



MANAGING ETHICAL ISSUES IN BASIC EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA



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Abstract

This paper is concerned with managing ethical issues in basic education for sustainable national development in Nigeria. Ethical issues in education contain basic principles, procedures and behavior pattern based on commitment to core value that are deeply rooted in evaluation. The therefore conceptualized basic education in relation to the provision of National Policy on Education 2013 (NPE); brief history of the establishment of universal basic education was discussed. The objectives of basic education were clearly articulated as contained in the NPE, the relevance of basic education to national development were further discussed. The concept of ethics was brought to bear and the common Ethical Issues in Basic Education identified and discussed, the need to Manage Ethical Issues in Basic Education schools for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria was well captured. In order to continue to improve on the existing basic education in Nigeria, the need to advance strategies and ways for quality service delivery and to reduce the incidence of re-occurrence these unethical challenges or practices, this paper has discussed few things that could serve as way forward for an improved basic education in Nigeria. The paper concluded that when ethical issues commonly noticed in our education system are critically analyzed will assist not only our educational planners but those to implement or run the management of the education system to achieve its desired goals.

Keywords: Ethics, ethical issues, basic education, sustainable national development

Introduction

The right to education requires a commitment to ensuring universal access, which includes taking all necessary measures to reach the most marginalized children. However, getting children into schools is not enough since that in itself does not guarantee the kind of education that enables them to achieve their economic and social objectives. It does not guarantee that they will acquire the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that bring about responsible and active citizenship. Hence, there is the need to ensure that all children are guaranteed equal and quality education.

The National Policy on Education (2013) defines Basic Education as the education given to children aged 0-15 years. It encompasses the Early Child Care and Development Education (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early Child Care and Development Education however is segmented into ages 0- 4 years, situated in daycare or creches, fully in the hands of the private sector and social development services, whilst ages 5-6 are within the formal education sector. For purposes of policy coordination and monitoring, the Federal Government instituted a Universal Basic Education (UBE),

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was established in 1999 as Nigeria's response to the Jomtien treaty. The concept of basic education is not a completely new term to the Nigerian society, within the last decade it has assumed a global significance and its meaning has been broadened. Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme is a reform measure introduced by the Federal Government in order to remove distortions and inconsistencies in the basic education delivery and reinforce the implementation of the National Policy on Education initiated by the Obasanjo administration in 1999. The Federal Government of Nigeria through the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and in collaboration with State Governments through the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) had invested enormous amount of financial resources in the provision and maintenance of facilities in schools (Tahir, 2001)

The National Policy on Education, from which the UBE Commission (UBEC) derives its establishment is charged with the responsibility of formulating policy guidelines for the successful operation of the programme in the Federation, prescribing the minimum standard for basic education throughout Nigeria in line with National policy on Education and the directive of the National Council on Education

Objectives of Basic Education

The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) in the National Policy on Education stated the following objectives of Universal Basic Education:

1. Developing in the entire citizenry, a strong conscientiousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
2. Provision of free Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school going age.
3. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop out from the formal school system
4. Catering for young persons, their schooling as well as other out of school children or adolescent through appropriate form of complementary approaches to the provision of UBE
5. Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for the life-long learning.

Relevance of Basic Education to National Development

There is emphasis on basic education is because the basic education segment has always been regarded a vital stratum in a nation's education system. This is because it is the first stage or foundation of education. While it is debatable which of primary, secondary, post-secondary and higher education sub-systems is the most important, nobody disagrees that basic education is the stage patronized by most learners. While not all beneficiaries of primary education reach other levels, all beneficiaries of other levels of education must first pass through primary school. Basic school is the foundation of the entire education edifice, which underscores its importance. Other major benefits of the primary education system are the acquisition of literacy and enlightenment. Lack of these skills lead to many problems, including poverty, ignorance, squalor, religious bigotry and political servitude; an enlightened citizenry makes possible the creation of a peaceful and prosperous society. Oni in Irewole&Akinsuroju, 2022)

Ethics

Ethics as a systematic study is concerned with the nature of good and bad, right and wrong, justice and injustice, duty and obligation. Ethics are the set of moral principles that guide a person's behavior. These morals are shaped by social norms, cultural practices, and religious influences. Ethics reflect beliefs about what is right, what is wrong, what is just, what is unjust, what is good, and what is bad in terms of human behavior. Ethics could be seen as set of principles relating to morals, especially as they apply to human conduct. In specific terms, work ethics is about what is morally correct, honourable and acceptable to the larger majority of the people of an organization, society or group. It is also the rules of conduct that have become a set of norms of the society, group or organization (Omisore&Oyende, 2015).

These ethical issues surfacing in the education process verifies the kind of education that can be regarded as good or bad education, right or wrong method of teaching or imparting knowledge to the learners. It also seeks to know how the students, teachers and parents are being managed and their level of relationship so as to enhance or achieve optimum result in the educational process (Oluwakemi, 2021). Ethics may further be seen as the science of right and wrong, the science of moral principles, the science of moral judgement and conduct. It does not only analyzes, classifies, describes and explains human actions as good or bad but also helps us to know why and on what bases our judgement of human action is justified Kizza, 2007)

Since teaching in particular deals with the moulding of character of humanity and it-self must rest on a set of solid, tested and proven ethical framework that guarantees the very best atmosphere and trust in the teaching-learning process (TRCN, 2013). But in most situations one finds a situation (s) or extreme cases where ethics in the workplace are highly bridged and unethical practices flourish and this includes the school system. As long as human beings interact and relate together with one another, there is usually the presence of both ethical and unethical practices in organizations. This is because no two human beings are the same and ethics deals on values displayed by individuals and people's value differs also. One's value highly influences his/her actions and performance in any organization. The performance of every organization is tied to the performance of every member of staff which is influenced by ethics and one's code of conduct (Ofojebe, 2018)

Ethical Issues in Basic Education

Ethical issues in education contain basic principles, procedures and behavior patterns based on commitment to core values that are deeply rooted in education. Ethical standard enables educators, students and administrators to maintain and promote quality education. They (ethical issues) should be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment (all activities within the school environment are in accord with the vision of the school), dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process (Oluwakemi, 2021).

Ethical issues relates to issues concerning rape, indiscipline, dishonesty, gangsterism, staff criticism, gossip, sexual harassment and molestation related to abuse of office, plagiarism, drug abuse, cultism, intimidation, bribery and corruption, embezzlement of funds, greed, stealing, murder, assault, slander, fraud, examination malpractices and any kind of malpractice of sort, kidnapping, among others (Manuel, Claire, Thomas & Michael, 2012; Ogunleye, 2000; TRCN, 2013).

Ethical issues are part of everyday life in schools. They frequently arise from decisions which require value judgement about doing the right thing or saying the good or best thing in a particular situation. Although doing the right seems easy enough most times when an ethically difficult situation arises, it may cause individuals to examine their ethics in practice (Campbell, 2004).

Specific ethical issues in Nigeria basic education

It is an open secret that our basic education system is characterized with several unethical practices that has led to poor performance of students and the education outcome by extension. These practices have led to fall in standard of our basic education output. Ethical issues in basic education in Nigeria are a pressing concern, affecting the quality of education and the overall development of the country. Some of the key issues include The following are some specific and common ethical issues prevalent in our schools

1. Examination malpractice: This is a widespread problem, with students often resorting to cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty to achieve good grades
2. Drug and substance abuse: Many students in Nigerian schools are involved in the use of illicit substances, which can lead to addiction, health problems, and poor academic performance.
3. Sexual harassment and illicit affair: There have been reports of teachers and school administrators engaging in inappropriate relationships with students, creating a toxic and unsafe learning environment.
4. Indecent dressing: Some students and teachers have been known to dress inappropriately, which can be distracting and disrupt the learning environment.
5. Poor value system:
6. Negative attitude of parents: Some parents are not taking an active role in their children's education, which can lead to a lack of support and guidance for students
7. Poor attitude of teachers: Some teachers are not committed to their jobs, leading to poor teaching standards and a lack of accountability
8. Justice and Injustice

9. Fairness and Equity: To be fair in education, simply connotes that every individual be giving such treatment that he or she deserves in the educational process. There should be fair treatment to every staff of the school in the course of daily management of the school activities; there should be no discrimination of any kind.
10. Reward, Punishment and Discipline: Students and teachers should be rewarded to achieve maximum productivity. When a student is performing well, he/she should be rewarded. The essence will not only boost his hard work but will encourage the indolent ones to emulate hard work. When a teacher or a student do what is wrong, such individual deserved to be punished according to the measure of the offence committed. To this effect, punishment should be done with the minimum pain possible.

Managing Ethical Issues in Basic Education for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

Schools have an important task to teach children to differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behavior and opportunity must also be given for the development of insight and learning. In a positive school situation, breaking of school rules is viewed as not only a negative action towards the school, but also a negative action towards fellow learners and teachers and the disruption of mutual relationship. In a positive school climate, school rules are instrumental to the whole development of a learner. Any ethical policy must therefore evolve out of the school's mission and values. It must also be consistent with and work alongside existing ethics related documents(Oluwakemi, 2021).

In Educational system and in the school, the Principal/Headmaster is seen as the authority just as the teacher is seen as an authority in the class and among his students. He stands as an authority figure in both the senses of knowledge and of the students. The use of power in the school management is not a bad idea. In some situation power is enforced to achieve a desirable end, correction or even to sustain justice in the school. In the school environment the administrator exercises power to make staff (teaching or non-teaching) carryout a particular task or assignment given to them so as to induce learning and meet up laid down goals. When power is viewed from this angle, it become something good or ethical/moral concept, but when it is exercised for personal gains it becomes evil. In all, caution should be applied in the use of power in school management so as to achieve the set objectives.

In the education process, freedom of education is very relevant to move the society forward. Such freedom guarantees all or many the access to educational potentials. Infact, when the individuals are not restraints by huddle of any kind, the gap between the "haves" and the "have not" will be drastically reduced. Again, the school staffs must express their freedom or zeal to perform, and not under thread or fore so that adequate performance can take place.

Responsibility, in the context of this paper is taking one's duties, promises or obligation seriously and to fulfill them to the best of his ability. The school administrator is expected to take his/her duties, obligation, or promises seriously. Any school administrator, who doesn't take his duties, obligation or promises seriously, will be term as an irresponsible school administrator because he cannot be relied upon for the effective management of the school. The government should as a matter of importance pay, promote and remunerate the teacher as at when due so as to continue to earn the good services of the teacher. The school administrators therefore must also act responsible in disseminating their duties towards effective management of the school resources.

The aforementioned ethical issues if not properly addressed will make the attainment of the goals of basic education difficult and by extension sustenance of national development in Nigeria. Ethical problems have forced various governments in Nigeria since the 1976 administration to introduce one form of legislation or the other to curb this monster and this has extended to education sector.

These unethical practices have great consequences or influence in the management of basic education, the consequences therefore include but not limited to; unpredictable behaviour in our economic, political and other interactions with foreign organizations. This could lead to lack of attractiveness of investment opportunities to foreign investor especially in education to come to Nigerian on the one hand. On the other hand, the cost of attracting foreign investment will become higher in Nigeria vis-à-vis other parts of the world (Iyieguniwe, 2010). Inculcating good ethics into



staff and students in the our basic education system will aid towards achieving quality education, including teaching and learning effectiveness which leads to achieving positive results and outcomes in the school.

Way Forward

1. Establishing Clear Codes of Conduct

Schools should establish clear rules and guidelines for student behavior and ensure that students understand the consequences of misconduct. Developing ethical codes which involves general development of ethical behaviour in individuals, students, teachers and school administrators which calls for massive education, training and development in basic schools, developing ethical and adhering to such codes, and likewise revitalizing the culture of excellence in education which calls for the restoration of good African traditional values that is based on honesty, trust, respect, considerations, responsibility and accountability. That is why in most public organization and professions in Nigeria there is code of conduct which are ethical principles that guides people's actions, behaviour and their relationships with other people and their job.

2. Promoting Values and Morals

Schools should prioritize the teaching of values and morals, and encourage students to develop a strong sense of character and integrity. The learner must see the teacher's behavior as positive. To do this the teacher must develop a relationship of genuine care trust and respect with the learner and other administrators. The learner will then model his / her behavior after the teacher's behavior. By building respect and trust, the learner will begin to feel the need to control his / her own behavior.

3. Increasing Parental Involvement:

Parents should be encouraged to take an active role in their children's education, through regular communication with teachers and participation in school activities. Quality involvement of parents will go along way ensuring lasting collaboration that will yield positive outcome.

4. Government Support

The government should provide adequate funding and resources to support education, and ensure that schools are held accountable for providing quality education. Government support crucial for effective deployment, utilization and maintenance of resources that most needed for effective management of basic education.

5. Fairness and Equity:

The teacher should be fair in discipline and punishment, fair in judgment and relating with the learners, and among the staff. Amaele and Damie (2016) opined that "fairness and equity are not just things that are nice to have if we can afford them. They are the foundation of prosperity in a society, the element that helps society learn and keep a society healthy".

6. Principles of Social Justice :

In modern society, the principles of Social justice provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and they define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation. Hence, justice in this context stands to mean the basic charter of the well-ordered human association. Social Justice mainly lies on how the fundamental rights and duties of the people's economic opportunities and social conditions are apportioned in the entire society.

Conclusion

Achieving quality education, teaching and learning and effective management of basic education largely depends on promoting work ethics within the school environment. Ethics stands to inculcate into both students and teachers sound morals that will boost their performance and



commitments. Failure to control ethical issues or problems at basic education level would have great influence and negative effects on the management of the institutions which consequently jeopardizes the achievement of goals and indirectly national development. This means that the kind of students that graduate from basic education will be people who are unethical and corrupt that cannot contribute towards meaningful development in education and nation at large. The researcher concludes that when ethical issues commonly noticed in our education system are critically analyzed will assist not only our educational planners but those to implement or run the management of the education system to achieve its desired goals.

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