

SCHOOL ETHICS AND VALUES: A WATCHDOG FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA



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Abstract

This project was aimed at finding out school ethics and values: A watchdog for educational development in Nigeria. The population for the study comprises all the principals in secondary schools in Enugu State which is 295 respondents that is made up of 145 male and 150 female principals. The researcher used census sampling because it is manageable. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled “ school ethics and values as a watchdog for educational development Questionnaire (SEWEDQ)”. The research questions was answered using mean and standard deviations. It was discovered that ethics encourages students to be honest in their academic work; encourages students to consider others’ perspectives and feelings, developing empathy and compassion etc; and that values fosters cultural integrity and respect among students and teachers. It was recommended that Ethics should be taking as a serious business in maintaining principles and orderliness in schools as to shape students attitude towards life, teachers should try as much as possible inculcate positive values to students irrespective of government poor regards towards many professions like teaching in the country and that the issue of ethics, morals and values should be broadcasted in TV stations and Radio station to improve citizens awareness in doing what is right in the society in general.

Keywords: Ethics, Values, Educational Development, School

Introduction

Education in general sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual. Etymologically, the word education is derived from the Latin Educo, educare or educatio, which means educate, train. Education is a process of acquiring information. It means teaching and learning. Education affects on human mind, character and physical abilities. The history of education begins with the human history itself. Education is also a way to become civilized individuals and it maximizes human potential. Culture and cultural heritage, values and ethics can be transmitted by education, because the main occupation of man is to pass knowledge, skills and attitude from one generation to another. Obasola (2019) opined that ethics refers to the guidelines for conducts that address questions of morality while values is defined as the principles and ideals which help them in making the judgment of what is more important. That is to say that ethics is a system of moral principles, in contrast to values which is the stimuli of our thinking. From time immemorial, the quest for moral principle is an intrinsic phenomenon which makes social life governable and blissful. As such, every person, irrespective of age, colour, sex, or social standing is

subject to the dictates of the moral principle. This is because the concept of morality serves a holistic function as it is the bedrock upon which the edifice of a truly righteous and egalitarian society rests. Implicitly, ethics and values form a fundamental aspect of every culture as it outlines comprehensively, codes of behaviour or conducts for the individual on the one hand, and the society on the other. Morals refer to human behaviour where morality is the practical activity and, ethics describes the theoretical, systematic and rational reflection upon that human behaviour (Churchill, 2022).

Values are linked to beliefs and attitudes that guide human behaviour (Rennie, 2017). Morals, values and ethics are strongly attached to society spirituality and culture (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2021). There are three meanings of ethics. First, ethics is commonly taken as a synonym for morality, the universal values and standards of conduct that every rational person wants every other to follow. Secondly, ethics is a well-established branch of philosophy that studies the sources of human values and standards, and struggle to locate them within theories of human individual and social condition. Thirdly, professional ethics, and it is not universal nor is it ethical theory; it refers to the special codes of conduct adhered to by those who are engaged in common pursuit. Professional ethics is an integral part of a profession (Kovac, 2016). However, Obasola (2019) avers that morality is not an abstract phenomenon but a real practical means of developing the sense of justice in the people as a prerequisite for social solidarity, welfare and happiness in the society. It is so crucial not only to the individual but also to the school and the society at large.

The school as part of the society was formal modification of character and discipline are assured. The school has a very important role to play in shaping the moral standard of every individual. With the help of school, individual students are provided with different teaching apparatus and adequate monitoring of individual character which tends to be one of the greatest obligations to be achieved. Nowadays, technological development orchestrated by globalization and civilization have attenuated and grossly affected our moral ethos. This has brought about a breakdown of the social structure on which society rests. Patrick (2018), notes that civilization has had and is still having a lot of negative impacts on the life of the Africans, most especially Nigerians. The problem of decline in public morality and national discipline in Nigeria is very alarming. Every sphere of like is not spared by this cankerworm which has eaten deep into every facet of the society. This prevailing situation has been incisively portrayed by Iwe (2021) who surmises that “over-concern with one’s self-importance and pre-occupation with self-aggrandizement naturally lead to total indiscipline or moral decadence from the self to the society”. At this juncture, it becomes expedient to discuss why ethics should be taught and what kind of ethics should be taught in schools. The importance of ethical education in nation building/ national development cannot be overemphasized. Teaching ethics in schools will help us reflect on the moral dimensions of the decisions we make.

Objekwu and Obiesili (2022) opined that moral laxity and other social vices especially as depicted in corruption in high and low places, drug trafficking, smuggling, advanced free fraud popularly called 419, increasing crime wave, theft, robbery, religious and ethnic violence, injustice, examination malpractice, sorting and so on are now the order of the day in Nigerian schools. Abogunrin (2023) states categorically that “there was never a time when humanity was so degraded and spiritually blind as is evidence in the madness we see around us daily in Nigeria society. Apparently, meaningful development has been halted and the nation is in the throes of disintegration. It is against this backdrop that the study advocates for the re-orientation of ethics and moral values as a panacea for sustainable development in Nigeria. Attention will be placed on teaching morals, values, ethics and character education in schools Causes of Moral Problems in Nigeria At this juncture, it is important to examine the causes of these moral vices that are bedeviling the Nigerian nation. They include: Break down of the family unit/lack of parental influence. As we all know, the home is the foundation for acceptable behaviour. The quality of this foundation determines the quality of subsequent effort towards desirable behaviour. There is a break- down of the family structure due to the individualistic tendencies now exhibited by our people due principally to the economic situation in the country. This has also forced many parents to abandon their responsibilities to their children and to their families for a white cola job that keeps them on the street for a better part of the day. The care of children are now trusted into the hands of “house girls and boys” who in turn will corrupt the children. The end product of this

seemingly “abandoned children” is moral decadence. Therefore, this present study tends to raise important questions, how can school help in solving this problem? Do you have any hand in the issue of poor ethics and depreciated value in the society?

Statement of the Problem

Educational institutions which are suppose to be the bedrock of moral instructions has been hit by this cancer orchestrated by poor funding. The rapacity of strikes and industrial actions in our institutions is ferocious. This culminates in half baked graduates with little or nothing to show at the end of the day. It equally accounts for high incidence of cultism in our tertiary institutions. Again on the part of the students, loss of morals has made a good number of them to engage all their time viewing pornographic videos with their android phones. When it is time for examinations, you see them engaging in examination malpractice. Some even go to the extent of “sorting” their lecturers in order to pass. One can go on and on with the devastating effects of the rubbishing of ethics and moral values as it cuts across all sectors. The truth, therefore, is that the demeaning of ethics and moral values remains the cause of the problems facing us as a nation and until urgent steps are taken to remedy it, Nigeria will continue to wallow in this moral mess. In a nutshell, national growth and development cannot be achieved given the state of moral decadence staring us in the face. Now, the question that demands an urgent answer is: what can we do as a nation to overcome these ethical and moral problems to achieve sustainable development. Therefore, the study tends to identify areas school ethics and values: A watchdog for educational development in Public Secondary Schools in Enugu State.

Purpose of the Study

The man purpose of this study is to identify school ethics and values: A watchdog for educational Development in Enugu State.

Specifically, the study sought to identify:

- The role of school ethics in shaping educational development in Enugu State.
- The role of school values in shaping the development in Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research questions are been developed to guide the study.

What are the roles of school ethics in shaping educational development in Enugu State?

What are the roles of school values in shaping the educational development in Enugu State?

Research Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Nworgu (2015) defined descriptive survey research design as a method that enables the study of a representative subset of people or items to gather and analyze data reflecting the characteristics of the entire group. This approach is typically used to infer findings about a larger population based on the responses from a sample. However, in this study, despite Nworgu's definition of descriptive survey research design, sampling will not be employed. The decision to forego sampling is due to the manageable size of the population being studied. Since the entire population is of a feasible size for direct study, it is more practical and comprehensive to include all respondents rather than just a subset. This approach ensures that the data was accurate and complete as possible for the research objectives. The descriptive survey research design is justified for this study because it will enable comprehensive data collection and analysis from the respondents to accurately reflect the broader population's needs and practices.

The study was carried out in all the public secondary schools in Enugu State. Enugu State is one of the states located in the South East Zone of Nigeria. It has six educational zones, namely: Agbani, Awgu, Enugu, Nsukka, Obollo-Afor, and Udi. Enugu State is bounded in the East by Ebonyi State, in the West by Anambra State, and in the North by Kogi and Benue States. The language of the people of Enugu State is Igbo, and most of them are involved in agriculture and civil service. The city owes its geographical significance to the discovery of coal in 1909. Its major source of revenue is through coal that is why the state in called “Coal City State”. Enugu State is chosen as the area of the study because

the researcher was very familiar with the area. The state predominantly civil servants, traders, farmers and is one of the educationally advantaged states with many secondary schools and tertiary institutions, both public and private. The justification for using Enugu State is that it will provide a comprehensive setting to evaluate and enhance principals' financial management skills to improve overall educational quality.

The population for the study comprises all the principals in secondary schools in Enugu State which is 295 respondents that is made up of 145 male and 150 female principals (Post Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB), Enugu, 2024)

The census sample of the 295 subjects was used. The researcher will use census sampling because it is manageable. It is in agreement with the postulation made by Uzoagulu in Nworgu (2015) that when a population is small or manageable, the researcher can make use of the whole population.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled “ school ethics and values as a watchdog for educational development Questionnaire (SEVWEDQ)”. The questionnaire has two sections, A and B. Section A will focus on the bio-data of the respondents while section B was based on the information on school ethics and values. It has 20 items built in two clusters. Cluster 1 has 10 items on ethics, cluster 2 has 10 items on values. The instrument was structured in a 4-point response categories and rating values as follows; Strongly Agree (SA) – 4 points, Agree (A) – 3 points, Disagree (D) – 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1 point. An introductory letter to the respondents stating the reasons for the study was attached to the instrument.

The instrument was validated by three research experts. Two of the experts were from the Department of Educational Management and one from the Department of Mathematics and Computer Education (Measurement and Evaluation option), all from Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu. They were requested to validate the instrument in terms of clarity, adequacy and appropriateness with particular reference to the purpose of study, research questions and hypotheses.

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a reliability test was conducted on 20 male principals and 20 female principals in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The overall reliability index was .81. This showed that the instrument is suitable to be used for this study.

The researcher, aided by six research assistants, was distributed the copies of questionnaire to the respondents, consisting of both male and female principals. To ensure effective communication, the researcher will hold a one-day interactive session to brief the research assistants, guiding them on courteous interaction and addressing any queries from the respondents. Meanwhile 295 (100%) of the questionnaire was returned. The research questions was answered using mean and standard deviations.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the roles of school ethics in shaping educational development in Enugu State?

Table 1: The mean rating of male and female principals’ responses on the roles of school ethics in shaping educational development.

S/N	ITEMS	Male Principals 145		Female Principals 150		Overall 295		Dec
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	
1	Encouraging students to be honest in their academic work	2.62	.96	2.58	.89	2.60	.93	Agree
2	Encouraging students to consider others’ perspectives and feelings, developing empathy and compassion	2.62	.89	2.55	.94	2.59	.92	Agree

3	Teaching students to take responsibility for their actions and their learning	2.55	.92	2.59	.89	2.57	.91	Agree
4	Helping students to develop self-awareness, recognizing their strengths, weakness and values.	2.65	.82	2.63	.80	2.64	.81	Agree
5	Encouraging students to regulate their emotions, behaviours and learning	2.54	.84	2.57	.82	2.56	.83	Agree
6	Fostering resilience, enabling students to cope with challenges and setbacks	2.59	.82	2.60	.82	2.60	.82	Agree
7	Teaching students essential skills such as communication, cooperation and conflict resolution	2.63	.80	2.54	.82	2.59	.81	Agree
8	Helping students to develop emotional intelligence, recognizing managing their emotions	2.56	.89	2.60	.90	2.58	.90	Agree
9	Fostering character development, including traits like kindness, fairness and responsibility	2.60	.94	2.64	.88	2.62	.91	Agree
10	Building trust between students and teachers.	2.67	.87	2.68	.93	2.68	.90	Agree
Cluster Mean/SD		2.60	0.88	2.60	0.87	2.6	0.88	Agree

In the above Table 1, the male principals' mean ranged from 2.54 to 2.65, while the female principals' mean ranged from 2.54 to 2.68. The values of their cluster means are 2.60 and 2.60 with standard deviations of .88 and .87 respectively. However, their overall mean ranged from 2.58 to 2.68 with cluster mean of 2.60 and standard deviation of .88. The finding of the study signifies that ethics serves as a watchdog for educational development in Enugu State. The respondents' standard deviations indicate that their responses are consistent

Research Question 2: What are the roles of school values in shaping the educational development in Enugu State?

Table 2: The mean rating of students responses to the roles of school values in shaping the educational development

S/N	ITEMS	Male Principals 145		Female Principals 150		Overall 295		Dec
		X	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	
11	Values fosters cultural integrity and respect among students and teachers	2.54	.91	2.50	.95	2.53	.93	Agee
12	Values promotes empathy and compassion among students	2.52	.93	2.54	.94	2.53	.94	Agree
13	It promotes the spirit of responsibility among students	2.51	.90	2.53	.90	2.52	.90	Agree
14	It increases the power of perseverance among teachers and students	2.53	.86	2.53	.88	2.53	.87	Agree

15	Values improves students alacrity and zeal to attain academic excellence	2.54	.96	2.58	.93	2.56	.95	Agree
16	It foster creativity, innovation and critical thinking	2.50	.91	2.52	.90	2.51	.91	Agree
17	It improves love for learning	2.45	.95	2.48	.90	2.47	.93	Disagree
18	It encourages open communication	2.38	.90	2.43	.88	2.41	.90	Disagree
19	Encourages inter personal motivation	1.50	.96	1.58	.97	1.54	.97	Disagree
20	Increases personal efficacy and self determination	2.55	.80	2.54	.82	2.54	.82	Agree
Cluster Mean/SD		2.65	0.99	2.67	0.99	2.65	0.90	Agree

Data analysis on Table 2, show that the male principals' mean ranged from 2.38 to 2.58, while the female principals' mean ranged from 2.42 to 2.56. The values of their cluster means are 2.52 and 2.53 with standard deviations of .92 and .92 respectively. However, their overall mean ranged from 2.41 to 2.58 with cluster mean of 2.6 and standard deviation of 0.90. The finding of the study signifies that values serves as a watchdog for educational development in Enugu State. The standard deviations of the respondents suggest that their responses are uniform.

Discussion of Findings

Roles of school ethics in shaping educational development

The findings of the study reveal that: ethics Encouraging students to be honest in their academic work; encouraging students to consider others' perspectives and feelings, developing empathy and compassion ; teaches students to take responsibility for their actions and their learning; Help students to develop self-awareness, recognizing their strengths, weakness and values; encouraging students to regulate their emotions, behaviours and learning; fostering resilience, enabling students to cope with challenges and setbacks; Teaches students essential skills such as communication, cooperation and conflict resolution; fostering character development, including traits like kindness, fairness and responsibility and build trust between students and teachers. The study's results resonate with the conclusions drawn by Obasola (2019) who opined that ethics refers to the guidelines for conducts that address questions of morality while values is defined as the principles and ideals which help them in making the judgment of what is more important. That is to say that ethics is a system of moral principles, in contrast to values which is the stimuli of our thinking.

Roles of school values in shaping educational development

The study's findings revealed that Values fosters cultural integrity and respect among students and teachers, Values promotes empathy and compassion among students; promotes the spirit of responsibility among students; increases the power of perseverance among teachers and students; values improves students alacrity and zeal to attain academic excellence; value foster creativity, innovation and critical thinking; values improves love for learning; encourages open communication and feedback; increases students engagement, thereby, reducing time redundancy among students and values increases students engagement, thereby, reducing time redundancy among students. The current finding aligns with previous research conducted by Rennie (2017) who opined that values are linked to beliefs and attitudes and guide human behaviour . Morals, values and ethics are strongly attached to society spirituality and culture.

Conclusion

There is no gain saying the fact that the rate of moral decadence in Nigeria is disturbingly alarming and this has affected the pace of development in the country. In this regard, thereis the urgent

need for a re-orientation, a re- engineering and a re-focusing on our moral values with a view to actualizing our potentials and harnessing our resources, both human and material, for a greater, purposeful, egalitarian and vibrant society. To this effect, all hands must be on deck to actualize this goal. In this regard, ethics education must be given a pride of place in all our educational institutions starting from the primary to the tertiary levels. Also, every citizen must imbibe the culture of moral value recognizing that society as a *suigeneri* is real only to the extent to which the members are instructed and guided by their value system. This presupposes that every social institution such as the family, the church, the schools, and the government must take the culture of punctuality very seriously, we must preach against violence, insolence and other vices which will project the nation in bad light.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that:

Ethics should be taking as a serious business in maintaining principles and orderliness in schools as to shape students attitude towards life

Teachers should try as much as possible inculcate positive values to students irrespective government regards towards many profession like teaching in the country.

The issue of ethics, morals and values should be broadcasted in TV stations and Radio station to improve citizens awareness in doing what is right in the society in general.

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