



ETHICAL AND VALUES EDUCATION: RE-ENGINEERING FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



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Abstract

This paper underscores the critical role of ethical and values education in fostering sustainable national development, with a particular focus on Nigeria. In the context of global environmental, social, and economic challenges, education serves as a pivotal tool for cultivating responsible citizens equipped to address issues such as corruption, inequality, and environmental degradation. The integration of ethical principles and core values into curricula is essential for nurturing civic responsibility, social cohesion, environmental stewardship, and good governance. Despite widespread recognition of its importance, current educational systems often prioritize academic achievement over moral and ethical development, hindered by curricular limitations, resistance to change, inadequate teacher training, and lack of supportive policies. To re-engineer ethical and values education effectively, the paper advocates for comprehensive curriculum reform, enhanced teacher professional development, community engagement, and the development of robust assessment frameworks. Embedding ethics into all levels of education through policy reforms and stakeholder collaboration can foster a culture of integrity, social justice, and sustainability. The proposed strategies aim to produce a generation capable of making informed, ethical decisions that promote societal well-being and environmental resilience. Ultimately, re-engineering ethical and values education is vital for Nigeria's journey toward sustainable development, ensuring that future leaders and citizens uphold principles of justice, responsibility, and stewardship, thereby contributing to a more equitable and sustainable nation. This holistic approach emphasizes the transformative power of education in shaping a resilient society committed to long-term sustainability.

Keywords: *Ethical and Values Education, re-engineer, environmental stewardship, sustainable national development and community engagement.*

Introduction

In the 21st century, the imperative for sustainable national development has gained heightened attention due to escalating environmental challenges, social inequalities, and economic disparities. The transition towards sustainability necessitates not only technological advancements and policy reforms but also a profound transformation in the educational landscape. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, emphasize the need for inclusive and equitable quality education that promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). Central to achieving these goals is the integration of ethical and value education into educational frameworks.

Ethical education focuses on instilling moral values and principles that guide individuals in making decisions that honor the dignity of all human beings and promote societal welfare. Likewise, value education emphasizes the cultivation of personal and collective values that drive positive behavior and social responsibility. According to Nussbaum (2010), ethical education contributes significantly to the formation of well-rounded individuals equipped to engage in democratic processes and contribute to

the common good. In the context of national development, fostering ethical and value-driven citizens is crucial for addressing systemic issues such as corruption, inequality, and environmental degradation. Research indicates that ethical and value education can lead to enhanced civic engagement and social cohesion (Dewey, 1997). Educating individuals about their responsibilities within their communities cultivates a sense of accountability and encourages participatory governance. Key works in this field, such as those by Hepburn (2018), argue that responsible citizens are more inclined to advocate for sustainable practices and resist actions detrimental to society and the environment.

Additionally, the academic discourse surrounding sustainability education underscores the necessity of incorporating ethics and values into educational curricula. According to Tilbury (2011), the integration of sustainability into education should encompass a critical examination of values, ethics, and their implications for future generations. By fostering an ethical worldview, educational institutions can equip learners with the critical skills needed to navigate ethical dilemmas and contribute to sustainable practices across various domains of life—from politics and business to community engagement and environmental stewardship.

Despite the recognition of its importance, the current state of ethical and value education varies significantly across different regions and educational systems. In many contexts, curricula are predominantly focused on academic achievement and technical skills, with limited attention to moral and ethical dimensions (Osler & Starkey, 2005). This gap highlights the urgent need for educational reform aimed at re-engineering curricula to emphasize ethical and value education as foundational pillars for fostering sustainable national development.

The convergence of ethical education and sustainable development presents a critical opportunity for re-engineering national educational frameworks. Educators, policymakers, and stakeholders must collaborate to embed ethical considerations into educational practices, fostering a generation of individuals capable of making sustainable choices and advocating for collective welfare. This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role of ethical and value education in driving sustainable national development, offering insights and recommendations for integrating these principles into educational policies and practices.

The pursuit of sustainable national development has emerged as a critical discourse in the face of numerous global challenges, including environmental degradation, economic inequality, and complex societal issues. Sustainable development, as defined by the Brundtland Commission (1987), is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Achieving this balance requires an educational approach that not only imparts technical knowledge but also cultivates ethical consciousness among learners.

The Role of Education in Sustainable Development

Education plays a pivotal role in fostering sustainable development. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2014) emphasizes the importance of education in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” Within this context, ethical education serves as a foundation for shaping responsible global citizens equipped to tackle pressing challenges.

Ethical Education Reengineering for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

Sustainable national development in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach, integrating economic growth, social equity, and environmental resilience (United Nations, 2015). A crucial yet often overlooked element is the ethical dimension of education. Ethical education reengineering involves re-evaluating and redesigning educational curricula to instill values that promote sustainability, social responsibility, and good governance. This paper explores how this approach can support sustainable national development in Nigeria.



The Importance of Ethical Education

Ethical education encompasses the teaching of moral principles, values, and decision-making processes that guide individuals in their interactions with others and the environment. The primary objectives of ethical education include fostering critical thinking, promoting social responsibility, and encouraging environmentally sustainable practices (Hahn & Preuss, 2014).

Research indicates that ethical education is a catalyst for positive change within societies. According to Hunt & Vasquez (2011), ethical education enhances civic engagement, nurtures empathy, and fosters a commitment to social justice. By equipping individuals with the ethical tools necessary for navigating complex societal dilemmas, educational institutions can facilitate the emergence of a generation dedicated to sustainable practices and responsible governance.

Ethical education is an essential pillar for re-engineering national development strategies aimed at sustainability. By fostering ethical awareness and responsibility among students, educational systems can cultivate a generation of leaders and citizens equipped to address today's pressing global challenges. The integration of ethical education into curricula, teacher training, and community engagement is vital for empowering individuals to contribute positively to society and the environment. With concerted efforts from educators, policymakers, and communities, ethical education can become a cornerstone of sustainable national development.

Ethical education encompasses teaching values, principles, and moral responsibilities that guide individuals in making decisions beneficial to society and the environment (Gini, 2004). In Nigeria, a country facing challenges such as corruption, environmental degradation, and social inequality, fostering a strong ethical foundation is critical. Ethical education encourages citizens to act thoughtfully and responsibly, enhancing civic engagement and community welfare (Haidt, 2012).

Re-engineering Ethical Education

1. Curriculum Development

Integrating Ethics into the Curriculum: The Nigerian education system should incorporate ethics as a standalone subject, emphasizing topics such as environmental ethics, social justice, and corporate responsibility (Osher et al., 2016). This can help students cultivate a comprehensive understanding of the consequences of their actions on society and the environment.

Experiential Learning: Implementing project-based and service-learning experiences can help students connect ethical theories with real-world challenges, fostering a sense of responsibility and community belonging (Kraft & Bilal, 2016).

2. Teacher Training

Professional Development: Educators must undergo training that equips them with the tools to teach ethical concepts effectively (Moral Education, 2019). Workshops and continuous professional development programs should focus on ethics education methodologies and the importance of role modeling ethical behavior.

3. Community Involvement

Partnerships with Local Organizations: Schools should collaborate with NGOs, local businesses, and community leaders to promote ethical values and sustainability initiatives, bridging the gap between education and community practice (Brown & Michael, 2018).

4. Policy Framework

Government Support: The Nigerian government should create policies that mandate the integration of ethical education across all levels of the schooling system. Such frameworks should also encourage ethical behavior in governance and corporate responsibility, promoting accountability (Odum, 2021).

Impacts on Sustainable National Development

1. **Enhanced Civic Responsibility:** An emphasis on ethical education can produce citizens who are more aware of their civic duties and are motivated to participate in democratic processes, thus strengthening governance (Okwu & Oyinloye, 2018).
2. **Social Cohesion and Justice:** Ethical education encourages respect for diversity and promotes social justice, which is essential in a multicultural society like Nigeria (Tutu, 2014). Teaching values of empathy, equity, and respect can help reduce conflicts and foster unity.
3. **Environmental Stewardship:** Educating youth about environmental ethics can instill a sense of responsibility towards nature, encouraging sustainable practices that can mitigate ecological degradation (Sengupta et al., 2020).
4. **Combating Corruption:** By instilling strong ethical principles in future leaders, the likelihood of corrupt practices may diminish, leading to better governance and accountability (Transparency International, 2019).

Values Education: Re-engineering for Sustainable National Development

In an era marked by escalating environmental concerns and social challenges, the concept of sustainable national development has gained unprecedented significance. The United Nations defines sustainable development as a process that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations, 1987). Achieving this balance hinges on a fundamental shift in education, particularly through the promotion of values education.

Values education refers to the systematic approach to teaching and learning that emphasizes moral and ethical principles, fostering the development of positive attitudes and behaviors among individuals (Bray, 2008). It aims to cultivate citizens who not only possess knowledge and skills but also demonstrate empathy, social responsibility, and a commitment to the common good. In this study, we explore how values education can be re-engineered as a core component of national development strategies, emphasizing its potential to produce engaged, responsible citizens capable of addressing the challenges of our time.

Values education encompasses a multitude of teachings that focus on developing personal and social values aligned with ethical standards. Rath, Harmin, and Simon (1978) define values as beliefs or principles that guide behavior and decision-making. Values education facilitates a profound understanding of concepts such as respect, compassion, integrity, and justice. It equips students to navigate complex ethical challenges and fosters civic responsibility essential for sustainable development.

The Intersection of Values Education and Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is fundamentally rooted in the principles of equity, justice, and responsible stewardship of resources. Values education emerges as a natural ally in promoting these principles, as it encourages individuals to prioritize the well-being of both current and future generations (Tilbury, 2011). As noted by Tilley (2021), education focused on values can enhance awareness of socio-environmental issues, ultimately driving positive social change.

The Importance of Ethical and Values Education in National Development Fostering Responsible Citizenship

Values education plays a critical role in shaping responsible citizens who are engaged in their communities and committed to democratic principles. Research has shown that students who receive values-based education are more likely to participate in civic activities, develop empathy toward others, and possess a strong sense of social responsibility (Sherrod et al., 2002). By fostering active civic engagement, values education contributes to social cohesion and sustainable community development.



Promoting Environmental Stewardship

With climate change posing an existential threat, instilling a sense of environmental stewardship through values education is more crucial than ever. According to UNESCO (2014), education for sustainable development must incorporate ethical considerations concerning the environment, highlighting the need for teaching values that promote conservation, respect for nature, and sustainable practices. Values education encourages individuals to make informed and responsible decisions regarding their consumption habits and environmental impact.

Addressing Social Inequalities

Values education has the potential to address systemic inequalities by fostering inclusion and understanding among diverse populations. Values such as empathy, respect, and justice can challenge biases and promote tolerance, enabling students to engage constructively with issues related to social justice (Hollander & Zinkler, 2018). By fostering an understanding of global citizenship, values education lays the groundwork for a more equitable and inclusive society.

Challenges of Ethical and Values Education: Re-engineering for Sustainable National Development

The integration of ethical and values education into national development frameworks aimed at achieving sustainability presents various challenges. Despite the recognition of its significance, several barriers hinder effective implementation. This analysis outlines the key challenges faced in promoting ethical and values education, with appropriate citations and references.

1. Curricular Limitations

One of the most significant challenges is the fragmentation and lack of coherence in current educational curricula, which often prioritize academic performance and standardized testing over the integration of ethical and values education. Many educational systems operate under rigid structures that do not allow for the incorporation of values-based learning (Osler & Starkey, 2005). This gap can diminish the potential impact of values education on students' ethical development.

2. Resistance to Change

Resistance from educators, administrators, and policymakers can impede the introduction of values education programs. Many educational institutions prioritize traditional forms of education focused on cognitive skills, often perceiving ethical and values education as secondary or less important (Schwartz, 2019). This tendency can lead to a lack of buy-in and support for initiatives aimed at embedding ethics and values into the curriculum.

3. Insufficient Teacher Training and Resources

The effective delivery of values education requires teachers who are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and confidence to address ethical issues in the classroom. However, many teachers lack adequate training in ethical pedagogy and values education, leading to inconsistent implementation (Meyer & Dawkins, 2017). Additionally, insufficient resources can limit opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development.

4. Lack of Clear Policy Frameworks

The absence of clear national policies that prioritize ethical and values education can create ambiguity and hinder the integration of these principles within existing educational systems. Many countries lack comprehensive guidelines or dedicated resources that specify how values education should be implemented across various levels of education (Wilson, 2015). This lack of direction can lead to varying degrees of commitment and effectiveness in different institutions.

5. Cultural and Contextual Differences

Values education must often navigate diverse cultural contexts and differing societal values, making it challenging to establish a uniform curriculum. Disparities in cultural perspectives on ethical behavior



can lead to tensions in the classroom and community. In multicultural societies, educators may struggle to address a range of values and beliefs without alienating specific groups (Hollander & Zinkler, 2018).

6. Assessment Challenges

Evaluating the effectiveness of values and ethical education presents unique challenges. Traditional assessment methods often do not capture the nuances of ethical reasoning or value development among students (Cohen & Hough, 2018). The lack of appropriate assessment tools can lead to difficulties in demonstrating the impact of values education on student behavior and community involvement.

7. Short-Term Focus of Educational Systems

Many educational systems operate under pressures for immediate results, leading to a short-term focus on measurable academic outcomes rather than long-term ethical and value development (Tilbury, 2011). This focus can undermine the integration of values education, which often requires a long-term commitment to fostering a culture of ethical awareness and responsibility.

The Way Forward for Ethical and Values Education: Re-engineering for Sustainable National Development

The path forward for enhancing ethical and values education as a means of achieving sustainable national development involves a multifaceted approach that integrates policy reforms, curriculum development, teacher training, community engagement, and assessment methods. Below are key strategies and recommendations to advance this agenda:

1. Integrate Values Education into National Curriculum Frameworks

To promote ethical and values education effectively, it is essential to integrate these principles into the national curriculum across all education levels. A well-defined curricular framework should outline how ethical and values education will be incorporated into various subjects, fostering interdisciplinary connections. Policy makers should develop and implement comprehensive guidelines that mandate the inclusion of values education in school curricula, ensuring that ethical considerations are embedded in subjects such as science, social studies, and literature (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2014).

2. Enhance Teacher Training and Professional Development

Teachers play a crucial role in delivering values education. Providing adequate training and resources is essential to equip educators with the necessary skills and confidence to teach ethical principles effectively. Ongoing professional development programs should focus on pedagogical strategies for addressing ethical issues and facilitating values discussions. Education authorities must invest in teacher training programs that emphasize the importance of values education and provide practical strategies for its implementation (Hahn & Preuss, 2014).

3. Foster Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Engaging communities and stakeholders in the implementation of ethical and values education is vital. Partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community leaders can create a supportive environment for values-based initiatives. Service-learning projects can further enrich the educational experience by connecting students with community issues. Schools should actively involve parents, community members, and local organizations in the design and implementation of values education programs to ensure that these initiatives are relevant and culturally sensitive (Bray, 2008).

4. Develop Robust Assessment Frameworks

To measure the effectiveness of values education, it is important to develop assessment frameworks that evaluate students' understanding and application of ethical principles. Traditional assessment methods may not adequately reflect the impact of values education on student behavior and decision-making. Education systems should design assessment tools that account for the complexities of ethical reasoning



and values application, ensuring that evaluations are aligned with the goals of values education (Cohen & Hough, 2018).

5. Strengthen Policy Frameworks

A clear and coherent policy framework supporting ethical and values education at national and local levels is essential. Policymakers must prioritize the integration of values education into broader educational reforms and development strategies. Governments should establish policies that recognize the importance of ethical and values education as a foundational component of sustainable development, allocating resources and support for its implementation across educational institutions (Wilson, 2015).

6. Promote Research and Best Practices

Ongoing research is critical to understanding the best practices in values education and its impact on sustainable development. Establishing research networks among educational institutions can facilitate the sharing of experiences, successes, and challenges faced in implementing values education. Educational institutions and researchers should collaborate to conduct studies that assess the effectiveness of different approaches to values education, disseminating findings to inform practice and policy (Meyer & Dawkins, 2017).

Conclusion

Reengineering ethical and Value Education in Nigeria is essential for promoting sustainable national development. By redefining curricula, enhancing teacher training, fostering community involvement, and establishing supportive policy frameworks, Nigeria can cultivate a generation of ethical citizens. This transformation will equip individuals with the values and skills necessary for contributing positively to society, ultimately leading to a more sustainable and equitable nation.

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