



RE-ENGINEERING ETHICAL AND VALUES EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTING LABOUR MARKET INCLUSIVITY AND NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.



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Abstract

This paper titled "Re-engineering Ethical and Values Education as a Tool for Promoting Labour Market Inclusivity and National Economic Development in Nigeria" explores the critical role of ethical and values education in shaping an inclusive and productive labour market that drives national economic development. It provides a conceptual overview of key constructs such as ethical and values education, labour market, economic development, and labour market inclusivity. The paper identifies indicators of how ethical and values education contributes to workforce inclusivity, such as integrity, respect for diversity, civic responsibility, and workplace ethics. Furthermore, the paper discusses strategic ways of re-engineering ethical and values education to align with national development goals, emphasizing on building employability soft skills that incorporate ethical and values education that widen access to quality jobs, setting standards that enhances productivity via ethical work cultures among others. The paper also highlights challenges facing effective implementation, including poor curriculum integration between education and the labour market, character mismanagement, wilful disobedience to values and ethical practices, socioeconomic inequalities and cultural barriers among others. In conclusion, the paper put forward actionable strategies such as modelling ethical leadership and governance within schools and the public sector, and fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships between educational institutions, industries, and government. These efforts are positioned as pivotal in creating a workforce equipped with the moral and professional competencies needed for inclusive economic progress in Nigeria.

Key Words: Re-Engineering Ethical and Values Education, Labour Market, Economic Development, Labour Market Inclusivity, Challenges.

Introduction

All over the world organizations and institutions are governed and operated by ethics, values and moral principles that serves as guiding rules and regulations which sustain and protect the existence of the organization and the individuals who are working cooperatively to achieve the desire goals of the organization. Educational system is operated and guided by such distinctive ethical principles and values which also regulate the conduct of individuals and develop them morally, culturally, ethically, politically and economically to reflect its goals and objective. According to Dereje (2017), morality, values and ethics are always connected and interrelated to societal expectations, and are attached to societal culture, though vary from society to society, organization to organization or institution to institution.



Ethical standards in education contains basic principles, procedures and behaviour patterns based on commitment to core values that are deeply rooted in education which also reflect societal expectations. Ethical and values education (EVE) is a strategic instrument geared sensitively for cultivating responsible, skilled, and morally upright citizens who can effectively participate in the labour market and contribute rationally to national economic development. In Nigeria, the persistent challenges associated with corruption, youth unemployment, workplace discrimination, and inequitable labour practices underscore the urgent need to re-engineer ethical and values education to align with contemporary socio-economic realities of the nation the characters required for employability in the labour market.

If this is the situation, re-engineering core values such as equity, integrity, respect for diversity, and civic responsibility and incorporating and implementing such necessary ethics and values through educational trainings where knowledge and skills are professionally developed can enhance the employability of graduates, promote inclusive labour market participation, and foster economic productivity (Ejeh, 2022; Fayemi & Adediran, 2024). Therefore, ethics not only reflects the moral codes but ethical values which incorporate cultural, social, political, and economical values acquired by individuals as they prepare to be responsible and active citizens ready to contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation. More so, ethical and values education seeks to train citizens to be morally upright, socially responsible and be committed to the national ethos.

Re-engineering ethical and values education offers a strategic pathway toward equipping graduates at all levels of education with the moral integrity, inclusivity mindset, and socio-emotional skills needed for the modern labour market. To truly re-engineer ethical and values education, it involves either restructuring or implementing already suitable curricula, teaching methodologies, and institutional policies to integrate moral reasoning with practical employability skills required to accommodate individuals in the labour market. The labour market demands not only technical competencies but also soft skills such as teamwork, communication, adaptability, and ethical decision-making. Embedding these elements within Nigeria's primary, secondary, and tertiary education systems ensures that graduates can navigate the complexities of modern workplaces while maintaining high ethical standards (World Bank, 2018; OECD, 2015).

Furthermore, EVE supports national economic development by addressing systemic challenges such as corruption, nepotism, and workplace inequality, which often hinder merit-based recruitment and fair economic participation. When education instils ethical principles and values through a well-articulated curricula that is labour market friendly, it nurtures a culture of employability, accountability and productivity that attracts investment, fosters entrepreneurship, and drives innovation (UNESCO, 2015; Transparency International, 2023). Thus, re-engineering EVE is not merely a moral imperative but also an economic strategy to build an inclusive, sustainable, and competitive economy. The achievement of these requires stakeholder engagement, coordinated policy action that rest hopes on institutional backing, teachers' readiness, alignment across home and societal structures, purpose driven curriculum that instils right ethics and values that are implemented to reduce antisocial behaviours that are not welcomed by labour market operators and at the end has the potential benefits for national economic development where social cohesion is substantial.

Concepts of Ethical and Values Education

Ethical and values education is regarded as essential educational practices that helps in building and shaping students' moral conduct, behaviours, integrity, empathy, responsibility, justice and respect that align with societal desirable expectations. According to UNESCO (2015, p.12), ethical and values education involves "educational activities that help individuals acquire and practice ethical values such as honesty, responsibility, and fairness to build peaceful and inclusive societies." In the Nigerian context, it is embedded in subjects such as Civic Education, Social Studies, and Religious Studies across primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels.

Put in another way, ethical and values education is the step-by-step teaching and learning of moral principles, social or societal norms, value system, civic responsibilities, and desirable behaviours that guide individual and collective actions necessary in the society. It focuses on the development of



learners' sense of right and wrong doings, promoting integrity, empathy, responsibility, justice, respect for diversity, and preparing them to rationally make ethical decisions in personal and professional settings. Ethical education comprises formal instruction with reference to integrity, fairness, civic responsibility, and respectful behaviour (Ejeh, 2022).

Concept of Labour Market

The labour market (LM) is regarded as an economic environment where employers considerably seek and hire labour and skills of individuals in exchange for wages or salaries in the production of goods and services. It reflects practically the demand and supply of labour which includes the processes of hiring, training, and retaining employees across various sectors of the economy (Aina, 2010). The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2023, p.12) defines the labour market as “a mechanism through which human labour is exchanged for monetary compensation under formal or informal conditions, influenced by institutional, demographic, and economic factors.”

Concept of Economic Development

Development is a broader concept that encompasses economic growth but goes beyond it. It involves qualitative improvements in people's well-being and living standards, including reductions in poverty, inequality, and unemployment, as well as improvements in health, education, and human rights. On the other hand, economic development refers to the sustained improvement in the economic well-being and quality of life of a nation's population, typically measured by indicators such as growth in GDP per capita, employment rates, access to education and healthcare, poverty reduction, literacy rate and infrastructure development (World Bank., 2018). According to Todaro and Smith (2015, p. 6), economic development is “a multi-dimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, institutions, and the acceleration of economic growth alongside the reduction of inequality and poverty.”

Concepts of Labour Market Inclusivity and Economic Development

Labour market inclusivity is a broader term that deals with issues relating to policies and practices that ensure equal access to employment opportunities and fair treatment for all individuals regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic background, or other marginalized status (UNDP, 2022). According to the OECD (2020) expressed inclusive labour markets as essential for achieving sustainable and equitable economic development as they ensure that all individuals can contribute to and benefit from economic growth. To this fact, it aims to remove obstacles that hinder full participation in the workforce, promote equity, diversity and inclusion, and to smoothly ensure that vulnerable groups are carefully integrated into meaningful employment opportunities.

To synergize these conceptual clarifications, one would say that the relationship between labour market inclusivity and economic development is cyclical and mutually reinforcing. This is because inclusive labour market enables broader participation of the population in productive activities, which enhances household income, reduces poverty, and stimulates economic growth. In turn, economic development creates more diverse and equitable employment opportunities, fostering further inclusion. Embedding inclusive values in early education helps shape attitudes that reduce discrimination and promote workplace fairness.

Indicators of Ethical and Values Education on Labour Market Inclusivity for Economic Development

Addressing ethical and values education on the ground of labour market inclusivity for economic development, there are specific indicators that systematically define and explain how this synergy cooperatively works to achieve educational trainings for tailored towards employability and entrepreneurship.



The indicators are as follows:

1. Individuals' possession of Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Workplace: This indicator hinges on reduction in workplace corruption and unethical practices, increased adherence to professional codes of conduct and improved transparency and accountability in labour practices (OECD, 2020).
2. Flexible Inclusive Employment Practices: This indicator hinges on increased employment of marginalized or underrepresented groups like women, persons with disabilities, and those regarded as ethnic minorities. Improved workplace diversity and equal opportunity policies and higher retention rates of previously excluded labour segments (ILO, 2021).
3. Social Responsibility and Citizenship: This indicator hinges on higher civic participation of educated youth in economic decision-making, enhanced corporate social responsibility (CSR) in business operations and greater alignment of corporate values with national development goals.
4. Skill Development and Employability through Education: This indicator hinges on increased enrolment in vocational and value-based education programs, enhanced soft skills (e.g., empathy, teamwork, conflict resolution) among graduates and employer satisfaction with graduates' ethical and social competence.
5. Productivity and Economic Participation: This indicator hinges on higher levels of workforce discipline and punctuality, improved worker motivation and productivity and reduction in job turnover due to improved workplace relationships (World Bank, 2022).
6. Policy and Governance Impact: This indicator hinges on implementation of ethics-based curriculum across educational levels, existence of national or organizational frameworks for values education and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for ethical standards in employment
7. Reduction in Social and Economic Inequalities: This indicator hinges on decrease in youth unemployment, especially among vulnerable populations and improved income distribution and social mobility opportunities and integration of ethical standards in entrepreneurship and innovation sectors (UNESCO, 2015).

Ways Ethical and Values Education can be Re-engineered to Promote Labour Market Inclusivity for National Economic Development

The ways EVE can be re-engineered to promote labour-market inclusivity for national economic development are as follows:

- 1) **Build Employability Soft Skills that Incorporate Ethical and Values Education that Widen Access to Quality Jobs**
From every indication, EVE systematically nurtures integrity, teamwork, empathy, conflict-resolution, respect for diversity, and accountability competencies employers increasingly rank as critical. This raises the employability of graduates from all socio-economic backgrounds, not only those with strong social capital. (World Bank, 2018; OECD, 2015; Clements & Sarama, 2009; National Policy on Education [NPE], 2014).
- 2) **Building individuals to Gain Knowledge on how to Reduce Discrimination and Bias in Hiring and at Work**
By foregrounding fairness, equity, dignity of labour and social justice, EVE helps future employers, human resource (HR) managers and employees internalise anti-bias norms, supporting inclusion of women, persons with disabilities, linguistic/ethnic minorities and other underserved groups. (UNESCO, 2015; OECD, 2017; Nwakanma, 2023). This opens doors for appealing characters that are tolerated by the labour market actors while seeking employees for respective jobs.
- 3) **Review Curricula to Gain Grounds on Lowering Corruption and Nepotism, Improving Allocative Efficiency**
Ethics-centred curricula (e.g., anti-corruption, transparency, rule of law) weaken the cultural acceptability of bribery, favouritism, sex-for-grades, and recruitment rackets, improving merit-based selection and productivity in both public and private sectors that do not encourage



- labour market growth that tend towards economic productivity. (Transparency International, 2023; Ejeh, 2022; NPE, 2014).
- 4) **Handle Education Programmes to Strengthens Trust, Institutional Quality, and Investment Climate**
Workforces socialised in ethical norms reinforce corporate governance, contract enforcement, and regulatory compliance conditions associated with higher domestic and foreign investment and faster growth. (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; OECD, 2015; UNESCO, 2015).
 - 5) **Design Programmes that Promotes Inclusive Entrepreneurship and Decent Work**
Values such as responsibility, reciprocity, and respect for labour standards foster ethical entrepreneurship that is less exploitative, more gender-inclusive, and more likely to formalise jobs—broadening participation in the labour market. (ILO, 2019; UNESCO, 2015; EsDev Foundation, 2025).
 - 6) **Set Standards that Enhances Productivity Via Ethical Work Cultures**
Ethical climates reduce workplace harassment, bullying, and discrimination, improving psychological safety, innovation, and team productivity. These are key drivers of firm-level and national competitiveness. (Edmondson, 2019; OECD, 2015; World Bank, 2018).
 - 7) **Teach Individuals Ethics and Values that Narrows Gender Gaps and Supports Vulnerable Groups**
EVE explicitly be review on the need to seriously teach gender equity, respect, inclusion, and human rights, supporting policies such as equal pay, anti-harassment codes, maternity/paternity protections, and reasonable accommodation, thereby raising female labour-force participation and inclusion. (UNESCO, 2015; OECD, 2017; Nwakanma, 2023).
 - 8) **Align schools/universities with codes of conduct that model inclusion**
When institutions practice what they teach, e.g. transparent grading, zero tolerance for harassment and bribery, inclusive admissions/hiring, they create role-model ecosystems that graduates carry into the labour market. (Ejeh, 2022; NPE, 2014; UBEC, 2019).
 - 9) **Reduce skills-values mismatch that fuels unemployment**
For the fact, Nigeria's employers in some cases report ethical/behavioural deficits among graduates, re-engineering curricula to integrate ethics with technical/TVET skills would raise job readiness, lowering frictional unemployment and underemployment. This view is supported by World Bank (2018); EsDev Foundation (2025); Fayemi & Adediran (2024).
 - 10) **Teach Ethics and Values that Supports peace, cohesion, and lower transaction costs**
When individuals are taught to cultivate tolerance, civic responsibility, and respect for rule of law, it will reduce social frictions and conflict costs, freeing fiscal space for productive investment and human-capital development. (UNESCO, 2015; OECD, 2015).

Challenges to the Implementation of Ethical and Values Education on Labour Market Inclusivity and National Economic Development

Weak Policy Implementation and Political Will Even when policies exist, poor political will, weak governance structures, and lack of monitoring mechanisms hinders effective implementation of ethics-based education programmes.

Lack of Curriculum Standardization

Many Nigerian schools lack a standardized curriculum that integrates ethical and values education across all levels (primary, secondary, tertiary). This inconsistency hampers national alignment on core values needed for labour inclusivity and economic participation (UNESCO-IBE (2017)).

Weak Institutional Commitment and Support

Without self-driven management and administrative support, such as dedicated enforcement of codes of conduct or systematic oversight mechanisms, ethical and values education becomes superficial and inconsistent to achieve desired goals.



Character Mismanagement of Role Models Undertaking Ethical and Values Education

Role Models liketeachers and other administrative officers in schools who are responsible in instilling ethical conducts and values in schools are sometime unworthy to deliver ethical and values-based education due to unruly behaviours and questionable characters, which directly contradicts emulative behaviours. It is good to practice what one preaches to encourage others to act rightly but in some cases the reverse is the case amongst some personnel undertaking such sensitive responsibility in school. This ugly situationmakes values education remains abstract and disconnected from real-world applications.

Wilful disobedience to values and ethical practices

There are instances where individuals wilfully deviate from practicing well-articulated values and ethical conducts taught and instilled in them during the course of schooling due to personal beliefs and life styles. People tend to violate such quality and life transforming ethics and values embedded them which practically circumvent such transformative aspect of the curricular.

Socioeconomic Inequalities and Cultural Barriers

Sometimes, poverty, cultural relativism, religious practices and social stratification tend to limit the reach and acceptance of ethical norms, especially in regions where traditional or religious beliefs conflict with formal education systems. These negatively affect the goals of ethical and values education practices.

Influence of Corruption and Poor Role Modelling

Flippant and rampant corruption in society unruly undermines moral lessons taught in schools. When learners see unethical behaviour rewarded in workplaces and government, it devastatingly contradicts the ethics curriculum.

Limited Linkages Between Education and the Labour Market

There exists notable disconnect between what is taught in values education and what is demanded in some workplaces. Some employers may prioritize technical competence directly needed at work over ethical behaviour, reducing the incentive for schools to emphasize ethics extensively in the curriculum.

The Way Forward

Re-engineering ethical and values education to promote labour market inclusivity and national economic development in Nigeria is a sensitive venture to passionately shoulder by every actor in the system because of its numerous benefits to a nation's rejuvenation. The following are some ways to achieve such venture.

Promote School-to-Work Transition Programmes with Ethical Emphasis: Encourage purpose driven entrepreneurship programmes, internship and mentorship programmes that promote ethics, inclusion, and civic responsibility in real-world settings. This can be done by embedding ethical performance indicators in school-industry collaboration initiatives.

Model Ethical Leadership and Governance in Schools and Public Institutions: Schools and universities must reflect the values they teach by enforcing codes of conduct, transparency, and inclusive policies in administration and classroom practices. This can be done through establishing integrity clubs and ethics oversight committees in educational institutions headed by a known character purposely for such situation.

Foster Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: Collaborate with employers, NGOs, faith-based groups, and government agencies to reinforce values education and link it to labour market needs and national priorities. This can be done through national values summits and inter-agency committees to monitor progress.

Strengthen Teacher Training and Professional Development: Select right educators and equip them with necessary skills to teach ethics and values effectively. Training programmes should include modules on



workplace ethics, civic responsibility, and inclusive development. This can be undertaken by partnering with institutions like TRCN and NCCE to update teacher education frameworks specifically on the aspect so it will be taken seriously.

Integrate Ethics and Values into All Levels of the Curriculum: Ethical and values education should be embedded systematically across primary, secondary, and tertiary curricula, using real-life labour and workplace examples to prepare students for ethical participation in the job market. This can be done by identifying areas that the national curriculum can be revised to align with sustainable development values and global labour standards.

Implement Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Systems for Values Education in Schools: Track and assess the impact of ethical and values education on students' workplace behaviour, inclusion in employment, and contributions to national development. Develop indicators for ethical awareness, inclusive attitudes, and civic responsibility in education assessments.

Conclusion

Ethical and Values Education in Nigeria seeks to train citizens who are morally upright, socially responsible, and committed to the national ethos. Though embedded in formal curricula like Social Studies and CRK/IRK, its efficacy depends on balanced coverage, teacher readiness, institutional backing, and alignment across home and societal structures. Effective implementation promises to reduce antisocial behaviours and improve the quality of citizenship and national development. Therefore, the relationship between labour market inclusivity and economic development is cyclical and mutually reinforcing. An inclusive labour market enables broader participation of the population in productive activities, which enhances household income, reduces poverty, and stimulates economic growth. In turn, economic development creates more diverse and equitable employment opportunities, fostering further inclusion.

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