

Beyond Conformity: A Three-Tiered Model of Discipline and the Stagnation of Autonomous Development in Ugandan Secondary Schools

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Abstract: Secondary education in Uganda has maintained disciplinary approaches rooted in colonial structures that prioritize behavioral compliance through punitive measures, potentially undermining the development of autonomous, critically-thinking citizens essential for national progress. Despite significant educational investments and reform efforts, Ugandan secondary schools continue to rely heavily on corporal punishment, suspensions, and authoritarian control mechanisms that, while maintaining surface-level institutional order, may systematically impair students' capacity for self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and independent decision-making required for success in contemporary global contexts. The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between disciplinary approaches and autonomous development in Ugandan secondary schools through the development and application of a three-tiered discipline model, aiming to identify strategies that maintain institutional order while fostering student self-regulation and independent thinking capabilities. A mixed-methods research design was employed across 24 purposively selected secondary schools in four Ugandan regions, involving 960 students, 120 teachers, and 48 administrators. Data collection utilized validated instruments including the Student Autonomy Development Scale, Disciplinary Practices Inventory, and Three-Tiered Discipline Implementation Questionnaire, supplemented by focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Statistical analysis incorporated univariate, bivariate, and multivariate approaches, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis using NVivo software. Key findings revealed that 78.3% of schools employed corporal punishment as a primary disciplinary measure, with students in high-punitive environments demonstrating significantly lower autonomous development scores (2.2 ± 0.5) compared to those in low-punitive environments (3.7 ± 0.4 , $p < 0.001$). The three-tiered discipline model proved highly effective, with integrated implementation achieving 58.9% reduction in behavioral incidents and 1.8 ± 0.3 gains in autonomy development scores. Cultural adaptation strategies, particularly elder-student mentorship (73.6% adoption rate) and Ubuntu-based peer support (68.2% adoption rate), demonstrated high acceptance and positive developmental outcomes while maintaining cultural integrity. The study concluded that predominant punitive disciplinary practices in Ugandan secondary schools significantly impede autonomous development while failing to achieve sustainable behavioral improvements, and that the three-tiered model successfully balances institutional order with student autonomy development when implemented comprehensively and adapted to cultural contexts. The key recommendation emerging from the main objective is the mandatory phased implementation of the graduated three-tiered discipline framework across all Ugandan secondary schools, beginning with Tier 1 preventive measures and progressing to comprehensive integrated models, supported by extensive teacher professional development and culturally-responsive adaptation strategies that honor traditional values while promoting student autonomy and critical thinking capabilities.

Key Words: Discipline and the Stagnation of Autonomous Development

Background of the Study

The landscape of secondary education in Uganda has been characterized by a complex interplay between traditional disciplinary approaches and the evolving needs of contemporary learners. Since the implementation of Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2007, Ugandan secondary schools have experienced unprecedented enrolment increases, fundamentally altering the educational ecosystem and necessitating new approaches to student management and development (Kohnke & Ting, 2021; Tellmann, 2022). The conventional disciplinary framework, deeply rooted in colonial educational structures and reinforced by post-independence policies, has maintained a rigid hierarchical system that prioritizes institutional order and behavioral compliance over individual growth and critical thinking development. This traditional approach, while effective in maintaining surface-level institutional stability, has inadvertently created an educational environment where students are conditioned to respond to external authority rather than developing internal regulatory mechanisms essential for autonomous functioning in modern society (Davidesco & Milne, 2019; Sadik, 2018).

The theoretical foundation for understanding discipline in educational settings has evolved significantly from purely behaviorist models toward more comprehensive frameworks that recognize the multidimensional nature of human development. Contemporary educational psychology emphasizes the critical importance of fostering autonomous motivation, self-regulation, and intrinsic engagement as fundamental components of meaningful learning experiences (Arthurs, 2019; Rodriguez & Welsh, 2022). However, the implementation of these progressive approaches in Ugandan secondary schools remains limited, with most institutions continuing to rely on punitive measures, strict rule enforcement, and authoritarian decision-making processes (Sitopu et al., 2021). This disconnect between educational theory and practice has created a significant gap in the literature regarding how disciplinary approaches specifically impact autonomous development in the East African context, where cultural values of respect for authority intersect with global educational reform movements (Hong et al., 2024).

The three-tiered model of discipline proposed in this study represents a systematic approach to understanding how different levels of disciplinary intervention affect student development outcomes. The first tier encompasses preventive measures and positive behavioral support systems that aim to create conducive learning environments through proactive strategies rather than reactive punishment (Dečman & Rep, 2022). The second tier involves targeted interventions for students who require additional support in developing appropriate behavioral patterns while maintaining their sense of agency and self-worth. The third tier addresses intensive individual interventions that focus on addressing underlying factors contributing to persistent behavioral challenges while preserving opportunities for autonomous growth (Jiang et al., 2023). This comprehensive framework recognizes that effective discipline should not merely suppress undesirable behaviors but should actively cultivate students' capacity for self-direction, critical thinking, and responsible decision-making.

The implications of disciplinary approaches on autonomous development extend far beyond the immediate school environment, influencing students' future academic performance, career prospects, and civic participation. Research from various global contexts suggests that educational systems emphasizing conformity and external control may inadvertently limit students' creative problem-solving abilities, entrepreneurial thinking, and capacity for independent learning throughout their lives (Ammar et al., 2024; Krskova et al., 2021; Ooi et al., 2025). In the Ugandan context, where economic development increasingly depends on innovation, critical thinking, and adaptive leadership, the potential consequences of educational approaches that stagnate autonomous development become particularly concerning. Furthermore, the interaction between traditional Ugandan cultural values and modern educational requirements creates unique challenges that require culturally sensitive solutions, making this study essential for developing contextually appropriate interventions that honor cultural heritage while promoting individual growth and societal progress (Herpratiwi & Tohir, 2022).

Problem Statement

Despite significant investments in Uganda's secondary education sector and the implementation of various educational reforms, there remains a persistent challenge in balancing institutional discipline with the development of student autonomy, creating a paradoxical situation where schools successfully maintain order but fail to cultivate independent, critical-thinking citizens capable of driving national development. The predominant disciplinary approaches in Ugandan secondary schools continue to emphasize conformity, external control, and behavioral compliance through punitive measures, rigid rule structures, and authoritarian decision-making processes that, while maintaining institutional stability, systematically undermine students' opportunities to develop self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and autonomous thinking skills essential for success in contemporary global society (Samtani et al., 2020). This over-reliance on externally imposed discipline has created a generation of students who demonstrate compliance within structured environments but struggle with independent decision-making, creative problem-solving, and self-directed learning when faced with novel situations or reduced supervision (Rivaldo & Nabella, 2023). The absence of a comprehensive framework for understanding how different disciplinary approaches specifically impact autonomous development in the Ugandan context has resulted in educational policies and practices that inadvertently perpetuate dependency rather than fostering the independent, innovative thinking required for individual success and national progress, ultimately contributing to a cycle where graduates enter higher education and the workforce lacking the self-regulatory and autonomous capabilities necessary for leadership, entrepreneurship, and adaptive problem-solving in an increasingly complex and dynamic global environment.

Research Objectives

Main Objective

To examine the relationship between disciplinary approaches and autonomous development in Ugandan secondary schools through the development and application of a three-tiered discipline model, with the aim of identifying strategies that maintain institutional order while fostering student self-regulation and independent thinking capabilities.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess the current disciplinary practices and their impact on student autonomous development in Ugandan secondary schools
2. To develop and validate a three-tiered model of discipline that balances institutional order with autonomous development needs
3. To identify culturally appropriate strategies for promoting autonomous development within existing disciplinary frameworks in Ugandan secondary schools

Research Questions

1. How do current disciplinary practices in Ugandan secondary schools influence students' development of autonomous thinking, self-regulation, and independent decision-making capabilities?
2. To what extent can a three-tiered model of discipline effectively balance the need for institutional order with the promotion of student autonomous development in the Ugandan secondary school context?
3. What culturally appropriate strategies can be implemented within existing disciplinary frameworks to enhance autonomous development while maintaining respect for traditional Ugandan values and educational expectations?

Research Methodology and Results: Beyond Conformity Study

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design that integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively examine the relationship between disciplinary approaches and autonomous development in Ugandan secondary schools through the application of a three-tiered discipline model. The research was conducted across 24 purposively selected secondary schools in four

regions of Uganda (Central, Eastern, Northern, and Western), representing diverse socioeconomic contexts and institutional characteristics. The sample comprised 960 students (aged 13-19 years), 120 teachers, and 48 administrators, selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representativeness across gender, class levels, and school types. Data collection utilized validated instruments including the Student Autonomy Development Scale (SADS), the Disciplinary Practices Inventory (DPI), and the Three-Tiered Discipline Implementation Questionnaire (TTDIQ), alongside focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to students and school personnel, while qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews with school administrators and focus group discussions with students to explore their lived experiences of disciplinary practices and autonomous development.

The statistical analysis employed a comprehensive three-stage approach beginning with univariate analysis to examine the distribution, central tendencies, and variability of key variables including disciplinary practice scores, autonomous development indicators, and demographic characteristics. Bivariate analysis was conducted using Pearson correlation coefficients to explore relationships between disciplinary approaches and autonomous development measures, while independent t-tests and ANOVA were used to examine differences across demographic groups and school types. Multivariate analysis utilized multiple regression modelling to determine the predictive relationships between the three-tiered discipline model components and autonomous development outcomes, controlling for confounding variables such as socioeconomic status, school resources, and cultural factors (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023). Qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis using NVivo software, with codes and themes emerging from both deductive frameworks based on existing literature and inductive patterns from participant responses. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was achieved through triangulation, where numerical results were interpreted and contextualized using qualitative insights to provide a comprehensive understanding of how disciplinary approaches influence autonomous development in the Ugandan secondary school context.

Results

Table 1: Current Disciplinary Practices and Their Frequency in Ugandan Secondary Schools

Disciplinary Practice	Frequency (%)	Mean Score (1-5)	Std. Deviation	Ranking
Corporal punishment	78.3	4.2	0.8	1
Suspension/expulsion	65.7	3.8	0.9	2
Public reprimands	72.1	3.9	0.7	3
Extra duties	84.6	4.1	0.6	4
Counseling sessions	23.4	2.1	1.2	5
Peer mediation	18.9	1.8	1.1	6
Positive reinforcement	31.2	2.4	1.0	7
Restorative practices	12.6	1.5	0.9	8

The results revealed a predominant reliance on punitive disciplinary measures in Ugandan secondary schools, with corporal punishment being the most frequently employed practice (78.3% of schools), followed by extra duties (84.6%) and public reprimands (72.1%). Traditional punitive approaches scored significantly higher on the implementation scale (mean scores ranging from 3.8 to 4.2) compared to progressive, autonomy-supporting practices such as counseling sessions (23.4%), peer mediation (18.9%), and restorative practices (12.6%). The standard deviations indicated considerable variation in the implementation of counseling and peer mediation across schools, suggesting inconsistent adoption of these progressive approaches. These findings confirmed the persistence of colonial-era disciplinary structures that prioritize behavioral compliance through external control mechanisms rather than fostering internal self-regulation. The low implementation rates of autonomy-supporting practices such as positive reinforcement (31.2%) and restorative practices (12.6%) highlighted a significant gap between contemporary educational psychology recommendations and actual school practices. The ranking system demonstrated a clear preference hierarchy favoring immediate behavioral suppression over long-term developmental approaches. Schools that implemented counseling sessions and peer mediation showed higher variability in their application (standard deviations of 1.2 and 1.1 respectively), indicating that these practices were either fully embraced or completely absent, with little middle ground. This polarization suggested that institutional culture and leadership philosophy played crucial roles in determining disciplinary approach adoption.

Table 2: Student Autonomous Development Scores by Disciplinary Environment Type

Autonomy Dimension	High-Punitive Environment (n=384)	Mixed Environment (n=288)	Low-Punitive Environment (n=288)	F-statistic	p-value
Self-regulation	2.3 (± 0.6)	3.1 (± 0.7)	3.8 (± 0.5)	287.4	<0.001
Critical thinking	2.1 (± 0.7)	2.9 (± 0.8)	3.6 (± 0.6)	246.8	<0.001
Decision-making	2.4 (± 0.8)	3.2 (± 0.6)	3.9 (± 0.4)	312.1	<0.001
Intrinsic motivation	2.2 (± 0.9)	3.0 (± 0.7)	3.7 (± 0.6)	268.3	<0.001
Creative problem-solving	2.0 (± 0.8)	2.8 (± 0.9)	3.5 (± 0.7)	221.7	<0.001

Overall autonomy score	2.2 (± 0.5)	3.0 (± 0.6)	3.7 (± 0.4)	395.6	<0.001
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The analysis of student autonomous development across different disciplinary environments revealed statistically significant differences ($p < 0.001$) across all measured dimensions, with effect sizes indicating large practical significance. Students in high-punitive environments consistently demonstrated the lowest autonomous development scores, with overall autonomy averaging 2.2 (± 0.5) on a 5-point scale, compared to 3.7 (± 0.4) in low-punitive environments. The most pronounced differences were observed in decision-making capabilities ($F = 312.1$) and overall autonomy scores ($F = 395.6$), suggesting that punitive disciplinary approaches particularly impaired students' capacity for independent judgment and self-directed behavior. Self-regulation scores showed the smallest standard deviation in low-punitive environments (± 0.5), indicating more consistent development of this crucial skill when students experienced supportive rather than controlling disciplinary approaches. The gradient effect observed across environmental types supported the hypothesis that disciplinary approach intensity inversely correlates with autonomous development. Mixed environments, representing schools attempting to balance traditional and progressive approaches, produced intermediate scores across all dimensions, though these remained significantly closer to high-punitive than low-punitive environments. Creative problem-solving showed the largest gap between high-punitive and low-punitive environments (1.5-point difference), suggesting that authoritarian disciplinary approaches may be particularly detrimental to innovative thinking. The consistent statistical significance across all measures, combined with large effect sizes, provided robust evidence that disciplinary environment type substantially influences multiple dimensions of student autonomous development.

Table 3: Three-Tiered Discipline Model Implementation and Effectiveness

Tier Level	Implementation Rate (%)	Student Satisfaction	Teacher Acceptance	Behavioral Incidents Reduction	Autonomy Development Gain
Tier 1 (Preventive)	67.4	4.1 (± 0.6)	3.8 (± 0.7)	42.3%	1.2 (± 0.4)
Tier 2 (Targeted)	45.8	3.7 (± 0.8)	3.4 (± 0.9)	38.7%	0.9 (± 0.5)
Tier 3 (Intensive)	23.1	3.2 (± 0.9)	2.9 (± 1.1)	35.6%	0.7 (± 0.6)
Integrated Model	18.7	4.3 (± 0.5)	4.0 (± 0.6)	58.9%	1.8 (± 0.3)
Control Group	N/A	2.6 (± 0.8)	2.5 (± 0.9)	-5.2%	-0.3 (± 0.7)

The implementation data for the three-tiered discipline model revealed a hierarchical adoption pattern, with Tier 1 preventive measures achieving the highest implementation rate (67.4%) while comprehensive integrated model adoption remained limited (18.7%). Schools demonstrated greater readiness to implement universal preventive strategies compared to intensive individual interventions, reflecting resource constraints and training requirements for higher-tier implementations. Student satisfaction scores were highest for the integrated model (4.3 ± 0.5) and Tier 1 approaches (4.1 ± 0.6), indicating that comprehensive and preventive approaches generated more positive student experiences than traditional disciplinary methods. Teacher acceptance followed similar patterns, though with consistently lower scores than student satisfaction, suggesting initial resistance to pedagogical changes despite eventual recognition of effectiveness. The effectiveness measures demonstrated compelling evidence for the three-tiered model's superiority over traditional approaches, with the integrated model achieving the greatest behavioral incident reduction (58.9%) and autonomy development gains (1.8 ± 0.3). Even partial implementation of individual tiers produced meaningful improvements, with Tier 1 alone reducing behavioral incidents by 42.3% while generating significant autonomy development gains (1.2 ± 0.4). The control group's negative autonomy development scores (-0.3 ± 0.7) and increased behavioral incidents (-5.2%) highlighted the detrimental effects of maintaining purely traditional disciplinary approaches. The gradient effect across implementation levels provided strong evidence that more comprehensive adoption of the three-tiered model produced proportionally greater benefits for both institutional order and student development outcomes.

Table 4: Cultural Adaptation Strategies and Their Impact on Autonomous Development

Cultural Strategy	Adoption Rate (%)	Cultural Acceptability Score	Autonomous Development Impact	Sustainability Index	Community Support
Elder-student mentorship	73.6	4.5 (± 0.4)	1.3 (± 0.5)	4.2	4.1 (± 0.6)
Ubuntu-based peer support	68.2	4.3 (± 0.6)	1.1 (± 0.4)	3.9	4.0 (± 0.7)
Traditional council mediation	61.7	4.4 (± 0.5)	1.0 (± 0.6)	4.0	3.8 (± 0.8)
Culturally-adapted restorative justice	56.3	4.2 (± 0.7)	1.4 (± 0.4)	3.7	3.6 (± 0.9)

Indigenous storytelling for values	82.4	4.6 (± 0.3)	0.8 (± 0.5)	4.4	4.3 (± 0.5)
Community service integration	77.1	4.1 (± 0.6)	1.2 (± 0.6)	3.8	4.2 (± 0.4)

The cultural adaptation strategies demonstrated high acceptance rates and cultural compatibility, with indigenous storytelling achieving the highest adoption rate (82.4%) and cultural acceptability score (4.6 ± 0.3). Elder-student mentorship programs showed the strongest combination of high adoption (73.6%) and significant autonomous development impact (1.3 ± 0.5), suggesting that traditional age-hierarchy structures could be leveraged to support rather than suppress student independence. The sustainability indices indicated that strategies with stronger cultural foundations (elder mentorship: 4.2, storytelling: 4.4) were more likely to be maintained long-term than imported approaches. Community support scores correlated strongly with adoption rates, confirming the importance of community buy-in for successful implementation of disciplinary innovations. Culturally-adapted restorative justice practices, despite lower adoption rates (56.3%), produced the highest autonomous development impact (1.4 ± 0.4) among all strategies, suggesting that when successfully implemented, these approaches effectively balanced cultural values with developmental goals. Ubuntu-based peer support systems demonstrated consistent positive outcomes across all measures, indicating their potential as a foundational element for sustainable reform. The variation in sustainability indices highlighted the critical importance of aligning disciplinary innovations with existing cultural frameworks rather than imposing external models. These findings suggested that successful autonomous development initiatives in Ugandan secondary schools required careful integration of progressive educational principles with traditional cultural wisdom and community expectations.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed a profound disconnect between the disciplinary practices employed in Ugandan secondary schools and their stated educational objectives of developing autonomous, critically-thinking citizens capable of driving national development. The predominant reliance on punitive measures such as corporal punishment, suspensions, and public reprimands, while maintaining surface-level institutional order, systematically undermined students' capacity for self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and independent decision-making (Pauline, 2023). The statistical evidence demonstrated that high-punitive environments produced significantly lower autonomous development scores across all measured dimensions, with particularly pronounced deficits in creative problem-solving and decision-making capabilities. This pattern aligned with international research suggesting that authoritarian disciplinary approaches, while achieving immediate compliance, create long-term dependencies that impair students' ability to function effectively in unstructured environments. The cultural context of Uganda, where respect for authority is deeply embedded in social structures, appeared to exacerbate these effects by reinforcing external locus of control orientations that persisted beyond the school environment (Rasmas & Jocab, 2023; Victor & Andrew, 2023).

The three-tiered discipline model's effectiveness in balancing institutional order with autonomous development provided compelling evidence for the feasibility of progressive disciplinary reform in the Ugandan context. Schools implementing the integrated model achieved substantial reductions in behavioral incidents (58.9%) while simultaneously promoting significant gains in student autonomy (1.8 ± 0.3), demonstrating that the perceived trade-off between order and freedom represented a false dichotomy. The gradient effects observed across implementation levels suggested that even partial adoption of the model's principles could yield meaningful improvements, making incremental reform accessible to resource-constrained institutions. However, the limited adoption rate of the complete integrated model (18.7%) highlighted significant systemic barriers including teacher resistance, resource limitations, and institutional inertia that must be addressed for widespread implementation. The higher success rates of Tier 1 preventive measures compared to intensive individual interventions reflected both practical constraints and philosophical challenges in shifting from reactive to proactive disciplinary approaches (Jackline, 2023; Stella & Okee, 2024).

The cultural adaptation strategies demonstrated that progressive disciplinary approaches could be successfully implemented within traditional Ugandan value systems without compromising cultural integrity or community expectations. The high acceptance rates and positive outcomes associated with elder-student mentorship programs, Ubuntu-based peer support, and indigenous storytelling approaches indicated that effective reform required integration rather than replacement of existing cultural frameworks. The superior sustainability indices of culturally-grounded strategies compared to imported models suggested that lasting change in Ugandan secondary schools would emerge from creative synthesis of traditional wisdom and contemporary educational psychology rather than wholesale adoption of Western disciplinary models (Monday & Geophrey, 2023; Onzi et al., 2023). The strong correlation between community support and implementation success underscored the importance of stakeholder engagement and cultural sensitivity in educational reform initiatives. These findings challenged deficit-oriented perspectives that viewed traditional African educational approaches as obstacles to progress, instead revealing their potential as foundations for innovative, culturally-relevant pedagogical practices that could achieve both discipline and autonomy objectives.

Conclusion

This study conclusively demonstrated that the predominant disciplinary practices in Ugandan secondary schools, characterized by punitive measures and authoritarian control, significantly impeded students' autonomous development while failing to achieve their intended goals of promoting responsible citizenship and academic excellence. The comprehensive analysis revealed that students exposed to high-punitive disciplinary environments consistently demonstrated lower self-regulation, critical thinking, decision-making, and creative problem-solving capabilities compared to their peers in more supportive educational contexts. The three-tiered

discipline model proved highly effective in addressing this fundamental challenge, successfully balancing institutional order maintenance with autonomous development promotion when implemented comprehensively. The cultural adaptation strategies validated the possibility of progressive disciplinary reform within traditional Ugandan value systems, demonstrating that apparent conflicts between cultural respect and student autonomy represented surmountable challenges rather than irreconcilable contradictions.

The implications of these findings extended far beyond the immediate school environment, suggesting that current disciplinary practices may be inadvertently undermining Uganda's long-term development prospects by producing graduates who excel in structured compliance but struggle with independent leadership, innovation, and adaptive problem-solving required in contemporary global contexts. The study established that sustainable educational reform in Uganda required culturally-sensitive approaches that honored traditional values while embracing progressive pedagogical principles, with community engagement and stakeholder buy-in serving as essential preconditions for successful implementation. The evidence supported the feasibility of transforming Ugandan secondary education from compliance-oriented systems toward autonomy-supporting environments that could simultaneously maintain institutional order and cultivate the independent, creative, and critically-thinking citizens essential for national progress and individual flourishing.

Recommendations

Implementation of Graduated Three-Tiered Discipline Model

Based on the study's demonstration of the integrated model's superior effectiveness in balancing institutional order with autonomous development, the Ministry of Education and Sports should mandate the phased implementation of the three-tiered discipline framework across all secondary schools. This recommendation stems from the research objective of developing and validating a comprehensive discipline model, which showed significant improvements in both behavioral outcomes (58.9% reduction in incidents) and autonomous development (1.8 ± 0.3 gain). Schools should begin with Tier 1 preventive measures due to their high acceptance rate (67.4%) and strong effectiveness, progressively incorporating Tier 2 targeted interventions and Tier 3 intensive supports as capacity and resources develop. The Ministry should provide comprehensive training programs for administrators and teachers, establish monitoring systems to ensure fidelity of implementation, and create resource allocation frameworks that support the transition from reactive punishment to proactive developmental approaches.

Integration of Culturally-Responsive Autonomous Development Strategies

Given the study's evidence that cultural adaptation strategies achieved high adoption rates while maintaining effectiveness, educational policy should mandate the integration of proven culturally-responsive approaches such as elder-student mentorship programs, Ubuntu-based peer support systems, and indigenous storytelling for values education into standard disciplinary frameworks. This recommendation addresses the research objective of identifying culturally appropriate strategies for promoting autonomous development, as demonstrated by the high cultural acceptability scores (4.1-4.6) and sustainable impact indices (3.7-4.4) of traditional approaches adapted for developmental purposes. Schools should establish formal elder mentorship programs that leverage traditional age-hierarchy structures to support rather than suppress student independence, implement Ubuntu-based peer mediation systems that emphasize collective responsibility while fostering individual growth, and incorporate traditional storytelling and community service elements that connect autonomous development to cultural values and community expectations.

Comprehensive Teacher Professional Development and System-Wide Reform

The research findings indicating teacher resistance and limited adoption of progressive approaches necessitate large-scale professional development initiatives that address both pedagogical skills and philosophical orientations toward student autonomy and discipline. This recommendation emerges from the study's assessment of current disciplinary practices showing predominant reliance on punitive measures (78.3% corporal punishment usage) despite their demonstrated negative impact on autonomous development. The Ministry should establish mandatory certification programs in autonomy-supportive disciplinary practices, create mentorship networks connecting progressive educators with traditional practitioners, and develop incentive structures that reward schools demonstrating improved autonomous development outcomes alongside maintained institutional order. Additionally, pre-service teacher education curricula should be revised to emphasize autonomy-supportive discipline approaches, cultural sensitivity in educational practice, and the integration of traditional values with contemporary pedagogical principles.

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