

Teaching Values and Attitudes Through the Novel *Utengano* in Rwanda's Competence-Based Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Literature plays a big role in language teaching and learning, especially in equipping learners with values and shaping their attitudes. Beyond developing language proficiency, literary texts provide opportunities for learners to reflect on social realities, moral principles, and human experiences that influence their personal and social development. This paper examines how the novel *Utengano* by Said Ahmed Mohamed can be used as a pedagogical tool for teaching values and attitudes within Rwanda's Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC). The study is grounded in Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which holds that individuals learn values, attitudes, and behaviours by observing and reflecting on the actions of others. Using document analysis of the novel *Utengano*, Senior Six Kiswahili Student's Book, Kiswahili Curriculum for Language Combination and other scholars' research studies, this study identifies the key values and attitudes embedded in the novel's themes, characters, events, and narrative structure.

Those include social justice, family responsibility, gender equality, moral integrity, respect for others, and the consequences of moral failure. The paper further analyses how these values and attitudes align with the cross-cutting issues and generic competences presented by Rwanda's CBC framework. Particular attention is given to the ways in which literary content can contribute to learners' character development while simultaneously strengthening language skills. Drawing on moral lessons and themes from the novel in relation to CBC principles, this study argues that the novel *Utengano* is simultaneously equipped with important language competences as well as attitudes and values that are essential for learners in Rwanda. The paper concludes with recommendations for the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) on how the curriculum can be improved by increasing the number of novels taught at Advanced Level. The paper also recommends practical pedagogical approaches for Kiswahili teachers on how to effectively integrate attitudes and values in their lesson preparation and teaching within the CBC classroom context.

Keywords: *Utengano*, language education, attitudes and values, Competence-Based Curriculum, literary pedagogy, Moral education

INTRODUCTION

Background

Language education does not only focus on planting language competences in learners, but also developing their human character, social norms and attitudes that guide them in their relationships with others and with society at large. In African educational context, literature has long served as one of the most powerful pedagogical tool used by the society to teach values, preserve cultural heritage and encouraging learners' moral reasoning (Obiagu, 2023). In Rwanda, the introduction of the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) in 2015 marked a significant change in educational philosophy, moving from a knowledge-based teaching methods toward approaches that emphasises the holistic development of learners. The current curriculum focuses on the active cultivation of values, attitudes and life skills relevant to the twenty-first century among learners (REB, 2015; Ndiokubwayo & Habiwaremye, 2018).

Within this reformed educational curriculum in Rwanda, Kiswahili is one of language subject that is taught in Rwanda's advanced level secondary education. The novel *Utengano*, authored by Said Ahmed Mohamed and

first published in 1980, is one of the novels to be taught to Senior Six (S6) students in Languages Combination. The title *Utengano* means 'Separation' in English and the novel addresses a wide range of social, moral and political themes that are directly relevant to contemporary African societies. Some common African customs highlighted by *Utengano* include but not limited to family disintegration, corruption, gender injustice, personal responsibility and the possibility of social redemption. These themes make the novel a good literary tool to teach attitude and values education within the CBC framework.

Issue

Despite the big role that literature plays in language education, there is a notable gap in academic research that examines how specific literary texts used in Rwanda's curriculum can be explicitly used to teach values and attitudes through CBC's generic competences and cross-cutting issues. Most of the studies address the general implementation of the CBC in Rwanda (Nsengimana, 2021; Ndiokubwayo & Habiyaemye, 2018; Hagenimana et al., 2023), without giving sufficient attention to the specific role played by Kiswahili literary texts in moral and attitude development. This paper seeks to address that gap by examining how the novel *Utengano* is used to teach attitudes and values through CBS.

Objectives

The study is guided by three objectives: (1) to identify and analyse the values and attitudes that the novel *Utengano* addresses; (2) to examine how these values and attitudes are related to the CBC's framework of generic competences and cross-cutting issues; and (3) to propose evidence-based pedagogical strategies through which Kiswahili teachers at the advanced level can effectively use *Utengano* to teach values and attitudes within the CBC classroom in Rwanda.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Literature in Language, Attitudes and Values Education

The relationship between literature, attitudes and values education has attracted many researchers in the fields of language education, moral philosophy and curriculum studies. Literature by specific, gives learners opportunities to encounter different moral human experience stories, to empathize with characters who face difficult choices and to reflect critically on the values that guide human behavior (Bikorimana, 2023). Lickona (1991), argues that good moral education doesn't only require explicit teaching, but also developing moral reasoning through literary texts. Moreover, Zhang et al. (2022), found that teachers who systematically integrate literary texts into moral education lessons create significantly richer opportunities for students to analyse ethical dilemmas and to internalise positive values through meaningful engagement with narrative.

In the African educational context, scholars have argued that moral education should be grounded from culturally relevant literary texts, rather than relying exclusively on imported frameworks or decontextualized instructional approaches (Obiagu, 2023). Obiagu (2023) further suggests that African moral education must be based on traditional attitudes, values and narratives that match with learners' lived experiences and cultural identities. This approach is more effective at encouraging attitude and value internalization among learners rather than teaching methods alone. The use of Swahili novel *Utengano* by Said Ahmed Mohamed offers precisely this kind of cultural grounding for East African learners, situating moral reflection within a familiar social and linguistic world.

Said Ahmed Mohamed and the Novel *Utengano*

Said Ahmed Mohamed is widely regarded as one of the prominent writer in Swahili literary tradition. He is a writer who made use of Swahili rich in vocabulary and rhetorical devices. He simultaneously was engaged in conserving, reviving and being highly innovative with the Swahili language. His novel *Utengano*, first published in 1980 by Longhorn Publishers in Nairobi, is considered a landmark work in contemporary Swahili fiction and has been widely studied by scholars and used as a school set text across East Africa (Bertoncini-Zubkova, 1989).

The novel's main theme is the disintegration of the family of Bwana Makuudi, a wealthy businessman and

corrupt politician. Makuudi is depicted as a tyrannical man at home and an immoral leader in public life. He is willing to use his power and wealth to satisfy his personal needs by exploiting people around him. Farashuu and Kazija, the two women that Makuudi's exploitation victimized, make a plan that exposes his moral failures and finally leads to his political defeat and personal collapse (Moh'd, 2017). On other hand Makuudi's children; Mussa and Maimuna stand for new generation's ideology of change in attitudes and values: they build new relationships characterized by respect and equity, standing in contrast to the authoritarian patterns of their father's generation.

Other characters like an honest policeman with integrity; inspector Fadhili, Shoka and James, act as moral preservers throughout the story. Fadhili embodies integrity and commitment to justice, while Shoka and James represents personal and social costs of irresponsibility and self-indulgence. Bertoni (1989), notes that Mohamed's novels consistently highlight moral conflicts in East African society. This make them suitable for ethical reflection and basis for attitude and values discussion in education context. The novel Utengano in particular presents a well contextualized moral issues through character's actions and beliefs that makes it an outstanding pedagogical literary text for teachers seeking to engage learners with questions of character, responsibility and social justice.

Rwanda's Competence-Based Curriculum: Attitudes, Values and Cross-Cutting Issues

Rwanda's Competence-Based Curriculum was introduced in 2015 as part of a far-reaching reform of the country's general education system. The curriculum was designed to shift educational focus from passive knowledge acquisition to the active development of competences, attitudes, values and life skills (REB, 2015; Ndiokubwayo & Habiyaremye, 2018). The CBC is built on basic competences, a set of generic competences including critical thinking, communication, research, cooperation and lifelong learning and a set of cross-cutting issues that must be taught across all subjects and levels of learning (REB, 2015). The curriculum intends not only to develop learners' academic competences, but also their moral responsibilities, social norms awareness and positive attitudinal change.

Cross-cutting issues that Rwanda's CBC focuses on include: environment and sustainability, peace and values education, inclusive education, gender education, financial education and standardization culture (REB, 2015). These issues are intended to ensure that education forms responsible citizens whose knowledge and skills are built on ethical commitment to the well-being of their society and the country in general. The Ministry of Education states that the main objective of curriculum's content and its associated textbooks is "Providing the citizens of Rwanda with sustained and inclusive high-quality education for competencies, skills and values required to drive rapid socio-economic transformation" (MINEDUC, 2024). The content to be taught to learners should be grounded from learners' socio-cultural environment and Kiswahili novel Utengano aligns with it. This is because it does not merely contain linguistic resources, but also intendeds to serve as vehicles for developing the values, attitudes and cross-cutting competences among learners through the CBC.

Despite CBC's clear policy intention, empirical research has found significant challenges in the implementation of cross-cutting issues at the classroom level. Many teachers in Rwanda had not received adequate training on how to integrate cross-cutting issues into their subject teaching (Nsengimana, 2021). Even teachers who had completed CBC training often struggled to enact the deeper pedagogical shifts required by the curriculum (Nsengimana et al., 2023). Hagenimana et al. (2023) similarly found that assessment practices in Rwandan secondary schools frequently underemphasize the attitudinal and values dimensions of learning. They instead focus recalling taught information and surface-level comprehension. The same gap occurs in implementation of CBC in Kiswahili subject where teachers teach it as a lonely subject than being a literary work that depict society's real life experience (Bikorimana & Migodela, 2023). These findings show that there is a great need of clear guidance on how Kiswahili teacher can use literary texts including Utengano to address the values and attitudes in a pedagogically effective way.

Literature-Based Language Teaching Attitudes and Values

Many studies support the use of literature as an active tool not only for language development, but also for attitude and values internalization in CBC context. Bikorimana (2023), found that the use of literary works in

language teaching significantly improved students' comprehension and language skills parallel with motivating them to engage deeply with ethical and social themes. The study concluded that literature provides 'the best examples of teaching a second language' and helps students 'develop twenty-first-century skills as the main goal of a competency-based curriculum' (Bikorimana, 2023, p. 8). This finding is directly relevant to the use of Utengano in Kiswahili teaching, given that Kiswahili is a second language for Rwandan learners.

Scholars in literature education have also stressed the importance of appropriate framework when using literary texts for attitudes and values education. Carter and Long (1991, as cited in Bikorimana, 2023) distinguish between the cultural model, the language model and the personal growth model of literature teaching. They argue that it is in the personal growth model that literary engagement is used to foster learners' self-awareness, empathy and moral reasoning; is most closely aligned with goals of attitude and values education. In this model, literary texts are not basically sources of cultural elements or linguistic examples, but challenge for personal reflection on how an individual reacts and behaves within society.

Theoretical Framework: Social Learning Theory

This study is grounded in Social Learning Theory, originally proposed by Albert Bandura (1977) and later developed in his work on self-efficacy and modelling (Bandura, 1986). Social Learning Theory holds that human beings do not learn values and behaviours only through direct experience. They learn significantly by observing the actions, choices, and consequences experienced by others. Bandura (1977) describes this process as observational learning or modelling, and identifies four key mechanisms through which it operates: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. A learner must first pay attention to the model's behaviour; then retain what was observed in memory; then be able to reproduce or apply that understanding; and finally be motivated by the perceived outcomes of the model's behaviour.

In the context of literary education, Social Learning Theory offers a powerful explanation for why reading novels can shape learners' values and attitudes. When S6 learners engage with Utengano, they encounter a range of characters who model different moral orientations. Inspector Fadhili models integrity and civic courage. Kazija models public accountability and the willingness to speak truth to power. Bwana Maksuudi, by contrast, models the destructive consequences of corruption, family neglect, and abuse of authority. Shoka and James model the personal costs of irresponsibility. According to Bandura (1977, 1986), learners observe these models, form mental representations of the values embedded in their behaviour, and are motivated either to emulate or to avoid those behaviours depending on the outcomes they observe. In this way, the novel functions as a structured observational learning environment.

Several scholars have applied Social Learning Theory to the study of literature in education and have confirmed its relevance. Rosenblatt (1978), in her transactional theory of reading, argues that readers do not merely receive a text passively; they engage in a transaction with it, bringing their own experiences and values into dialogue with those of the characters. This transactional engagement mirrors Bandura's (1977) concept of reciprocal determinism, the idea that the learner, the behaviour being modelled, and the environment interact dynamically in the learning process. More recently, Zhang et al. (2022) found that literary engagement creates richer conditions for ethical reasoning than direct moral instruction precisely because it engages learners in the kind of observational and reflective processes that Bandura describes. In Rwanda's CBC context, where generic competences such as critical thinking, and cooperation should be developed alongside language skills, Social Learning Theory provides the theoretical justification for using a novel like Utengano as a values education resource.

Social Learning Theory also helps to explain the pedagogical implications of this study. Bandura (1986) stresses that the effectiveness of observational learning depends heavily on the conditions under which modelling takes place. Learners are more likely to internalise modelled behaviour when they perceive the model as credible, when the modelled behaviour leads to positive or meaningful outcomes, and when the learning environment actively encourages reflection on what has been observed. This means that for Utengano to function effectively as a vehicle for values education, teachers must do more than simply present the text. They must actively scaffold learners' observation and reflection through structured discussion, critical questioning, and personally connected writing tasks so that the moral modelling embedded in the novel's characters translates into genuine attitudinal

learning. This theoretical insight directly informs the pedagogical recommendations proposed in Section 5 of this study.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is deals with understanding meaning, context and lived experience. It intends to explore phenomena in depth rather than measure them in numbers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design is appropriate for the present study because the study is not interested in counting or testing variables, but in understanding how values and attitudes are embedded in specific documents, how those values relate to Rwanda's CBC goals and what they mean for the teaching of Kiswahili literature in secondary schools. Qualitative research allows for this kind of deep, contextual and interpretive engagement with educational materials (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study is also guided theoretically by Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory. This theory holds that learners develop values and attitudes by observing and reflecting on the behaviour of others; a process that is directly applicable to the literary analysis of characters in Utengano. Social Learning Theory provides the conceptual basis for understanding why document analysis of literary and curriculum texts can help to examine how morals are embedded and transmitted through literary education. The theory explains the mechanism by which characters in the novel function as models of moral and social behaviour for learners, and it informs the analytical lens through which the study reads the relationship between character behaviour, textbook pedagogy, and the CBC's values education goals.

Within the qualitative design, this study employs document analysis as its data collection method. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents, both printed and electronic, as a source of evidence (Bowen, 2009 p. 27). It is a method that enables researchers to extract meaning from texts, to build understanding from documentary evidence and to generate knowledge that is grounded in the content of the documents being studied. Bowen (2009) further describes document analysis as involving two core activities: skimming, which means reading documents for an initial sense of their content; and close reading, which involves a more detailed, systematic examination of the text to identify patterns, themes and meanings. This study applies both levels of reading to its primary and secondary data sources.

Document analysis particularly suited to educational research because education itself produces a wide range of documents namely syllabuses, textbooks, curriculum frameworks, policy papers and learning materials that are rich sources of evidence about educational intentions, values and practices (Bowen, 2009). In this study, the documents are the data. They are the primary site of analysis and this is methodologically appropriate because the nature of the research objectives which focus on what is embedded in curriculum texts and literary works rather than on what happens in individual classrooms.

The primary document analysed in this study is the Senior Six (S6) Kiswahili Student Book published by the Rwanda Education Board (REB, 2019). This textbook is the central curriculum artefact used to teach Kiswahili at the advanced level in Rwanda's secondary schools. It is used across the country in all schools offering the Languages Combination. The S6 student book is developed in accordance with the Competence-Based Curriculum framework and reflects the educational intentions of both the Rwanda Education Board and the Ministry of Education. Within this textbook, the focus of the analysis is specifically on the unit or section dedicated to novels. This section contains an extract of the novel and a series of activities and questions designed to guide learner engagement with the text. It is this specific section that constitutes the core of the documentary data for the present study.

The second primary document is the novel Utengano itself, authored by Said Ahmed Mohamed (1980). Reading the original literary text alongside the textbook presentation of it serves an important analytical purpose. It allows the researcher to move between the source text and its curriculum representation, comparing what the novel contains with what the S6 student book foregrounds, selects and emphasises. This comparative reading reveals not only what values are present in the novel, but also which of those values the curriculum chooses to make visible to learners and which remain implicit or underexplored. This level of analysis would not be possible from the textbook alone.

The third primary document is the Kiswahili advanced level curriculum document, formally titled *Muhtasari wa Somo la Kiswahili Kidato sha 6 Mchepuo wa Lugha (LFK)* published by the Rwanda Education Board (REB, 2015). This document specifies the learning objectives, competences, content and cross-cutting issues that govern the teaching of Kiswahili at the advanced level in Rwanda. It provides the normative framework within which the S6 student book was designed and within which teachers are expected to teach. Analysing this document alongside the student book and the novel enables the researcher to assess the degree of alignment between the curriculum's stated goals for values and attitudes education and the specific content and activities provided in the textbook. This alignment analysis is central to the second research objective of the study.

Secondary documents also inform the analysis. These include Rwanda's overarching Competence-Based Curriculum framework (REB, 2015); the Ministry of Education's Education Sector Strategic Plan (MINEDUC, 2024); and a selection of peer-reviewed journal articles on Swahili literary studies, values education and CBC implementation in Rwanda published between 2015 and 2025. These secondary sources serve two functions. First, they provide the theoretical and scholarly context needed to interpret the primary documents. For example, research on CBC implementation by Nsengimana et al. (2023) and Mutabazi and Saine (2025) contextualises the findings within the broader landscape of curriculum reform in Rwanda. Second, they enable a process of triangulation: by comparing the evidence from the primary curriculum documents with evidence from independent scholarly research, the study strengthens the credibility and reliability of its interpretations (Bowen, 2009).

Data analysis in this study follows the approach to thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is defined as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). It is a flexible and accessible method that is well suited to document-based qualitative research because it does not require a fixed theoretical commitment and can be applied across a wide range of data types and research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a six-phase process: familiarisation with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and producing the final analysis. This study follows these phases in a systematic but iterative way, meaning that the researcher moved back and forth between the documents and the emerging themes, refining the analysis at each stage.

Specifically, the analytical process began with repeated close reading of the *Utengano* extract from the S6 student book, the relevant sections of the *Muhtasari wa Somo la Kiswahili Kidato cha 6 Mchepuo wa Lugha (LFK)* and the novel *Utengano* itself. During this reading, initial codes were generated; short labels that captured significant features of the content related to values and attitudes. These initial codes were then grouped into broader themes that recur across the documents and those themes were mapped onto the cross-cutting issues and generic competences prescribed by the *Muhtasari wa Somo la Kiswahili Kidato cha 6 Mchepuo wa Lugha (LFK)* and the CBC framework.

One limitation of this study is that it relies only on document analysis and does not provide direct evidence of how the *Utengano* is taught and understood in actual classrooms. While documents help to explain curriculum intentions and content, they cannot fully capture classroom practices and learner experiences. Future studies should use methods such as classroom observations, teacher interviews and learner discussions to obtain deeper evidence. Despite this limitation, document analysis remains an appropriate and ethical approach for establishing a strong foundation for further research on curriculum implementation and classroom practice.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Corruption, Integrity and the Consequences of Moral Failure

The most dominant value running through the extract from senior six student's book is the unequivocal rejection of corruption. The extract contrasts three political figures with starkly different moral profiles. Bwana Maksuudi, the corrupt former District Chief, is systematically exposed by Kazija, a community woman, who speaks with courage before the assembled crowd. Her speech is meticulous and detailed in its accusations:

“Na Makuudi. . . huyu aliyewahi kuwa Mkuu wa Wilaya, akataka kuifisidi nchi hii kwa kuwadhulumu wananchi, na ambaye baada ya kugundulikana na kusamehewa amekuwa ahasi. . . Huyu Makuudi ambaye ameshindwa kuiendesha nyumba yake ataweza kuangalia maslahi yetu?”

(Kiswahili Mchepuo wa Lugha Kidato cha 6, p. 21)

“And Makuudi... this man who was once a District Commissioner, who sought to corrupt this country by oppressing its citizens and who, after being discovered and forgiven, has become defiant... This Makuudi, who has failed to manage his own household, will he be able to look after our interests?”

This extract carries immense pedagogical weight. Kazija does not merely accuse; she builds a logical argument, linking Makuudi's domestic failures to his public unfitness. This mirrors the CBC's emphasis on critical thinking as a generic competence. The curriculum document states that learners must develop “tafakari tunduizi na stadi za utatuji wa matatizo” (critical thinking and problem-solving skills) which will help them “kufikiri kwa mapana, kutathmini na kutafuta suluhisho kwa matatizo” (to think broadly, evaluate situations and seek solutions to problems.)” (REB, 2022, p. 4). Kazija’s speech models exactly this kind of structured, evidence-based moral reasoning.

The contrast between Makuudi and Inspector Fadhili is equally instructive. While Makuudi is dragged away in handcuffs, Fadhili commands public respect through his moral authority alone. The extract notes:

“Na kwa Inspekta Fadhili haikumchukua muda kwa sababu ya umaarufu wake miongoni mwa wananchi. Kwa kweli ni kwa ajili yake tu, ndio wakasita.”

(Kiswahili Mchepuo wa Lugha Kidato cha 6, p. 23)

And as for Inspector Fadhili, it did not take long because of his popularity among the citizens. In fact, it was only because of him that they hesitated.

This passage demonstrates that genuine moral authority is earned, not appointed. It teaches learners that integrity is a form of social capital. Lickona (1991) argues that moral education requires learners to encounter characters who embody the very values being taught. Fadhili fulfills precisely this function in the narrative.

This connects directly to the CBC cross-cutting issue of “peace and values education.” The curriculum document describes the importance of “maarifa sahihi, ujuzi, stadi sahihi na mwenendo mwema wa tabia mwafaka” (correct knowledge, skills and good moral behaviour) as foundational goals of Rwanda’s education system (REB, 2022, p. i). Bikorimana (2023) similarly finds that literary engagement in Rwanda’s CBC context creates the best conditions for students to “develop twenty-first-century skills” and to engage with ethical dilemmas in ways that classroom instruction alone cannot achieve.

Gender Justice and Women's Agency

The woman, Kazija has becomes the moral voice of the community at the most critical moment. While male figures either perform empty promises (Zanga), retreat into silence (Makuudi), or maintain order (Fadhili), Kazija is the one who speaks the truth that restores public accountability. This is a remarkable representation of female agency in a text authored in 1980.

The narrator explicitly marks Kazija’s exceptional courage:

“Njiani mazungumzo yalikuwa ya mwanamke Kazija aliyekuwa na ujasiri kuliko wanaume. Yeye ndiye aliyethubutu leo kumpa kweli kiongozi.”

(Kiswahili Mchepuo wa Lugha Kidato cha 6, p. 23)

Along the way, the conversation was about Kazija, the woman who was more courageous than the men. She was the one who dared to tell the leader the truth today.

This is a profoundly teachable moment. The narrator positions Kazija's bravery as superior to that of any man present. For S6 learners, this disrupts any assumption that public courage and civic responsibility are male domains. It models gender equity not as an abstract principle but as a lived, narrative reality.

Kazija also exposes how Maksuudi has exploited women specifically. She details how he abandoned his wife Mwanasururu, seizing her property and how his daughter Maimuna fled his household. These are not minor narrative details. They constitute a systematic account of how patriarchal abuse operates:

"Amemnyang'anya mkewe mmoja, Mwanasururu, mali yake na mwisho akamwacha na kusababisha kifo chake."

(Kiswahili Mchepuo wa Lugha Kidato cha 6, p. 22)

He dispossessed one of his wives, Mwanasururu, of her property and later deserted her, an act that ultimately contributed to her death.

For Rwanda's CBC, gender education is an explicit cross-cutting issue. The curriculum document requires that gender awareness be integrated into all subjects at all levels (REB, 2015). This extract provides Kiswahili teachers with a contextually embedded, emotionally resonant entry point for discussions about gender-based violence, women's rights and the costs of patriarchal behaviour. Obiagu (2023) argues that moral education in African educational contexts is most effective when grounded in culturally familiar narratives that resonate with learners' lived social realities. Kazija's experience speaks directly to social dynamics many East African learners recognise.

The curriculum document's expectations for S6 learners include the ability to perform *"uhakiki wa kazi yoyote ya kifasihi katika matini andishi au simulizi"* (critical analysis of literary works) (REB, 2022, p. 5). Kazija's speech is itself an act of literary analysis, narrating, interpreting and evaluating Maksuudi's conduct in public. By studying her method, learners acquire both analytical competence and a model of civic courage.

Civic Participation, Democratic Values and Leadership Accountability

The selected novel presents those values in different ways. Firstly, extract opens with a vivid description of a full civic gathering. The setting itself carries instructional value. Citizens of all ages and backgrounds have assembled to exercise democratic judgment:

"Ilikuwa siku ya watetezi kujielezea. Uwanja umejaa, wake kwa waume, wadogo kwa wakubwa. Asiye mwana labda alieleka jiwe. Watu wamefika hapa mapema. Wa ng'ambo na wa mjini."

(Kiswahili Mchepuo wa Lugha Kidato cha 6, p. 20)

It was the day for the defenders to present their case. The grounds were packed, with women and men, young and old. Anyone who was not a child had come, perhaps even leaning on a walking stick. People had arrived early, both from across the region and from the town.

This is a community at work. The proverb *"Asiye mwana labda alieleka jiwe"* (the childless one perhaps leaned on a stone) implies that everyone who could attend did attend. The scene encodes democratic participation as a communal norm, not a privilege. Even Mzee Japu, an elderly man with personal grievances, articulates a sophisticated political reasoning:

"Kura yangu nitampa Siwa, kijana huyu amepata sifa miongoni mwa wananchi. Sifa zake zimeenea. Kijana mkakamavu, siye yule dhalimu Maksuudi, au Zanga. . ."

(Kiswahili Mchepuo wa Lugha Kidato cha 6, p. 21)

"I will give my vote to Siwa. This young man has earned a good reputation among the people. His achievements are widely known. He is a strong and determined young man, unlike that tyrant Maksuudi or Zanga...

Japu does not follow his vote blindly. He compares candidates on moral grounds. This models the informed citizen that Rwanda's CBC aims to produce. The curriculum document explicitly states that learners should develop "*ushirikiano, utawala binafsi na stadi za maisha*" (cooperation, self-governance and life skills) including the ability to "*kuheshimu haki na maoni ya wengine*" (respect the rights and opinions of others) (REB, 2022, p. 4). The rally scene enacts these competences in real time.

The contrast between Siwa's reception and Zanga's is equally significant. Siwa speaks with humility and brevity:

"Wananchi, mimi sina mengi. Hapana katika nyinyi asiyenielewa juu chini. Sina kubwa la kusema ila nakukumbusheni kuwa mnahitaji kiongozi atakayeshughulikia maslahi yenu na maslahi ya taifa zima."

(Kiswahili Mchepuo wa Lugha Kidato cha 6, p. 21)

Citizens, I do not have much to say. There is no one among you who does not know me well. I have little to add except to remind you that you need a leader who will look after your interests and the interests of the entire nation.

Siwa's speech is short, confident and trust-based. He does not make grand promises. He refers the decision back to the people. Zanga, by contrast, makes undeliverable promises about roads, jobs and schools and the crowd remains silent. Mzee Bakari articulates the moral flaw precisely:

"Njia, kazi, skuli zaidi, raha. . . haya ndiyo mliyokuwa mkituambia muda wote huu; watetezi gani nyinyi? Hata hamjui kuwa nchi yenu maskini haina uwezo wa kutimiza ahadi mnazotoa. . ."

(Kiswahili Mchepuo wa Lugha Kidato cha 6, p. 21)

Roads, jobs, more schools, prosperity... these are the things you have been telling us all this time. What kind of defenders are you? Do you not even realize that your poor country does not have the capacity to fulfill the promises you are making

Bakari's inner monologue teaches learners to evaluate political speech critically. This is a direct enactment of the CBC's generic competence of critical thinking. Zhang et al. (2022) found that literary texts create richer opportunities for students to analyse ethical dilemmas and internalise positive values than direct instruction alone. The political rally scene in *Utengano* is precisely such a dilemma-laden narrative space.

The curriculum's learning objectives include the expectation that learners will be able "*kushiriki kwa ufasaha katika midahalo inayohusu mada mbalimbali akitumia Kiswahili sanifu*" (participate competently in debates on various topics using standard Kiswahili) (REB, 2022, p. 27). The extract serves as a live classroom model of such debate, with multiple speakers embodying different communicative strategies and moral stances.

Family Responsibility, Social Trust and the Cost of Moral Failure

The novel *Utengano* provides insights on the relationship between private moral failure and public consequences. Kazija's speech to the crowd is structured around a simple but powerful argument: a man who cannot manage his household cannot manage a nation. This is a deeply African ethical principle and one that resonates strongly in Rwanda's cultural context.

She catalogues the specific failures: his son has not seen him for a year, his daughter has fled, his wife died after he seized her property (*Utengano*, 1980, p. 81). These are not merely personal tragedies. They are evidence of a man incapable of the reciprocal care that leadership requires. Kazija draws the political conclusion directly:

"Huyu Makuudi ambaye ameshindwa kuiendesha nyumba yake ataweza kuangalia maslahi yetu?"

(Utengano, 1980, p. 81, Kiswahili Mchepuo wa Lugha Kidato cha 6, p. 22)

This Makuudi, who has failed to manage his own household, will he be able to look after our interests?

This question is rhetorical but analytically sharp. It invites learners to consider whether private virtue and public competence are connected. Rwanda's CBC cross-cutting issues include "*Rwandan cultural values and norms*," which emphasise family as the foundational unit of social life. The curriculum document notes that learners should develop "*mwenendo mwema wa tabia mwafaka ambao unawajenga na kuwajumuisha katika jamii*" (good character that builds and includes them in the community) (REB, 2022, p. i). Makuudi's failure is the photographic negative of this ideal.

This theme also surfaces through Mzee Japu's grievance about being charged for his wife's land permit signature when Makuudi was District Chief:

"Makuudi. . . aaa, alipokuwa Mkuu wa Wilaya, alikula pesa ngapi za mke wangu alipotaka kununua kiwanja cha kujengea nyumba. Sahihi yake tu Mkuu wa Wilaya aliiuza shilingi mia mbili."

(Kiswahili Mchepuo wa Lugha Kidato cha 6, p. 21)

Makuudi... ah, when he was the District Commissioner, how much money did he take from my wife when she wanted to buy a plot of land to build a house? He sold his signature alone, as District Commissioner, for two hundred shillings

Japu's memory is specific and personal. It grounds the novel's anti-corruption message in the material harm done to ordinary families. This is consistent with Obiagu's (2023) argument that African moral education should be rooted in the lived experience of community members. Abstract ethical principles become teachable when anchored to the concrete injuries of real people.

The curriculum document's learning objectives emphasise the ability "*kufanya ufafanuzi wa kina wa vipengele vya fani na maudhui katika uhakiki wa fasihi*" (to conduct deep analysis of both form and content in literary criticism) (REB, 2022, p. 27). The extract rewards exactly this kind of layered analysis, connecting individual characterisation to broader social critique.

Alignment Between the Novel and Rwanda's CBC Framework

The four themes identified above map clearly onto Rwanda's CBC framework. The curriculum document explicitly states that the CBC aims to produce learners with "*maarifa sahihi, ujuzi, stadi sahihi na mwenendo mwema wa tabia mwafaka ambao unawajenga na kuwajumuisha katika jamii ili waweze kutumia vilivyo fursa za ajira zilizopo*" (correct knowledge, skills and good moral character that builds and integrates them into society so they can make good use of available employment opportunities) (REB, 2022, p. i). *Utengano* speaks to each dimension of this goal. It provides knowledge of social and political realities. It models the skills of public speaking, critical analysis and civic reasoning. And it enacts the moral character of integrity, accountability and courage.

Specifically, the five generic competences of the CBC find direct expression in the novel. The competence of "*mawasiliano katika lugha rasmi*" (communication in formal language) is exercised through the characters' speeches and Kazija's public address. The competence of "*tafakari tunduizi*" (critical thinking) is modeled by Japu, Bakari and Mama Miraji's interior reasoning. The competence of "*ujifunzaji wa kudumu*" (lifelong learning) is implicitly invoked by the text's insistence that wisdom must be earned and demonstrated through action, not proclaimed. And the competence of "*ushirikiano, utawala binafsi na stadi za maisha*" (cooperation, self-governance and life skills) is displayed by the community's collective action in demanding accountability from its leaders (REB, 2022, pp. 4–5).

Pedagogical Implications Attitudes and Values for Kiswahili Teachers

The analysis reveals a significant pedagogical opportunity. However, that opportunity can only be realised if teachers engage with the novel beyond surface comprehension. The S6 student book's own comprehension questions remain largely at the factual level: listing minor characters, naming Makuudi's wife, describing what

Fadhili did at the meeting. While these questions serve a linguistic function, they risk reducing a morally complex text to a recall exercise (Kiswahili Mchepuo wa Lugha Kidato cha 6, p. 22)

This gap between curriculum intention and classroom practice has been documented in multiple studies. Nsengimana (2021) found that many Rwandan teachers had not received adequate training on how to integrate CBC's cross-cutting issues into subject teaching. Hagenimana et al. (2023) similarly found that assessment practices in Rwandan secondary schools frequently underemphasise the attitudinal and values dimensions of learning. Bikorimana and Migodela (2023) note specifically that Kiswahili teachers often teach literary texts as standalone language exercises rather than as vehicles for social and moral education.

The curriculum document itself is clear that the role of the Kiswahili teacher extends beyond grammatical instruction. It requires teachers "*kuonyesha shauku na upendo usio na upendeleo kwa wanafunzi katika mchakato wa ufundishaji na ujifunzaji*" (to show enthusiasm and impartial love for students in the teaching and learning process) and "*kuhusisha ubunifu na ugunduzi katika mchakato wa ufundishaji na ujifunzaji*" (to engage in creativity and inquiry in teaching and learning) (REB, 2022, p. 12). Teaching *Utengano* in ways that honour this moral richness requires teachers to design lessons that move from description to analysis, from analysis to evaluation and from evaluation to personal and social application.

Carter and Long's (1991, as cited in Bikorimana, 2023) "personal growth model" of literature teaching is most applicable here. This model holds that literary texts are not primarily sources of cultural data or linguistic examples but challenges for personal reflection on how one reacts and behaves in society. In this model, teaching Kazija's speech is not about understanding vocabulary but about asking learners: would you have spoken as she did? What stopped others from speaking? What does silence in the face of injustice cost a community? These are the questions that make *Utengano* a genuinely transformative educational text.

SUMMARY

This study examines the novel *Utengano* by Said Ahmed Mohamed as a pedagogical tool for teaching values and attitudes within Rwanda's Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC). The study was guided by three objectives: to identify the values and attitudes embedded in the novel; to examine their alignment with the CBC's generic competences and cross-cutting issues; and to propose evidence-based pedagogical strategies for Kiswahili teachers at the advanced level.

The study used a qualitative research design, specifically document analysis (Bowen, 2009). The primary documents analysed included the Senior Six Kiswahili Student Book (REB, 2019), the original novel *Utengano* (Mohamed, 1980), and the Kiswahili advanced level curriculum document (REB, 2015). Secondary sources included the CBC framework, the Ministry of Education's Education Sector Strategic Plan (MINEDUC, 2024), and peer-reviewed literature on Swahili literary studies and CBC implementation in Rwanda. Thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to identify patterns and themes across the documents.

Four major themes emerged from the analysis. The first theme is corruption, integrity, and the consequences of moral failure. The novel presents a strong moral contrast between Bwana Makuudi, a corrupt and abusive leader, and Inspector Fadhili, who commands public respect through genuine integrity. Kazija, a community woman, exposes Makuudi's failures before a public gathering. Her speech models critical thinking and evidence-based moral reasoning, which align with CBC's generic competences (REB, 2022; Lickona, 1991).

The second theme is gender justice and women's agency. Kazija emerges as the moral voice of the community, demonstrating greater courage than any male character. The novel also documents the specific harms that Makuudi inflicted on women, including property seizure and abandonment. This connects directly to the CBC's cross-cutting issue of gender education and resonates with Obiagu's (2023) argument that African moral education is most effective when grounded in culturally familiar narratives.

The third theme is civic participation, democratic values, and leadership accountability. The novel opens with a community gathering where citizens evaluate their candidates on moral grounds. Characters like Mzee Japu and Mzee Bakari model informed civic reasoning. Their judgements reflect the CBC competence of critical thinking

and the expectation that learners will participate competently in public debates (REB, 2022). Zhang et al. (2022) confirm that literary texts create richer opportunities for ethical engagement than direct instruction alone.

The fourth theme is family responsibility, social trust, and the cost of moral failure. Kazija's accusation against Makuudi is structured around a clear argument: a leader who fails his family cannot serve the public. This reflects the CBC's cross-cutting issue of Rwandan cultural values and norms, which position the family as the foundational social unit. The analysis also reveals a gap between the curriculum's intentions and classroom practice. Comprehension questions in the S6 student book remain largely factual, which risks reducing a morally rich text to a recall exercise (Nsengimana, 2021; Hagenimana et al., 2023; Bikorimana & Migodela, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the novel *Utengano* is a valuable pedagogical resource for teaching values and attitudes in Rwanda's Competence-Based Curriculum. Its themes of anti-corruption, gender justice, civic responsibility, and family accountability align closely with the CBC's generic competences and cross-cutting issues. The novel does not only develop language competence; it simultaneously builds the moral and attitudinal dimensions of learner development that Rwanda's education system prioritises.

However, the alignment between the novel's pedagogical potential and actual classroom practice remains incomplete. Evidence from multiple studies shows that many Kiswahili teachers in Rwanda have not received sufficient training to integrate cross-cutting issues into literary instruction (Nsengimana, 2021; Hagenimana et al., 2023; Bikorimana & Migodela, 2023). The comprehension activities in the S6 student book are largely surface-level, which limits learners' engagement with the deeper values and attitudes that the novel contains. This finding reflects a broader challenge in CBC implementation across Rwanda, where the gap between policy intention and classroom practice remains significant (Mutabazi & Saine, 2025; Nsengimana et al., 2023).

Despite these challenges, *Utengano* remains a powerful text for values and attitudes education. Characters such as Kazija, Fadhili, and Siwa model moral courage, integrity, and accountability in ways that are culturally familiar and emotionally resonant for East African learners. The novel's grounding in social realities that learners recognise makes it, in Obiagu's (2023) terms, an ideal vehicle for African moral education. Used well, it can help learners develop the twenty-first-century skills, ethical commitments, and civic competences that Rwanda's reformed curriculum demands.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed. They are directed at the Rwanda Education Board, at Kiswahili teachers at the advanced level, and at future researchers.

The Rwanda Education Board should review the comprehension activities in the Senior Six Kiswahili Student Book. The current questions focus heavily on factual recall and do not guide learners toward analytical or values-based engagement with the text. REB should develop supplementary activities that ask learners to evaluate characters' moral choices, connect narrative events to cross-cutting issues such as gender education and peace and values education, and apply lessons from the novel to their own social contexts. This would close the gap between the textbook's content and the CBC's attitudinal goals.

REB should also expand the number of Swahili novels available at the advanced level. *Utengano* is a strong text, but a broader literary canon would give learners exposure to a wider range of moral contexts, cultural perspectives, and social themes. In fact, there are few novels embedded in Advanced Level language combination curriculum and books. Introducing additional novels that explicitly address CBC cross-cutting issues would strengthen values and attitudes education across the Kiswahili curriculum.

Kiswahili teachers should be supported to move beyond surface comprehension when teaching *Utengano*. Professional development programmes should introduce Carter and Long's (1991, as cited in Bikorimana, 2023) personal growth model of literature teaching, in which literary texts are used as spaces for personal reflection and moral reasoning rather than as sources of vocabulary or cultural information. Teachers should design lessons

that progress from description to analysis, from analysis to evaluation, and from evaluation to personal and social application. Questions such as ‘Would you have spoken as Kazija did?’ or ‘What does Mzee Bakari’s reasoning teach us about civic responsibility?’ create the kind of reflective engagement that the CBC intends.

Teachers should also make explicit connections between the novel’s themes and the CBC’s cross-cutting issues in their lesson plans. References to gender education, peace and values education, and Rwandan cultural values should not be left implicit. When teachers name these connections clearly, learners are better equipped to transfer the values and attitudes they encounter in the novel to their own lives and communities.

Future researchers should extend this work through classroom-based studies. This study relied exclusively on document analysis and could not capture how the novel is actually taught and received in Rwandan classrooms. Studies that use classroom observations, teacher interviews, and learner discussions would provide richer evidence about the gap between curriculum intention and classroom practice. Research that examines learner responses to specific values-based activities using Utengano would be particularly valuable in informing future revisions to the S6 student book and teacher training programmes.

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