

ETHICAL AND VALUES EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA



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Abstract

This article critically examined the high regards of ethical and value education in universities for sustainable national development in South-South Nigeria as a driver and catalyst. The study was guided by five objectives and five research questions. The theoretical frameworks were Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory in 1977 and Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development in 1984. This work dived into several conceptual frameworks such as the imperative, extent of integration, pedagogical approaches employed in delivering, current challenges, impacts and strategic framework on ethical and value education in universities for sustainable national development. It was argued that beyond technical skills and academic knowledge, the inculcation of strong ethical principles and moral values in university students is paramount for fostering responsible leadership, combating corruption, promoting social cohesion, and driving socio-economic progress. The article highlighted the current challenges faced in this regard and proposes actionable strategies for integrating and strengthening ethical and values education within the university curricula such as the General Studies like Philosophy and Logic, Nigeria people and culture, entrepreneurship and campus culture in South-South Nigeria. Conclusively, when the universities system intentionally cultivating a generation of graduates who are not only intellectually competent but also morally upright, universities can play an indispensable role in transforming the region and, by extension, the nation. Suggestively, this requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders – government, university administration, faculty, students, and the wider community – to prioritize, integrate, and consistently uphold ethical principles as the foundation for a prosperous and just society.

Keywords: *Ethical Education, Value Education, Universities, Sustainable National Development, South-South Nigeria, Corruption, Moral Degradation.*

Introduction

Education today is widely acknowledged as the bedrock of national development. However, for a nation to achieve truly sustainable development, its educational system must transcend the mere transmission of knowledge and skills to encompass the holistic development of individuals, particularly in the realm of ethics and values. Sustainable national development in the Nigerian context, encompassing economic growth, social equity, environmental protection, and good governance e.g., Agenda 2030, Nigeria's Vision 20:2020/20:2050 goals. The concept of ethical education could be viewed as a systematic instruction aimed at developing students' moral reasoning, ethical decision-making abilities, and understanding of right and wrong while value education could be regarded as the process of imparting and cultivating desirable personal, social, and moral values such as integrity, honesty, empathy, justice, and responsibility. Sustainable National Development in this context referred to the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions within a national context. The imperative of ethical and value education argued that addressing these challenges necessitates a moral re-orientation and the inculcation of strong ethical values in citizens, starting from universities as incubators of future leaders and professionals (Okafor, 2019). Universities

are crucial in shaping character, integrity, and social responsibility alongside academic knowledge.

The challenges to sustainable development in Nigeria are critical issues. In Nigeria, and specifically in the South-South region, the imperative for robust ethical and value education in universities has never been more urgent. The pervasive challenges of academic corruption, examination and electoral malpractices, environmental degradation, poor governance, resource mismanagement, and declining moral values, and how these impede sustainable development and social unrest underscored a significant deficit in moral uprightness and civic responsibility (Transparency International, 2023; NBS, 2022). This article posited that universities, as crucial incubators of future leaders and professionals, bear a significant responsibility in addressing this lacuna by deliberately and effectively integrating ethical and value education into their core functions. Students in all levels of education are to be trained in character and learning, despite the recognition of ethical and value education, there appears to be a disconnect between the theoretical knowledge imparted in universities and its practical application in students' lives and the broader society. Questions persist regarding the adequacy, integration, and effectiveness of existing ethical and values education programs in Nigerian universities to genuinely drive sustainable national development. Are these programs in the universities holistic enough? Do they address contemporary ethical dilemmas relevant to Nigeria's development challenges? Is there sufficient emphasis on practical application and civic engagement? Against this background, the researcher dare to dive into the ethical and values education in universities for sustainable national development in South- South Nigeria.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory which later evolving into Social Cognitive Theory emphasized that learning occurs within a social context through observation, imitation, and modeling. The theory explained how individuals learn values and ethical behaviors through observation, imitation, and modeling, emphasizing the role of lecturers as role models and the institutional environment (Bandura, 1977). It goes beyond traditional behaviorism by incorporating cognitive processes. Key principles include:

Observational Learning (Modeling): Individuals learn by observing the behaviors of others (models) and the consequences of those behaviors.

Mediating Processes: Learning is not passive. Cognitive processes mediate between observing a behavior and imitating it. These include:

- Attention: The learner must pay attention to the model's behavior.
- Retention: The learner must be able to remember the observed behavior.
- Reproduction: The learner must be capable of physically reproducing the behavior.
- Motivation: The learner must be motivated to perform the behavior, often influenced by vicarious reinforcement (seeing others rewarded) or direct reinforcement.

Self-Efficacy: A person's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task. This belief plays a crucial role in determining whether an individual will attempt to imitate an observed behavior.

Application of the Bandura's Social Learning theory to the study

1. **Role Modeling:** University lecturers, administrators, and community leaders can serve as positive ethical role models, demonstrating integrity, accountability, and a commitment to sustainable practices. Students observing these behaviors are more likely to internalize similar values. In this sense, lecturers should be of best behavior before the student and in absentia.

2. **Case Studies and Simulations:** Using real-life ethical dilemmas relevant to the South-South context (e.g., corruption in resource management, environmental degradation due to unethical practices)

as case studies allows students to observe and analyze different responses and their consequences. Simulations can provide opportunities for students to "practice" ethical decision-making.

3. **Peer Mentoring and Collaborative Learning:** Encouraging peer mentorship programs and collaborative projects where students work together on ethical issues can facilitate observational learning among students. Positive peer influence can reinforce ethical norms and discourage undesirable behaviors.

4. **Highlighting Positive Consequences:** Showcasing the positive outcomes of ethical actions and sustainable practices (e.g., improved community well-being, environmental preservation, economic stability) can serve as vicarious reinforcement, motivating students to adopt similar behaviors.

5. **Building Self-Efficacy for Ethical Action:** Curricula can be designed to build students' confidence in their ability to act ethically, even in challenging situations. This can involve skill-building in areas like critical thinking, moral reasoning, and conflict resolution.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

This theory provided a framework for understanding how individuals progress through stages of moral reasoning, suggesting that higher education can facilitate this development (Kohlberg, 1984). Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development posited that individuals progress through a series of six distinct stages (grouped into three levels) in their ability to reason morally. These stages are hierarchical and sequential, meaning individuals must pass through each stage in order and cannot skip stages. Kohlberg used moral dilemmas, like the Heinz dilemma, to assess individuals' moral reasoning.

Level 1: Pre-Conventional Morality (typically children, but adults can also exhibit this)

Stage 1: Obedience and Punishment Orientation: Morality is based on avoiding punishment. "Right" is what avoids trouble.

Stage 2: Individualism and Exchange: Morality is based on self-interest and what benefits the individual, often involving reciprocal exchange ("you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours").

Level 2: Conventional Morality (typically adolescents and adults)

Stage 3: Good Interpersonal Relationships (Good Boy/Nice Girl): Morality is based on living up to the expectations of others and seeking approval.

Stage 4: Maintaining Social Order: Morality is based on obeying laws and rules to maintain societal order and avoid guilt.

Level 3: Post-Conventional Morality (rarely achieved by many adults)

Stage 5: Social Contract and Individual Rights: Morality is based on the understanding that laws are social contracts that can be changed if they don't serve the greater good, while still upholding individual rights.

Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principles: Morality is based on abstract, universal ethical principles (e.g., justice, equality, human dignity) that transcend specific laws.

The application of this theory to this study are expressed that Kohlberg's theory provides a framework for designing curricula that encourage higher-level moral reasoning:

Moral Dilemma Discussions: Presenting students with complex ethical dilemmas relevant to the South-South Nigerian context (e.g., balancing economic development with environmental protection, addressing corruption in public service, land disputes) and facilitating discussions on these issues can challenge their existing moral reasoning and encourage progression to higher stages.

Just Community Approach: Creating a "just community" within the university where students participate in decision-making, establish rules, and resolve conflicts based on principles of fairness and justice can foster a more mature understanding of social order and individual rights.

Critical Analysis of Laws and Policies: Encouraging students to critically analyze existing laws, policies, and traditional practices in South-South through an ethical lens can help them move beyond simply obeying rules (Stage 4) to evaluating their underlying principles (Stage 5 and 6).

Exposure to Diverse Perspectives: Exposing students to diverse cultural, religious, and philosophical perspectives on ethics and values can broaden their understanding and encourage them to consider universal ethical principles.

Linking Theory to Practice: Connecting abstract moral principles to real-world applications in sustainable development (e.g., how ethical leadership impacts community development, the moral imperative of environmental conservation) can make moral reasoning more tangible and impactful.

Conceptual Framework

Ethics referred to the philosophical study of morality, while ethical education is more or less systematic set of beliefs, usually held in common by a group, about how people should live. (Britannica, n.d., Peter Singer). The positions ethical education is within the realm of philosophy, focusing on the systematic inquiry into right and wrong. In the same vein, ethics education is the teaching of ethics in the classroom." (Gaytan, Hazari, & North, 2008). It simply, emphasizes the formal, structured approach to imparting ethical principles within an educational setting. In the same line, inculcating universal ethical principles Zohoor & Miller, n.d depicted that ethical education aims to "convey to students a universally valid set of ethical principles and practices that do not depend only on nationality or belief systems. They emphasized the pursuit of common ethical ground applicable across diverse cultures.

Values education is the process by which people give moral values to each other. (Powney et al., 2007). This emphasizes the social and interactive nature of values acquisition. Also, it is the process that gives young people an initiation into values, giving knowledge of the rules needed to function in this mode of relating to other people and to seek the development in the student a grasp of certain underlying principles, together with the ability to apply these rules as expressed by Aspin, 2000. This highlights the role of values education in social integration and the application of principles. In addition to the above, values education as learning about self and wisdom of life in a self-exploratory, systematic and scientific way through formal education (Cheng, Lee, & Lo, 2006). This points to the introspective and holistic aspects of values development. There are various types of values which are personal, professional, societal, and universal, and their role in shaping character and national identity (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). Development has three pillars: economic, social, environmental and this is interconnected with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) according to United Nations (2015). This is also in connection with Wikipedia Corporation (2025) which expressed in balancing economic, environmental, and social well-being. Sustainable development tries to find a balance among economic development, environmental protection, and social well-being. Development should meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987. This is the most widely cited and foundational definition. This emphasizes ecological preservation and social equity as core components. Sustainable development aims at the continuous improvement of the quality of life and well-being on earth for present and future generations (Senedd Wales, n.d.). This focuses on a long-term vision of well-being. Sustainable development requires an integrated approach that takes into consideration environmental concerns along with economic development (United Nations Academic Impact, n.d.). This emphasizes the necessity of holistic planning that considers all facets of development simultaneously.

Imperative of Ethical and Value Education in Universities for Sustainable National Development

Sustainable national development is not solely about economic growth; it encompasses social equity, environmental protection, and good governance. All these dimensions are inextricably linked to the ethical conduct and values of a nation's citizens and leaders.

➤ *Combating Corruption:* Corruption remains a monumental impediment to Nigeria's development. Value education instills principles of honesty, integrity, transparency, and accountability, which are vital in dismantling corrupt practices within public and private sectors. Universities, by producing ethically conscious graduates, can contribute significantly to a future generation less susceptible to corrupt tendencies.

- **Promoting Good Governance:** Responsible and ethical leadership is a cornerstone of good governance. Ethical education equips students with the moral compass to make decisions that prioritize the common good over personal gain, fostering a culture of public service and justice.
- **Fostering Social Cohesion and Justice:** Values like empathy, tolerance, respect for diversity, and social justice are crucial for building a harmonious society. University environments that actively promote these values can help bridge ethnic and religious divides, fostering a sense of shared national identity and purpose.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** The South-South region of Nigeria, with its rich natural resources, particularly oil and gas, faces significant environmental challenges. Ethical education can instill a sense of responsibility towards environmental protection and sustainable resource management, encouraging practices that mitigate ecological damage and promote long-term sustainability.
- **Enhancing Professionalism and Productivity:** Graduates equipped with strong ethical foundations are more likely to exhibit professionalism, diligence, and a commitment to excellence in their respective fields. This, in turn, boosts productivity and contributes to a more efficient and reputable workforce.

Integration of Ethical and Value Education into the Curricula of Universities

The extent to which ethical and value education is integrated into university curricula for sustainable national development in South-South Nigeria is a complex issue, characterized by both policy intentions and implementation challenges. While there's a recognized need and some level of integration, empirical evidence often points to a gap between what is envisioned and what is consistently practiced.

1. Policy Emphasis and General Integration (Intentional but often Superficial)

Nigerian educational policies, including those governing university education, emphasize the importance of character development, moral values, and civic responsibility. This often translates into the inclusion of General Studies (GS) courses like Philosophy, Logic, and Citizenship Education, which carry ethical and value components. However, the depth of integration across all disciplines for sustainable national development is often questioned. According to Okafor and Egenti (2022), the extent primarily is through compulsory General Studies (GS) courses and a presumed, but not always explicit, integration into professional ethics courses in fields like accounting, law, and medicine.

Ejeh (2022) highlighted the general call for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Nigeria, which inherently includes ethical and value components. While it doesn't detail specific curricula in South-South universities, it underscores the policy push for integrating sustainability, implying the need for relevant values. Also, Ejeh explicitly argued for the re-introduction and prominence of moral education in tertiary institutions to address moral decadence. This suggests that while some elements exist, there's a perceived insufficiency in the current integration of values.

2. Integration in Specific Disciplines (Varying Degrees of Success)

Some professional programs have a more explicit integration of ethics and values due to the nature of their professions. Onwumere, Nwagbara and Okoro, (2024) views were stronger in fields like Accounting, Medicine, and Law, where professional ethics are statutory or foundational. Less systematic in other fields unless directly linked to a specific course. Onwumere, et al. (2024) in their study, while not restricted to South-South, found a significant alignment between accounting curricula and International Education Standard 4 (IES 4) requirements for professional values, ethics, and attitudes. However, it also noted a "limited use of participative teaching approaches in ethics," suggesting that integration can be more theoretical than practical. This empirical study was relevant to the Nigerian context, indicates that while the curriculum might contain ethical components, the method of delivery can limit the true integration and impact of values. This is likely reflective of universities in the South-South as well.

3. Challenges and Gaps in Integration

Despite the acknowledged importance, several factors limit the comprehensive and effective integration of ethical and value education for sustainable national development in South-South Nigerian universities (Ngonso, 2022). The significant gaps exist due to a focus on cognitive knowledge, inadequate resources, limited training for lecturers, and a lack of systematic, interdisciplinary approaches. This work points to "near absence of ethics and value curriculum" in some areas or a lack of sufficient prominence, contributing to moral deficiency. This suggests that even where it exists, it might not be comprehensive or impactful enough (Ugwuanyi & Okolo, 2023). While discussing awareness, this paper implicitly touches on the integration aspect. The fact that awareness is still a key discussion point suggests that the full integration and internalization of values for SDGs might not be fully realized in the curriculum. This study revealed that lecturers' perception on integrating ethical education into other aspects of the curriculum might not adequately help fight corruption. It also noted a "near absence of ethics and value curriculum" in some areas, highlighting a key challenge in comprehensive integration. The study implicitly suggests that the integration, where it exists, may not be robust enough or effectively delivered (Adamu, 2020).

Summarily, the extent of the integration of ethical and value education for sustainable national development in South-South Nigerian universities is partial and often faces significant challenges in its depth and effectiveness. While foundational courses and specific professional ethics modules exist, a truly pervasive, interdisciplinary, and transformative integration that consistently fosters values for sustainable development across all programs is still an aspiration. The literature suggests that while the need for such integration is widely recognized, its practical implementation is often hampered by curriculum design issues, teaching methodologies, resource limitations, and broader societal challenges.

Pedagogical Approaches Employed in Delivering Ethical and Value Education in Universities

The pedagogical approaches employed in delivering ethical and value education for sustainable national development in universities in South-South Nigeria are varied, but often lean towards traditional methods, with a growing recognition and call for more active and experiential learning. The approaches are:

1. Traditional Lecture-Based Approach: This remains the most prevalent method in many Nigerian universities, including those in the South-South. Ethical and value concepts are typically taught as theoretical knowledge through lectures in General Studies (GS) courses (e.g., Philosophy, Logic, Citizenship Education) or specific departmental ethics courses. In this pedagogical approach there is didactic lectures, note-taking, and memorization of ethical theories, principles, and societal values (Afe Babalola University AD (n.d.)). This general overview of teaching methods in Nigerian universities highlights the common use of prepared notes and dictation by lecturers, suggesting that a significant portion of instruction, including that on ethics and values, would still follow this traditional pattern in Agbor, Etan, Akuji and Ogbor (2024). It is important to note that this paper pointed out that "traditional lecture-based approaches, which dominate Nigerian classrooms, often fail to instill critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and proactive environmental stewardship among learners." This implies that ethical and value education also suffers from these limitations when delivered solely through lectures.

2. Case Study Method: This approach involves presenting students with real-life ethical dilemmas or scenarios related to professional conduct, civic responsibility, or sustainable development. Students analyze these cases, apply ethical frameworks, and propose solutions. The pedagogical approach viewed analysis of hypothetical or real-world ethical dilemmas, group discussions, and presentation of reasoned solutions according to Onwumere, Nwagbara, and Okoro, (2024). While this empirical study on accounting ethics education in Nigerian tertiary institutions (which would include those in the South-South) found limited use of participative teaching approaches in ethics, it indirectly advocates for methods like case studies. Ethical vignettes (short cases) are sometimes used for assessment, indicating

an awareness of the method's potential. The call for more practical approaches suggests a desire for greater adoption of case studies.

3. Discussion and Debate: Encouraging open discussions and debates on controversial ethical issues or value conflicts helps students develop critical thinking, articulate their positions, and appreciate diverse perspectives. This pedagogical approach uses Socratic method, group discussions, debates, and peer learning as depicted by Adamu, (2020). With this study, exploring lecturers' perceptions, would imply that methods fostering engagement like discussions are seen as beneficial, even if their implementation varies. Effective integration of ethics would naturally require more interactive methods.

4. Experiential Learning (Emerging but Limited Adoption): According to Olagoke-Oladokun (2023) expressed that this category includes methods where students learn by doing and reflecting on their experiences. This is often seen as ideal for ethical and value education as it promotes deeper internalization. The pedagogical approach such as: Service-learning, community projects, simulations, role-playing, and field trips related to ethical conduct or sustainable development issues. The paper specifically discussed service-learning as an "educational approach that combines classroom instruction with community service" and notes its "novel" status, having been "recently adopted in a few Nigerian institutions of higher education." While not explicitly restricted to South-South, federal universities there would be among those potentially adopting this. Service-learning is highly effective for fostering civic responsibility and commitment to sustainable development. According to Ijie, Okoye, and Osagie, (2023) have this as exploratory study, while general to Nigerian universities, found service-learning programs to be "educationally valuable and impactful on the students," recommending their incorporation into the curriculum. This strongly supports experiential methods for ethical and value education. Furthermore, Agbor, Etan, Akuji, and Ogor, (2024) noted the paper advocates for "experiential and participatory teaching methods, such as fieldwork, problem-solving exercises, and project-based learning" for environmental education, highlighting their effectiveness over traditional methods. These are directly applicable to broader sustainable development goals and associated ethical values.

5. Role Modeling by Lecturers: While not a formal pedagogical "method" in curriculum design, the ethical conduct and commitment of university lecturers themselves serve as a powerful informal pedagogical tool. In the pedagogical approach: Demonstrating ethical behavior, integrity, and commitment to values (Iroegbu, & Uyanga, 2019). This empirical study in South-South federal universities found that "teaching staff professional ethics variables of professional competence, professional integrity and professional accountability significantly predicts quality of educational output." This implies that the ethical conduct of lecturers is a crucial, albeit informal, pedagogical approach in transmitting values to students. In a nutshell, while traditional lecture-based methods are still prevalent, there's a clear recognition in the literature regarding the limitations of these approaches for effective ethical and value education. There is a strong call for, and some emerging adoption of, more active, participatory, and experiential learning methods like case studies, discussions, and especially service-learning, to foster a deeper understanding and internalization of ethical conduct, civic responsibility, and commitment to sustainable national development among university students in South-South Nigeria. The role of lecturers as ethical exemplars is also implicitly seen as a vital, though often uncoded, pedagogical element.

Current Challenges in Ethical and Value Education in South-South Nigerian Universities

The challenges faced by universities, lecturers, and students in implementing ethical and value education are enormous. Despite the clear importance, the effective delivery and internalization of ethical and value education in Nigerian universities, including those in the South-South, face several challenges:

- **Curriculum Deficiencies:** While some universities may have standalone courses on ethics, their integration across all disciplines is often superficial or inconsistent. There is a need for a more comprehensive and practical approach that connects ethical principles to real-world professional and societal challenges.
- **Lack of Role Models:** The wider societal landscape, often characterized by moral decay and impunity for unethical behavior, can undermine the efforts of universities. Students may struggle to see the practical application of ethical principles when those in positions of authority exhibit contrary conduct.
- **Inadequate Funding and Resources:** Universities often grapple with insufficient funding, which can impact the quality of teaching, research, and extracurricular programs that promote ethical development.
- **Examination Malpractice and Indiscipline:** Persistent issues like examination malpractice, cultism, and indecent dressing within universities highlight a breakdown in ethical values among some students and even staff.
- **Overemphasis on Certification:** A prevailing focus on obtaining certificates rather than acquiring genuine knowledge and character development can dilute the impact of value education.
- **Immorality and Indecent Dressing:** the increase of female and even male indecent dressing is alarming and will continue where there is no critical sanctioning and dress code task force. Females as well as male are now having all kinds of piecing on their noses, ears, lips, eyebrows with rings. This also follow the shabby and all sorts of painting and designs on their body with tattoos.
- **Craving to Get-Rich-Quick:** The drive to get money now like others had dropped down the level of student ability to be discipline and diligent to study. This had led many to internet fraud (yahooism), online and offline sex trade (oloshism), internet businesses at the detriment of their studies.
- **Uncontrollable Use of the Phone and Internet:** it has been observed that Students in the universities now make use of the smart phones than reading their book. This is the issue of reading the screen more the books.
- **Professors Hovering between Two Opinions:** the Professors that were engaged during general election are always between the deep blue sea and the devil. Where those that were employed and involved relegated the professional ethics and values education by manipulating electoral results for the desire of more money.

Impact of Ethical and Value Education on Universities, Lecturers and Students

Ethical and value education in universities in South-South Nigeria is increasingly recognized as crucial for shaping students' ethical conduct, civic responsibility, and commitment to sustainable national development. While direct empirical studies specifically linking all three outcomes to ethical and value education in this precise region can be scarce, existing research in Nigeria provides strong foundational evidence and insights.

1. Impact on Students' Ethical Conduct: Ethical and value education aims to instill moral principles and guide behavior. Its impact on student conduct is a primary concern, especially in a context grappling with issues like corruption and examination malpractice. Improved ethical awareness, reduction in unethical practices, and development of a moral compass as cited in Iroegbu and Uyanga, (2019). In the same vein, Ngonso (2022) stated that while focusing on the ethics of teaching staff, this empirical study in the South-South zone implicitly acknowledges the critical role of ethical behavior within the university system for quality output, which directly influences student conduct. Teachers serve as role models, and their ethical conduct significantly impacts student behavior. This paper discussed ethical lapses in Nigerian higher education, indirectly emphasizing the need for robust ethical

education to address issues like examination malpractice, which is a prevalent ethical issue even with efforts to educate students on values. It highlights the gap that ethical education seeks to bridge.

2. Impact on Students' Civic Responsibility: Otubanjo, et al. (2025) posited that civic responsibility involves active and informed participation in community and national affairs, contributing to the common good. Ethical and value education is expected to foster this sense of duty. They emphasized it enhanced understanding of rights and duties, increased participation in community development, and a greater sense of national consciousness and patriotism. In their views, while this study focused on secondary school students in Ogun State (South-West), its findings on the impact of values taught in civic education on behaviors like respect, honesty, and moderate comprehension of civic engagement are highly relevant to the university context in South-South Nigeria. It suggested that well-implemented civic and value education can positively influence student behavior and civic participation.

3. Impact on Students' Commitment to Sustainable National Development: This aspect focused on how ethical and value education encourages students to contribute to long-term societal well-being, encompassing economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Development of environmentally friendly behaviors, responsible consumption patterns, a commitment to economic growth, and an understanding of social equity as stated by Okafor and Egenti (2022). This paper strongly advocated for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Nigeria, emphasizing the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. It directly links education to the goals of sustainable development, a concept ethical and value education is integral to.

Abdullahi (2024) stated that while not limited to South-South Nigeria, this very recent study provides empirical evidence of the link between education for sustainable development (which includes ethical and value components) and university students' sustainability behavior. It highlights that cultivating ethical competencies through education promotes sustainable consumption practices and other behaviors critical for achieving SDGs. In Ugwuanyi and Okolo (2023) underscored how value education can act as nourishment for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It suggested that value education helps in sharpening understanding, motives, and attitudes toward the environment and responsible actions, directly contributing to sustainable development.

The challenges and aspirations for ethical conduct, civic responsibility, and sustainable development are largely shared across Nigerian universities. The emphasis on integrating values and ethics into the curriculum and the role of educators as moral exemplars are recurring themes in the literature. Further localized empirical research within South-South Nigeria would provide more granular data on the effectiveness of specific ethical and value education initiatives in that region.

Strategic Framework for Enhancing Ethical and Value Education in University Students

The strategic frameworks are deduced from the entire literature reviewed. The strategies to overcome these challenges and harness the potential of ethical and value education in universities for sustainable national development in South-South Nigeria are the following:

Curriculum Review and Integration:

- *Embed Ethics Across Disciplines:* Ethical considerations should be integrated into all courses, not just as a standalone subject. For instance, engineering ethics in engineering courses, medical ethics in health sciences, and business ethics in management programs.
- *Case Study Approach:* Employing real-life case studies and dilemmas relevant to the Nigerian context can make ethical principles more tangible and foster critical thinking and moral reasoning among students.
- *Service-Learning and Community Engagement:* Incorporate programs that require students to engage in community service, fostering empathy, social responsibility, and an understanding of societal needs.



Faculty Development and Role Modeling:

- *Train the Trainers:* Equip university lecturers with the necessary skills and resources to effectively teach and model ethical behavior.
- *Promote Academic Integrity:* Universities must vigorously enforce policies against academic dishonesty, ensuring that faculty members themselves adhere to the highest ethical standards.

Cultivating a Culture of Ethics on Campus:

- *Strong Ethical Leadership:* University administration must demonstrate unwavering commitment to ethical principles through their policies, decisions, and personal conduct.
- *Student Codes of Conduct:* Clearly defined and consistently enforced codes of conduct, developed with student input, can guide behavior and foster a sense of responsibility. This can be done with a task force on indecent dressing, disciplinary committee on examination malpractices, misconduct and dishonesty.
- *Mentorship Programs:* Establish mentorship programs where senior students and faculty guide junior students on academic, personal, and ethical development. Course advisers function cannot be overemphasized in this matter,
- *Extracurricular Activities:* Encourage student clubs and organizations that focus on community service, leadership development, and ethical discourse such as Student Union Government (SUG), Students' Representative Council (SRC), Faculty and Departmental leadership.
- *Instilling the Fear of God through Chaplaincy:* the university chapel should be encouraged by the institution as other students' activities. The chaplaincy activities should be monitored for with a tangible purpose of establishment with its aim and objectives.

Collaboration and Partnerships:

- *Industry and Professional Bodies:* Collaborate with professional organizations and industries to ensure that ethical education aligns with the demands of the workplace and societal expectations.
- *Government and Civil Society:* Partner with government agencies and civil society organizations to promote national values and address societal ethical challenges.

Government Policy Advocacy and Implementation:

- *National Policy Review:* Advocate for a robust national policy on ethical and value education that provides a clear framework for its implementation across all levels of education.
- *Adequate Funding:* Governments and institutions must prioritize and allocate sufficient resources for ethical and value education initiatives.

Conclusion

Ethical and value education in universities is not a luxury but a fundamental necessity for sustainable national development in South-South Nigeria. When this is done intentionally, it will be cultivating a generation of graduates who are not only intellectually competent but also morally upright, universities can play an indispensable role in transforming the region and, by extension, the nation. This requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders – government, university administration, faculty, students, and the wider community – to prioritize, integrate, and consistently uphold ethical principles as the foundation for a prosperous and just society.

Suggestions

1. Ethical and values education should be taken as a duty by all and sundry and not for the few but for the government, universities management, lecturers, non-teaching staff, students, parents, society at large.
2. Role modeling and experiential pedagogical approach should be adopted by lecturers and non-teaching staff to impact right ethics and values education in universities in south-South Nigeria.



3. Ethical and values education has a direct and indirect influence by those who would uphold it and the consistency in the right course would influence other colleagues and students.
4. The universities Professors engaged as electoral umpire during general election should stand to do what is just and right. This would stampede the bait of money by politicians from the very high unethical lifestyle portrayed before, during and after general election.
5. The challenges against building right ethical and values education are enormous but the willingness to abide by it will be integrated in the universities and in turn for sustainable national development.

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