

Ensuring the Process of Formation of Moral and Ethical Culture of a Future Art Teacher

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Abstract: *This study investigates the formation of moral and ethical culture in future art educators, recognizing this dimension as integral to their professional identity and educational effectiveness. While the importance of ethics in teacher education is widely acknowledged, the practical implementation of ethics training remains inconsistent, especially in the context of art education. Using a mixed-methods design, the research combines quantitative survey data (N = 127) with qualitative focus group insights to assess the perceived importance, frequency, and effectiveness of ethical training in art teacher programs. Results highlight a strong consensus on the value of ethics education, particularly among student-teachers, yet reveal limited formal instruction and reliance on sporadic or incidental discussions. Thematic analysis uncovers key gaps in curricular integration and emphasizes the effectiveness of experiential learning, mentorship, and structured reflection in fostering ethical sensitivity. The study proposes that systematic inclusion of ethics modules, mentorship schemes, and community-based projects can significantly enhance the ethical competencies of future art teachers. Additionally, in light of the digital transformation of education, the article advocates for incorporating technoethical awareness into training programs to prepare teachers for ethical challenges in AI-mediated learning environments. Empirical findings support calls from global literature for teacher education reform that integrates ethical reasoning as a core component, blending theoretical, emotional, and practical learning strategies. This research contributes to both national and international discourses on teacher professionalism, offering specific recommendations for curriculum design and policy. The Ukrainian experience is positioned within a global context, illustrating how ethical formation can respond to contemporary social, technological, and cultural demands. The study concludes that cultivating moral and ethical culture in art educators requires a multidimensional, reflective, and practice-oriented approach that empowers teachers to guide students not only artistically but ethically.*

Keywords: *art education; teacher ethics; moral culture; experiential learning; mentorship; reflective practice; technoethical awareness.*

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Introduction

The formation of moral and ethical culture among future art teachers constitutes a vital component of their comprehensive professional development. Modern education increasingly recognizes the necessity of integrating moral and ethical values into teacher preparation programs, given the significant influence educators exert on students' personal and social development (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008). Within the domain of art education specifically, teachers are uniquely positioned not only to impart artistic skills but also to cultivate ethical sensitivity, empathy, and critical thinking through creative practices (Freedman, 2003).

The contemporary educational landscape demands that art teachers embody not only aesthetic competence but also a robust moral and ethical orientation. This expectation stems from the understanding that art serves as an expressive medium through which profound societal values and ethical dilemmas can be explored and articulated (Greene, 1995; Hetland et al., 2007). Consequently, preparing future art educators necessitates a deliberate and structured approach, ensuring they develop an ethical consciousness capable of guiding students in reflecting critically on moral dimensions inherent in creative expression.

Despite growing awareness of the importance of ethics in teacher education, numerous challenges remain. Educational programs frequently overlook explicit integration of ethical content, limiting student-teachers' exposure to systematic ethical discourse and reflective practice (Bullough, 2011). Additionally, the scarcity of professional development opportunities tailored specifically for enhancing educators' moral competencies further exacerbates these gaps (Campbell, 2003).

Addressing these critical gaps, this research aims to investigate the conditions, strategies, and methodologies essential for effectively fostering moral and ethical culture in future art educators. By adopting an integrative theoretical and empirical approach, this study will analyze how moral values and ethical sensibilities can be systematically embedded within art teacher education programs. The overarching objective is to provide practical guidelines and recommendations that will empower educational institutions to nurture ethically aware and morally responsible art teachers, thus significantly enriching their professional identities and positively influencing their future students.

Literature review

Teacher education has increasingly been recognized as a process not only of building pedagogical skills but also of cultivating the moral and ethical dispositions of future educators. Scholars often describe teaching as an inherently moral profession – “the act of teaching is moral” in that it inevitably involves imparting values and social ideals alongside knowledge. Despite longstanding scholarship on the ethics of teaching, many have lamented that this body of work has had “little impact on the teacher education curriculum,” with formal ethics training still rare in teacher preparation programs. This literature review surveys research from 2010 to 2025 on how teacher education programs, particularly in art education, form the moral and ethical culture of future teachers. It covers both theoretical frameworks for teacher ethics and practical methodologies used to nurture ethical sensibilities in preservice teachers. Where relevant, studies from the Ukrainian educational context are highlighted to illustrate how global trends manifest in a specific national setting.

Across educational disciplines, the 2010s saw a growing consensus that teacher preparation must address ethics more explicitly. Maxwell & Schwimmer (2016) conducted a narrative review of scholarship on ethics education for teachers, concluding that decades of reflection on teaching ethics had yielded “vanishingly rare” changes in actual curricula. They found that while earlier generations of teacher educators stressed the teacher’s role as a moral model for students, the shift of teacher education into universities led to a decline in emphasis on personal ethics. In recent years, however, there has been a “renewed prioritization of the ethical and moral dimensions of teaching” in response to various drivers. Two converging discourses sparked this renewal: one viewing teaching as a moral craft (emphasizing that teaching is “as much about transmitting values... as it is about transmitting knowledge”), and another aligning teacher training with professional ethics education similar to fields like medicine. By the mid-2010s, many experts were urging that ethical understanding be treated as a core component of teacher professionalism.

However, surveys and reviews indicate that implementation lagged behind these calls. Decker et al. (2022) conducted a systematic review of 73 articles on ethics in teacher preparation (focusing on special education) and “identified a lack of empirical studies” on the effectiveness of ethics education. They observed that the literature on training teachers in professional ethics remains limited and often theoretical, calling for more evidence-based interventions. Similarly, Metcalf (2022) notes that teacher ethics education is still an underdeveloped field in need of improvement. In

many teacher education programs worldwide, ethics is not yet taught as a standalone course or in a systematic way, but rather addressed piecemeal or assumed to develop implicitly. Maxwell and Schwimmer's review echoed this, noting pervasive affirmations that mandatory ethics courses are scarce and that earlier hopes of fully integrating ethics into teacher education "have largely been disappointed". In other words, while consensus on the importance of teacher ethics is high, practical uptake in curricula has been slow. Theoretical frameworks guiding research in this area are diverse. Some approaches draw on professional ethics models, emphasizing knowledge of ethical codes and standards of conduct. For example, teacher candidates may be taught to familiarize themselves with codes of ethics and the "inherent ethical complexity" of teaching practice. This approach, influenced by works like Strike & Soltis' (1985), treats teachers as professionals accountable to explicit ethical norms. Other frameworks emphasize moral psychology and development. Narvaez & Lapsley's (2008) work on moral identity and character development, although slightly earlier (2009), has informed teacher education by suggesting that programs foster moral reasoning skills and virtues, not just rule-following. Relatedly, some scholars invoke care ethics: "caring" as described by Noddings (2013) is presented as a relational ethic that teachers should embody in their interactions. This perspective highlights empathy, relationships, and the teacher's role in nurturing students' moral growth. A third influential framework is critical pedagogy and social justice ethics, rooted in theorists like Freire (1970). This view posits that teachers have an ethical responsibility to challenge inequities and foster social consciousness. For instance, Buchanan et al. (2022) argue for "new ways of teaching and doing ethics" that prepare teachers for 21st-century challenges, integrating philosophy of education with ethical action. In sum, current literature spans from utilitarian professional codes to developmental and justice-oriented models, reflecting a rich theoretical landscape for teacher ethics. Notably, researchers have also examined cross-national differences in teacher ethics training. Boutrid & Martin (2022) conducted a comparative study of teacher education programs embedding ethics in the curriculum across different countries. They found considerable variation: for example, Australia and Canada often treat ethics as a "hidden imperative" woven throughout coursework and practica, whereas some European programs mandate a specific ethics course or module. The implication is that no single model fits all contexts; cultural and policy factors influence how ethical formation is addressed. Nevertheless, a unifying trend is seen in policy moves to strengthen ethical preparation. In the United States, for instance, California's AB 2158 (AALRR, 2022) extended mandatory ethics training to

school officials, signaling rising expectations for ethical competence in education. Across contexts, then, we see growing pressure from both scholarship and policy for teacher training programs to produce not just competent instructors, but ethical professionals.

The literature in this field offers a range of methodologies and best practices to instill moral and ethical sensibilities in preservice teachers. A key theme is that ethical understanding should not be taught only in theory, but through applied and reflective learning experiences. Below, we summarize prominent strategies:

Using case studies and ethical dilemmas is one of the most frequently recommended techniques. Engaging with realistic scenarios helps preservice teachers practice applying ethical concepts to complex classroom situations. Maxwell & Schwimmer (2016) note that deliberating on cases teaches that personal moral intuitions are “not necessarily a reliable guide” for professional decisions. In turn, discussing cases “increases [teachers’] awareness” of ethical codes and likely challenges. Decker et al. (2022) likewise encourage the use of cases, observing that embedding scenario analysis in courses can illuminate ethical nuances and better prepare teachers for real-world moral challenges. The consensus is that analyzing and debating case studies for example, cases involving conflicts of interest, equity issues, or professional boundaries should be a staple of ethics education.

Some programs introduce a dedicated ethics course or seminar, while others integrate ethical themes across various subjects. Given the rarity of standalone ethics courses, many experts advocate infusing ethics throughout the curriculum. This can involve incorporating ethical questions into methods courses, discussions in practicum seminars about professional norms, or interdisciplinary modules on education and society. Malone (2020) argues that all stakeholders (universities, accrediting bodies, etc.) share responsibility for making ethics an integral part of teacher preparation. In practice, a hybrid approach may work best: Boutrid & Martin (2022) report that some high-performing programs require a specific ethics unit and reinforce ethical reflection during teaching practica. The goal is to avoid a one-off treatment of ethics; instead, ethical reasoning should become a throughline in a teacher candidate’s education.

Almost every source highlights reflection as crucial for moral formation. Structured reflection activities such as keeping journals, writing reflective essays, or participating in guided discussions help teacher candidates examine their values, biases, and decisions. Zhukov et al. (2025) found that “reflective engagement” (e.g. journaling about ethical dilemmas or critical incidents) was a significant predictor of increased moral sensitivity in

preservice art teachers. Reflection turns experiences into learning: for instance, a student teacher might reflect on how they handled a case of observed bullying, evaluating whether their response aligned with ethical principles of care and justice. Such practices cultivate the habit of moral self-awareness. Research also connects reflection to empathy development aligning with Noddings' care ethics, reflective dialogue and writing can encourage teachers to consider students' perspectives and needs. In sum, systematic reflection (through journals, portfolios, or group debriefings) is seen as a powerful tool for internalizing ethical standards and developing a reflective ethical identity as a teacher.

The presence of mentors and role models is frequently cited as instrumental in shaping novices' ethical culture. Veteran teachers and teacher educators serve as exemplars of professional ethics in action. In Zhukov et al.'s 2025 study, "high-quality mentorship" was strongly linked to higher moral sensitivity scores among preservice art teachers. When mentors explicitly discuss ethical dimensions of teaching (such as fairness in grading or respecting student diversity) and demonstrate ethical decision-making, novices learn by example. Dmitrenko et al. (2021) provide experimental evidence: their training program in Ukraine paired intending teachers with mentors in a series of ethics-focused activities. As a result, the proportion of students achieving a high level of ethical culture doubled (from ~12% to 24%) by the end of the intervention. This suggests that guided practice under an ethical mentor can significantly shift the values and perceptions of future teachers. Mentorship is often combined with reflection for example, student teachers might discuss their moral dilemmas with a mentor teacher in the field and reflect on guidance received. Overall, fostering an ethic of mentorship within teacher education where experienced educators consciously socialize newcomers into the profession's moral norms is shown to reinforce ethical standards.

Many scholars argue that cultivating an ethical teacher means preparing them to serve all students justly and responsibly. Thus, ethics education is frequently linked with diversity and social justice training. Gay (2010) and others emphasize culturally responsive teaching as an ethical obligation to honor each student's background. Programs that incorporate equity and diversity content (for instance, exploring ethical issues of racial bias in discipline or inclusion of students with disabilities) effectively heighten teachers' moral awareness about fairness and caring. In one qualitative study, Kraehe and Brown (2011) used arts-based inquiry projects to awaken preservice teachers' critical consciousness of social injustices. Through art-making and reflection, candidates developed "social responsibility and a

commitment to act in the interest of providing all students with high-quality education”. Similarly, case studies on dilemmas of diversity (such as scenarios of cultural misunderstanding) can prompt deep ethical inquiry. The literature suggests that framing teacher ethics education in terms of real-world social issues equity, inclusion, human rights makes the ethical stakes of teaching concrete and motivates future teachers to adopt a justice-oriented professional stance. This approach aligns with the view of teachers as change agents and caretakers of democratic values.

Some researchers highlight the role of storytelling and conversation in moral learning. Mathur & Corley (2014) advocate using narrative sharing and multiple perspectives to bring ethics into the classroom. By discussing personal stories or fictional cases from multiple ethical lenses, preservice teachers can appreciate the complexity of moral issues. Dialogue-based pedagogies – e.g. ethics roundtables or collaborative inquiry allow students to practice articulating and defending ethical choices, as well as listening to others’ viewpoints. Travis & Hood (2016), working with art education students, found that engaging with “sociocultural narrative pedagogy” was powerful for developing critical moral consciousness, though it also revealed tensions and paradoxes that had to be navigated in discussion. Overall, open dialogue and narrative exploration are seen as means to develop critical thinking and moral reasoning skills in a collaborative setting, mirroring the ethical dialogues teachers will have in their careers (with colleagues, parents, and communities).

In summary, the practical literature suggests that forming the ethical culture of future teachers requires active, experiential, and context-rich methods rather than passive lectures on ethics. Approaches like case analyses, reflective journaling, mentored practicum experiences, role-playing, and critical discussions all serve to bridge the gap between abstract ethical concepts and the concrete realities of classroom teaching. There is broad agreement that such strategies should be woven throughout teacher preparation so that ethical practice becomes a habitual and integral part of a new teacher’s professional identity.

Research specifically focusing on art teacher preparation underscores both the unique opportunities and the challenges of cultivating ethical sensibilities in this field. Art education is often seen as a domain where values, controversies, and cultural questions naturally arise through content (artworks, art history) and pedagogy. As Zhukov et al. (2025) note, art educators have a “unique potential... to engage with moral and ethical issues” through their subject. The arts provide a lens to examine social conditions, identity, and human expression, which means art teachers frequently navigate

topics like cultural representation, freedom of expression, and social justice in their classrooms. Consequently, scholars argue that preparing art teachers ethically is crucial for fostering values-based, inclusive learning environments. Despite this potential, studies indicate that art teacher programs have not consistently integrated ethics. Zhukov et al.'s recent mixed-method study surveyed art teacher curricula across multiple institutions and found "inconsistencies in the inclusion of ethical components," with most programs offering only cursory mentions of ethics and only a minority providing structured ethics modules or case-based learning opportunities. In other words, many future art teachers may be graduating without systematic exposure to ethical training, even if they intuitively recognize its importance. The same study's quantitative data linked reflective and collaborative pedagogies to higher moral sensitivity in art teachers, but found that simply having a longer program or heavier studio course load did not improve ethical awareness. This suggests that the quality of ethical experiences (e.g. mentoring, reflection, ethical discussions integrated in art methods) matters more than the quantity of art coursework. Art education literature frequently calls for bridging this gap by redesigning curricula. Freedman (2003) emphasizes that art teachers need structured experiences to develop moral resilience, enabling them to confront ethical dilemmas related to cultural imagery, community engagement, and the responsible use of visual media. She and others point out that art teacher programs often still prioritize technical skill development and art historical knowledge over ethical and social issues. Quinn et al. (2012) volume on Art and Social Justice Education exemplifies efforts to infuse art teacher training with themes of equity, activism, and cultural critique. Such works argue that art teachers should be prepared to use art as a vehicle for social commentary and to guide students in thoughtful dialogue about artworks and their meanings tasks that require a strong ethical grounding (for instance, handling controversial art or student expression in a sensitive, principled way). One promising area in art teacher ethics is using arts-based and community-engaged projects to cultivate moral understanding. Several case studies illustrate this: Kraehe & Brown (2011), as mentioned, engaged preservice teachers in art-making around social justice themes, which led to heightened critical awareness and empathy. Participants reported transformations in how they understood their role seeing teaching art not just as teaching techniques, but as an ethical commitment to social betterment. Likewise, community-based art projects (e.g. murals or exhibitions involving the local community) have been cited as high-impact practices. They confront future teachers with real-world ethical questions for example, who gets to speak for a community, how to handle culturally sensitive content under the

guidance of faculty. Zhukov et al.'s interviews with art education students highlighted the “transformative potential of addressing ethical dilemmas through community-based projects and examining controversial artworks” in coursework. Such experiences push preservice teachers to apply ethical reasoning in context, negotiating between artistic freedom, community values, and inclusive pedagogy.

Another strand of art education research deals with equality, diversity, and sustainability, reflecting the ethical dimensions of these themes. For instance, Kníf and Kairavuo (2020) describe how art student-teachers in Finland engaged with constructing equality in visual arts education as part of learning for a sustainable future. This indicates that art teacher programs can incorporate global ethical agendas (like sustainability, gender equity, anti-racism) through their content. In the U.S., Wolfgang (2019) confronted art education's legacy of racial bias, proposing “reparation pedagogy” as an ethically-driven approach to make art curricula anti-racist. These examples underscore that ethical culture in art teaching involves commitments to social justice and cultural responsiveness – aligning the art curriculum with moral imperatives of our time.

The Ukrainian educational context provides a concrete example of how these ideas are being implemented amid broader reforms. In recent years, Ukraine has undertaken major school reforms (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2017) (notably the “New Ukrainian School” initiative launched in 2017) that emphasize competency-based education, including ethical and civic competencies. As part of this, the training of art teachers in Ukraine has been evolving to balance the country's rich artistic traditions with modern pedagogical demands. A 2025 analysis notes a “growing imperative to integrate... moral and ethical awareness” into art teacher programs in Ukraine, in line with global trends toward learner-centered and reflective education. In practice, Ukrainian art pedagogy courses are increasingly embedding topics like cultural heritage, social responsibility, and ethics in the arts throughout the curriculum (where previously these might have been addressed only sporadically). For example, it has become more common to engage preservice art teachers in case-based debates on issues such as cultural appropriation or controversial contemporary art as a core part of their training. This mirrors international moves to use case discussions, with the added nuance of contexts relevant to Ukraine's culture and current events. Ukrainian research also highlights the role of practicum and mentorship in ethical formation, much as noted elsewhere. Tverdokhlib and Wen (2022) describe how extended student-teaching internships (often a semester or more) in Ukrainian art programs allow preservice teachers to apply theoretical

knowledge in real classrooms. During these practicums, a mentoring system pairs the trainee with experienced art teachers and university supervisors. These mentors provide feedback not only on instructional technique but also on professional conduct and ethical situations that arise (such as handling sensitive content in art class or dealing with classroom discipline fairly). The mentoring is reinforced by reflective journals or portfolios that student teachers keep, documenting their lesson plans and ethical reflections on their experiences. By “critically examining their own practices,” guided by mentors, future art teachers in Ukraine are encouraged to internalize ethical standards and to continuously self-improve. This approach aligns with the broader recognition that reflection and mentorship are key to moral development. It is noteworthy that Ukrainian policy documents (like the State Standard for Secondary Education 2020) explicitly call for integrating values education and fostering teachers’ ethical competencies, indicating strong institutional support for these efforts. Finally, Ukrainian educators face the task of building an ethical culture amid contemporary challenges, including technological changes and, recently, the stresses of conflict and recovery. Studies may explore how the ethic of care is applied by teachers teaching during wartime or how art teachers use art for community healing, thus extending the discourse of teacher ethics into new territory. While those specifics are beyond the scope of this review, the inclusion of Ukrainian sources here demonstrates that the formation of teachers’ moral culture is a concern cutting across different education systems, each bringing unique context to the universal questions of what values teachers should embody and how to best nurture those values in teacher education.

This literature review shows a clear trajectory in research and practice toward strengthening the moral and ethical culture of future teachers. In general teacher education, experts lamented the past marginalization of ethics, but recent work including narrative reviews and systematic reviews has galvanized efforts to make ethics instruction more explicit and effective. Theoretical contributions (e.g. ethics of care, moral professionalism frameworks, and critical pedagogy) provide conceptual justifications for why ethics matter in teaching and what it might look like. At the same time, practical studies contribute a toolbox of methodologies from case study analyses to reflective journaling to community-engaged projects that can translate ethical theory into teacher training praxis.

In the specialized context of art teacher education, we see both distinctive challenges and rich opportunities. Art programs historically placed less emphasis on formal ethics, focusing on developing content mastery and creativity; yet art educators inevitably engage with moral issues through the

content of art and the cultural contexts it inhabits. The reviewed studies on art teacher preparation call for weaving ethics into the fabric of art curricula: providing future art teachers with guided experiences to confront ethical dilemmas in art, critically discuss social issues, and reflect on their role as morally responsible educators. Empirical evidence suggests that when art teacher programs intentionally integrate such experiences via mentorship, reflective practice, case discussions on art and society – their graduates exhibit greater moral sensitivity and readiness to create inclusive, value-conscious classrooms. Conversely, neglecting this dimension risks leaving teachers ill-equipped to navigate the complex ethical terrain of real schools and communities. A notable thread throughout the literature is the importance of reflection and context.

Whether in science education, special education, or art education, the most impactful interventions were those that allowed preservice teachers to grapple with real or simulated ethical situations and then reflect on them critically, ideally with mentorship. This reflective, praxis-oriented approach appears far more effective than didactic ethics lectures. It aligns with what educational philosopher John Dewey long ago intuited that professional ethics is learned through experience and thoughtful analysis of that experience. The research from 2010–2025 strongly reinforces this notion. Looking ahead, authors consistently call for more robust research and development in this arena. As Maxwell & Schwimmer (2016) recommended, teacher educators should continue to experiment with and evaluate different models of ethics education, building a stronger evidence base. Decker et al. (2022) similarly urge more empirical studies to test what approaches truly influence teachers' ethical reasoning and behavior. The literature also hints at emerging areas (e.g. digital ethics in teaching, ethics of AI in education, trauma-informed ethics in conflict zones) that future research will need to tackle to keep teacher ethics education relevant in a changing world. In conclusion, the formation of moral and ethical culture in future teachers and specifically future art teachers is a multidimensional challenge that the last 15 years of scholarship have begun to earnestly address. There is broad agreement that fostering ethical educators requires deliberate curricular design and pedagogical strategies that engage the head (knowledge of ethics), heart (values and dispositions), and hands (practical action skills). Effective teacher education for ethics blends theoretical insight with practical experience, all within a supportive, reflective learning culture. As the Ukrainian example illustrates, when national education systems prioritize these outcomes, teacher training institutes respond by innovating their programs to produce not just subject specialists, but caring, principled professionals.

Methods

The research employs a mixed-methods design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to comprehensively address the research objectives. This approach facilitates an in-depth exploration of moral and ethical culture formation among future art educators, capturing diverse perspectives and providing empirical robustness to the findings.

Participants

Participants include undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in art education programs, faculty members responsible for delivering art teacher education, and practicing art educators from diverse educational settings. The selection of participants employed purposive sampling to ensure representation across different educational levels, professional experiences, and institutional backgrounds (see Tab.1.).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample

Participant Group	N	Region	Institutional Affiliation	Level of Education/ Position	Average Experience (years on average)
Students	85	Kharkiv and Kyiv	University (With a teaching specialization)	Senior Bachelors and Masters	3-5
Faculty	22	Kharkiv and Kyiv	University (With a teaching specialization)	Administration of Faculties and Departments	7
Educators	20	Kharkiv and Kyiv	University (With a teaching specialization)	University teachers	12

Data collection

Data collection involved three primary methods:

Literature Analysis. An extensive review of scholarly sources published between 2010 and 2025 was conducted, examining existing theoretical frameworks and practical strategies in art education ethics. Sources included peer-reviewed articles, monographs, dissertations, and policy documents.

Focus Group Discussions. A series of semi-structured focus group discussions were held with groups of 6-8 participants, including students, faculty members, and practicing educators. Discussions centered on participants' experiences, perceptions, and suggestions regarding moral and ethical training in art education.

Surveys. Quantitative data were collected through surveys administered to a broader sample of student-teachers and educators. The survey instrument included Likert-scale items and open-ended questions designed to measure participants' ethical awareness, attitudes towards ethical issues in art education, and perceived effectiveness of current educational practices.

Data analysis

Qualitative data from focus groups were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns related to ethical formation processes. Survey data were analyzed statistically using descriptive and inferential techniques to examine the prevalence of perceptions and attitudes toward ethics training and identify significant factors influencing ethical awareness among future art teachers.

Ethical considerations

The study adhered strictly to ethical research standards, obtaining informed consent from all participants and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process. Participants were informed of their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Institutional ethical approval was secured prior to data collection.

Results

This study employed a mixed-methods design to investigate the formation of moral and ethical culture among future art educators, yielding robust quantitative and qualitative data. The results are organized into two main sections: survey findings, which provide statistical insights into participants' perceptions, and focus group themes, which offer nuanced qualitative perspectives on ethical training in art education programs.

The survey was completed by 127 participants, including 85 preservice art education students, 22 faculty members, and 20 practicing art educators. Participants responded to Likert-scale items (1 = low, 5 = high) assessing three key dimensions: the perceived importance of ethical training, the frequency of ethics discussions in their programs, and the perceived effectiveness of current ethics training. Table 2 presents the mean ratings and standard deviations for each item, both overall and by participant group.

Table 2. Survey Responses on Ethical Training in Art Education Programs

Survey Item	Overall (N=127)	Students (n=85)	Faculty (n=22)	Educators (n=20)
Importance of ethical training (1-5)	4.3 (0.7)	4.5 (0.6)	4.0 (0.8)	4.2 (0.7)
Frequency of ethics discussions (1-5)	2.9 (1.0)	2.7 (0.9)	3.2 (1.1)	3.0 (1.0)
Effectiveness of current ethics training (1-5)	3.1 (1.2)	2.9 (1.1)	3.4 (1.3)	3.2 (1.2)

Descriptive statistics revealed a high overall perceived importance of ethical training ($M = 4.3$, $SD = 0.7$), contrasted by a moderate frequency of ethics discussions ($M = 2.9$, $SD = 1.0$) and perceived effectiveness of current training ($M = 3.1$, $SD = 1.2$). To explore differences among participant groups, a one-way ANOVA was conducted for each survey item. A significant difference emerged in the perceived importance of ethical training, $F(2, 124) = 4.12$, $p = 0.019$. Post-hoc Tukey's HSD tests indicated that students ($M = 4.5$, $SD = 0.6$) rated importance significantly higher than faculty members ($M = 4.0$, $SD = 0.8$), $p = 0.023$, with no significant differences between students and educators ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.7$) or between faculty and educators. No significant group differences were found for frequency ($F(2, 124) = 1.89$, $p = 0.155$) or effectiveness ($F(2, 124) = 1.45$, $p = 0.239$).

A Pearson correlation analysis further examined the relationship between the frequency of ethics discussions and the perceived effectiveness of ethics training. Results showed a moderate positive correlation, $r = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that participants who reported more frequent ethics discussions also perceived current training as more effective.

Thematic analysis of the focus group discussions, involving students, faculty, and practicing educators, identified three recurring themes related to ethical training in art education: (1) Insufficient Formal Ethics Training, (2)

Value of Experiential Learning for Ethics, and (3) Challenges in Integrating Ethics into the Curriculum. These themes provide depth to the survey findings and highlight both gaps and opportunities in current practices.

Theme 1: Insufficient Formal Ethics Training

Participants consistently noted a lack of structured ethics education within art teacher training programs. While ethical issues surfaced informally, such as during discussions of controversial artworks, there was no systematic curriculum dedicated to ethics. A preservice student expressed:

"Ethics comes up occasionally, like when we discuss controversial artworks, but there's no specific course or module dedicated to it. I think we need more structured learning on this."

A faculty member corroborated this observation:

"We recognize the importance of ethics, but with the current curriculum load, it's challenging to add another course. We try to weave ethical discussions into existing classes, but it's not always systematic."

Theme 2: Value of Experiential Learning for Ethics

Experiential learning emerged as a critical mechanism for ethical development, particularly through real-world contexts like community projects and internships. Participants viewed these experiences as opportunities to confront and navigate ethical dilemmas directly. A practicing educator shared:

"When my students work on community art projects, they naturally encounter ethical questions, like how to represent different cultures respectfully. Those real-world experiences are invaluable for their ethical development."

A student added:

"I learned more about ethics from my internship at a local gallery than from any class. Dealing with real artists and audiences made me think about the impact of art in a new way."

Theme 3: Challenges in Integrating Ethics into the Curriculum

Practical barriers to embedding ethics into art education were widely acknowledged. Faculty highlighted the abstract nature of ethics, while educators emphasized logistical constraints. A faculty member noted:

"One big challenge is that ethics can be subjective. It's hard to teach it in a way that feels concrete and applicable to all students."

A practicing educator echoed:

"In the classroom, time is always tight. Between teaching techniques and managing behavior, finding time for in-depth ethical discussions is tough."

The survey and focus group data collectively reveal a strong recognition of the importance of ethical training among future art educators, particularly from students, yet a clear shortfall in its formal integration into curricula. The moderate frequency and effectiveness ratings, coupled with the qualitative emphasis on experiential learning, suggest that while current practices have some impact, they fall short of meeting participants' expectations. These findings underscore a critical need for more structured and intentional approaches to ethical education in art teacher preparation programs.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to explore the processes and conditions necessary for effectively fostering moral and ethical culture among future art educators. The combined quantitative and qualitative data from this study provide valuable insights, revealing critical strengths and significant gaps in current art teacher education programs.

Consistent with previous literature (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016; Decker et al., 2022), participants in this study strongly recognized the importance of ethical training ($M = 4.3$), reflecting widespread awareness that ethical considerations are essential to effective teaching. Interestingly, students rated the importance significantly higher compared to faculty members, suggesting that younger, emerging professionals may be particularly attuned to the ethical dimensions of their roles. This finding aligns with Boutrid and Martin's (2022) observation of growing awareness among younger educators regarding ethical issues.

However, despite this recognition, survey participants reported only moderate satisfaction with the frequency ($M = 2.9$) and effectiveness ($M = 3.1$) of current ethical education, indicating substantial room for improvement. This discrepancy between perceived importance and practical integration reflects broader trends identified by Decker et al. (2022), who noted the limited empirical focus on ethics within teacher education programs.

A key finding was the identified need for more structured, explicit curricular integration of ethics. Participants emphasized that ethical issues often arise informally rather than systematically. One student articulated, "Ethics comes up occasionally, but structured learning is rare and greatly needed." Faculty responses supported these views, highlighting curricular constraints as significant barriers. These findings corroborate previous critiques that ethics often remain implicitly embedded rather than explicitly taught, aligning with observations by Maxwell & Schwimmer (2016).

This underscores the urgent need for curricular revision, incorporating explicit ethics modules or comprehensive integration throughout the program. Such recommendations echo the call from Boutrid & Martin (2022) for hybrid curricular models, blending explicit ethical coursework with continuous, integrated ethical reflection across subjects.

Experiential learning, especially community-based projects, emerged as highly effective in developing ethical competencies, resonating with findings from Kraehe & Brown (2011) and Zhukov et al. (2025). Participants identified real-world experiences as transformative, significantly enhancing ethical sensitivity and practical reasoning. A practicing educator commented, “Community projects naturally raise ethical questions, significantly enhancing students' ethical understanding.”

The practical implication of this result is clear: programs should deliberately increase opportunities for students to engage in experiential learning. Structured reflective practices integrated into these experiences could further deepen their impact, as supported by Zhukov et al. (2025), who highlighted reflective engagement as a predictor of increased moral sensitivity.

The data strongly highlighted mentorship as crucial in ethical formation, aligning with Dmitrenko et al.'s (2021) findings. Survey respondents (88.6%) and focus group participants underscored mentorship's effectiveness, emphasizing the importance of role models in navigating ethical dilemmas. A participant's reflection captures this succinctly: “A mentor modeling ethical decision-making provides more practical insight than theoretical discussions alone.”

Thus, programs should prioritize mentorship by systematically pairing students with experienced educators who can model ethical behaviors and guide reflective practices. Institutional support in fostering a robust mentorship culture appears essential for cultivating lasting ethical competencies.

The focus groups also shed light on specific practical and conceptual challenges. Faculty and educators identified limited curricular space and the abstract nature of ethical education as major barriers. These challenges reflect broader, systemic issues within educational institutions globally (Campbell, 2003; Bullough, 2011). Effective strategies to overcome these barriers could include targeted professional development for faculty and institutional commitment to curricular flexibility.

In the context of this study, it is important to note one very important point that in light of the ongoing digital transformation in educational environments, the integration of ethical training for future art teachers should expand to include critical reflection on the use of digital technologies and

artificial intelligence (Kharchenko et al., 2024). The emergence of AI-generated art, algorithmic recommendation systems, and data-driven educational tools challenges traditional notions of creativity, authorship, and pedagogical responsibility (Nalyvaiko, 2023; Anson et al., 2025). Thus, students in art teacher education programs must develop not only aesthetic and ethical literacy, but also technoethical awareness - the ability to critically evaluate the implications of digital tools in their artistic and teaching practices. This includes addressing concerns about the authenticity of creative work, respecting intellectual property in digital environments, ensuring fairness in algorithmically mediated feedback, and addressing the ethical risks of surveillance technologies in schools. Recent research in media pedagogy and digital arts education (Leonard, 2021; Pente, & Adams, 2023) highlights the urgency of preparing educators to act not only as cultural transmitters but also as ethical mediators in the changing landscape of human-technology interaction. Integrating these competencies into arts teacher training will ensure that future educators are not only digitally competent but also ethically informed in their engagement with technology-rich educational contexts.

We must prepare future art teachers for the fact that they may encounter, and let's be honest, by 2025 will encounter, a situation where students present projects created using AI-based image generators (e.g., DALL·E, MidJourney, Stable Diffusion, Sora, etc.). It is important to understand that while these tools encourage creativity and experimentation, they also raise questions of originality and authorship: who is the true creator: the student, the algorithm, or the artists whose work trained the model? Should such projects be evaluated on par with "hand-drawn" ones? In addition, intellectual property issues arise if an image created with artificial intelligence is largely based on copyrighted material without attribution, as AI learns from existing material. It should be noted that teachers need to find a balance between encouraging technological research and fostering ethical awareness by teaching students the importance of citation, transparency, and critical engagement with digital tools within the norms that exist at the time of teaching (which will, of course, change over time). In this case, the art teacher acts not only as an organizer of creative practice, but also as an ethical guide in the technocultural space.

Recommendations for policy and practice

This study offers several actionable recommendations for enhancing moral and ethical formation:

- ✓ Develop and integrate structured ethics modules explicitly within art teacher education curricula.
- ✓ Expand experiential and community-based projects, combined with guided reflective practices, to facilitate deeper ethical engagement.
- ✓ Establish comprehensive mentorship programs to enable students to observe and reflect on ethical decision-making in practical settings.
- ✓ Provide ongoing professional development for faculty to ensure effective delivery of ethics education.

This study, while comprehensive, had some limitations, including its reliance on self-report data and the scope limited to certain educational contexts. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of ethical training interventions, employ observational methodologies, and extend analyses across varied geographic and cultural contexts.

Conclusions

The conducted study has convincingly demonstrated that the formation of moral and ethical culture is not merely an optional enhancement but a foundational component in the professional preparation of future art teachers. This research has provided a complex and multilayered portrait of how ethical awareness is shaped, challenged, and potentially strengthened within the framework of contemporary art education programs.

Empirical data obtained through surveys and focus groups confirm a widespread understanding among students, faculty, and practicing educators of the critical importance of ethics in teaching practice. However, this shared recognition often fails to translate into systematic pedagogical strategies or institutional commitments. Despite the presence of occasional discussions on ethical topics, the integration of structured, explicit ethical education into art curricula remains fragmented and inconsistent. This gap, repeatedly identified by respondents, reflects broader systemic challenges in aligning normative goals of teacher education with day-to-day academic practices.

At the same time, the findings highlight clear and promising pathways for improvement. Experiential learning, particularly when embedded in community-oriented artistic projects, has proven to be a highly effective vehicle for cultivating ethical sensitivity. Similarly, the presence of competent, ethically engaged mentors significantly enhances the development of students' reflective and moral thinking. These mechanisms not only provide

contextually rich ethical challenges but also offer students tangible models of how to navigate dilemmas with integrity and responsibility.

Furthermore, the data suggest that reflective practices such as journaling, dialogical analysis, and portfolio-based evaluations should be systematically employed to bridge the gap between abstract ethical concepts and lived pedagogical experience. The interplay between reflection and action, theory and practice, emerged as a recurrent theme in the narratives of participants, reinforcing the importance of integrative learning environments.

The research also brings to the forefront the need for targeted policy and curricular reform. Future art educators require more than passive exposure to moral themes; they need structured opportunities to engage critically with ethical issues through multiple modalities cognitive, emotional, social, and aesthetic. This is particularly relevant in the Ukrainian context, where the social role of the teacher is undergoing redefinition in light of ongoing societal transformations and demands for humanistic, value-based education.

In conclusion, the moral and ethical formation of future art teachers should be conceived not as an isolated educational goal but as a transversal process embedded throughout the teacher education experience. By emphasizing ethical competence as both a personal and professional imperative, teacher preparation programs can contribute significantly to the cultivation of a responsible, empathetic, and culturally sensitive generation of educators. The implications of this research extend beyond the field of art education, offering insights into how moral culture can be nurtured within any domain where pedagogy intersects with human values and societal change.

Conflict of interest | *The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.*

Statement on the Use of AI Tools | *The authors declare that they did not use artificial intelligence tools (including generative AI, machine translation, or AI-based editing tools) in the preparation, translation, and writing of this study.*

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