used to identify the most highly prioritized components. The results were then synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of the expert consensus on teacher character development.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study which used the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) to obtain expert opinion and consensus has emphasized crucial features of teacher character development via the framework of core virtue and eudaimonia.

Core Virtue

Table 1

Key elements	Items / Elements	Total item score	% of Agreement	Voter Consensus
Honesty	Practicing honesty in teaching fosters trust with students, which is essential for creating an effective learning environment.	27	**100	Suitable
Courage	Exercising courage enables teachers to confront ethical challenges in the classroom, ensuring that their actions remain fair and just.	27	**100	Suitable
Wisdom	Applying wisdom allows teachers to navigate complex situations in schools by making morally sound decisions.	27	**100	Suitable
Generosity	Demonstrating generosity through giving attention and time to students boosts their engagement and supports their moral development.	27	**100	Suitable
Justice	Ensuring justice in the classroom provides all students with equal opportunities to succeed, regardless of their backgrounds.	27	**100	Suitable
Respect	Practicing respect towards students and colleagues contributes to building a positive and ethical educational environment.	27	**100	Suitable
Humility	Embracing humility helps teachers accept feedback and fosters continuous learning, which is crucial for personal and professional growth.	27	**100	Suitable

Note: ** Percentage of agreement (>70%)

The experts reached a strong consensus on the critical role of cultivating specific virtuous character traits in teachers (see Table 1). They identified honesty, courage, wisdom, generosity, justice, respect, and humility as essential for fostering trust with students, ethical decision-making, moral development, and the creation of a positive educational environment.

By fostering the development of these virtues, educators can become more effective role models and better equipped to navigate the ethical challenges that arise in the classroom (Lumpkin, 2008; Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006). The experts emphasized that practicing honesty in teaching helps to build trust with students, which is crucial for an effective learning environment (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Lumpkin, 2008). They also noted that exercising courage enables teachers to confront ethical challenges in the classroom, ensuring that their actions remain fair and just (Kristjánsson, 2015; Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006). The application of wisdom was viewed as crucial for navigating complex situations in schools and making morally sound decisions (Kristjánsson, 2015; Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006).

Furthermore, the experts highlighted the importance of demonstrating generosity through giving attention and time to students, as this boosts their engagement and supports their moral development (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Lickona, 1993). Ensuring justice in the classroom by providing all students with equal opportunities to succeed, regardless of their backgrounds was also deemed essential (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Lumpkin, 2008). Practicing respect towards students and colleagues was seen as contributing to building a positive and ethical educational environment (Lumpkin, 2008; Noddings, 2012). Lastly, embracing humility was viewed as helping teachers accept feedback and foster continuous learning, which is crucial for their personal and professional growth (Kristjánsson, 2015; Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006).

Eudaimonia

Table 2

Key Elements	Items / Elements	Total item score	% of Agreement	Voter Consensus
Finding deeper meaning in work	Cultivating Eudaimonia in teaching helps teachers find deeper meaning in their work, resulting in increased job satisfaction.	27	**100	Suitable
Continuous growth and contribution	Pursuing Eudaimonia inspires teachers to grow and actively contribute to their school community continuously.	27	**100	Suitable
Recognizing the broader scope of education beyond knowledge transfer	Teachers who prioritize Eudaimonia recognize that education encompasses knowledge transfer and the development of students' character.	27	**100	Suitable
Maintaining worklife balance	Achieving Eudaimonia in their professional lives enables teachers to maintain a healthy work-life balance, which is crucial for their overall well-being.	27	**100	Suitable
Teaching with passion	Focusing on Eudaimonia allows teachers to teach with genuine passion, which positively impacts their students' learning experiences.	26	**96.3	Suitable
Preparing students for a well-rounded life	Teaching with Eudaimonia in mind encourages educators to prepare students for both academic achievement and a well-rounded, fulfilling life.	27	**100	Suitable
Viewing teaching as part of a meaningful life	A life grounded in Eudaimonia helps teachers see their role as educators as part of their effort to achieve a meaningful and fulfilling life.	27	**100	Suitable

Note: ** Percentage of agreement (>70%)

The experts also reached a strong consensus on the critical role of *eudaimonia* or the pursuit of human flourishing in teacher character development (see Table 2). They identified several key aspects of *eudaimonia* that are vital for effective teaching, including finding deeper meaning in one's work, continuous growth and contribution to the school community, recognizing the broader scope of education beyond knowledge transfer, maintaining a healthy work-life balance, teaching with genuine passion and preparing students for a well-rounded life.

Furthermore, the strong consensus on the critical role of *eudaimonia* suggests that teacher character development should be approached with a holistic focus on the overall well-being and flourishing of educators, encompassing not only the development of specific virtues but also the cultivation of a sense of purpose, meaning, and work-life balance (Annas, 2011; Gürol & Kerimgil, 2010). This perspective aligns with the growing body of research on teacher well-being and its impact on student outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schussler et al., 2018).

The experts emphasized that cultivating *eudaimonia* in teaching helps teachers find deeper meaning in their work resulting in increased job satisfaction (Gürol & Kerimgil, 2010; Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006). Pursuing *eudaimonia* was also seen as inspiring teachers to grow and actively contribute to their school community continuously (Annas, 2011; Kristjánsson, 2015). The experts noted that teachers who prioritize *eudaimonia* recognize that education encompasses more than just knowledge transfer as it also involves the development of students' character (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Lumpkin, 2008).

Additionally, the experts highlighted that achieving *eudaimonia* in their professional lives enables teachers to maintain a healthy work-life balance, which is crucial for their overall well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schussler et al., 2018). Focusing on *eudaimonia* was also viewed as allowing teachers to teach with genuine passion, which positively impacts their students' learning experiences (Hargreaves, 1998; Ria et al., 2004). Finally, the experts emphasized that teaching with *eudaimonia* in mind encourages educators to prepare students for both academic achievement and a well-rounded, fulfilling life (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Lickona, 1993).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of this study, which utilized the Nominal Group Technique to elicit expert consensus, provide valuable insights into the key elements of teacher character development through the integration of core virtue and *eudaimonia*. The strong consensus among the experts underscores the critical importance of these philosophical and psychological frameworks in shaping the character and practices of effective teachers. The strong consensus among experts underscores the relevance of these philosophical constructs in addressing the challenges faced by modern educators.

The emphasis on cultivating virtuous character traits, such as honesty, courage, and justice, highlights the need for a character-based approach to teacher education and professional development. By fostering the development of these virtues, educators can become more effective role models and better equipped to navigate the ethical challenges that arise in the classroom. Furthermore, the strong consensus on the critical role of *eudaimonia* suggests that teacher character development should be approached with a holistic focus on the overall well-being and flourishing of educators. This includes not only the development of specific virtues but also the cultivation of a sense of purpose, meaning and work-life balance. This perspective aligns with the growing body of research on teacher well-being and its impact on student outcomes, underscoring the need for a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to supporting teachers.

While this study provides valuable insights into the expert consensus on teacher character development, further research is needed to expand and deepen our understanding of this complex and multifaceted issue. Future studies could explore a broader range of perspectives and empirical evidence on teacher character development including studies that did not utilize the Nominal Group Technique to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Longitudinal studies that track the long-term effects of teacher character development initiatives on both teacher well-being and student outcomes would provide valuable insights into the sustainability and efficacy of such programs.

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