

ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL MANAGERS' IMPLEMENTATION OF ETHICAL AND VALUES EDUCATION IN BASIC SCHOOLS IN IMO STATE, FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study empirically investigates the implementation of ethical and values education by school managers in basic schools in Imo state for sustainable national development in Nigeria. The aim of the study was to ascertain the level at which head-teachers implement ethical and value education that will lay the positive foundation to guide the pupils, in order to become useful citizens in adulthood. The general outlook shows a decadence of integrity, a corrupt and negatively bred crop of a nation that depicts a generally poor upbringing, which seems to start from the basic schooling stage. There is therefore the need to examine the basic school features. Two research questions were posed. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. A population of 1,380 pupils were used while a sample of 138 was drawn. The rating scales were used for data collection while the mean and standard deviation were used for data analyses. Findings revealed among others that head-teachers do not highly implement ethical education at the basic schools. It was therefore recommended among other that the Government should make efforts to revive the ethical education curriculum.

Key Words: Assessment, School Managers, Implementation, Ethical and Value Education, Basic Schools.

Introduction

Education is universally recognized as a vital instrument for personal empowerment, societal transformation, and national development. Beyond the acquisition of knowledge and vocational skills, education plays a critical role in shaping the character, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals. In particular, ethical and values education at the foundational levels of learning, which is commonly referred to as basic education, is crucial for building a morally upright and responsible citizenry. This form of education is not only about teaching right from wrong but also about instilling a deep sense of respect, empathy, tolerance, patriotism, and social responsibility among young learners.

In the Nigerian context, the need for ethical reorientation has never been more urgent. The prevalence of social vices such as examination malpractice, cultism, cybercrime, corruption, intolerance, and general moral decadence among youth reflects a systemic failure in value inculcation from the earliest stages of education. The National Policy on Education (2020) emphasizes that the goals of basic education include not only intellectual development but also the formation of character, discipline, and ethical conduct. This aligns with Nigeria's long-term vision for sustainable national development, as articulated in policy frameworks such as Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The school manager, whether referred to as head-teacher, principal, or administrator, serves as the chief architect of a school's operational and moral climate. Their leadership decisions, policy enforcement, staff coordination, and personal conduct are central to the successful integration of ethical and values education in the school environment. Effective school managers not only supervise teaching and learning but also model the behavior and attitudes they expect of both staff and students. They set the tone for a culture of honesty, discipline, respect, and civic responsibility. As such, the leadership capacity of school managers to implement values-based education cannot be underestimated. Despite the emphasis on values education in Nigeria's educational goals, there remains a significant gap between policy intentions and actual practice. Anecdotal and empirical evidence suggests that ethical and values education is often inconsistently implemented, poorly structured, or relegated to the sidelines in basic schools. Many school managers seem to lack the necessary training, institutional support, or resources to deliver effective value-based programs. Furthermore, societal contradictions, such as widespread corruption, media glorification of materialism, and the erosion of traditional family values, often undermine the ethical principles being taught in schools. This raises a critical question: To what extent are school managers in basic schools implementing ethical and values education in ways that contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's quest for sustainable national development? This study therefore seeks to provide an empirical answer to this question by assessing the level of implementing ethical and values education in selected basic schools in Imo State, Nigeria.

The significance of this study is broad. Firstly, it aims to provide baseline data for policymakers, school administrators, and educational stakeholders on the current state of ethics implementation at the foundational level. Secondly, it contributes to the discourse on educational reform by highlighting the structural and leadership gaps that must be addressed to make ethics and values education more effective. Thirdly, and most importantly, it underscores the centrality of value-oriented education in achieving sustainable development, national cohesion, and long-term peace and progress in Nigeria. The implementation of ethical and values education in schools is a critical subject in educational discourse globally. This paper synthesizes major scholarly perspectives, theoretical underpinnings, and empirical findings on the concepts of ethical and values education, the role of school managers, and their intersection with sustainable national development, particularly within Imo State of Nigerian educational context.

Ethical Education is broadly defined as the structured process of teaching moral principles that guide human conduct. It encompasses themes such as honesty, integrity, fairness, tolerance, accountability, and empathy. According to Özen (2023), ethics in education involves helping learners to internalize societal norms and apply them in decision-making and interpersonal relations. Similarly, Primayana (2019) argues that ethical education must not be limited to formal lessons but should be embedded in every aspect of school life—including the hidden curriculum, teacher behavior, classroom culture, and administrative processes.

Values Education, though overlapping with ethics, extends to inculcating broader societal ideals such as respect for human rights, cultural identity, environmental stewardship, unity in diversity, and national consciousness. Uche and Okafor (2020) views values education as a foundation for nation-building, character reformation, and global citizenship. Values, unlike mere rules or customs, are seen as enduring principles that transcend individual or group preferences and are often reinforced through deliberate and consistent educational strategies.

Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2020) clearly states that one of the goals of basic education is "the inculcation of national consciousness, values, and national unity." The policy further mandates the inclusion of value-laden subjects such as Civic Education, Social Studies, and Religious Studies in the curriculum. However, scholars like Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2024) argue that while policy intentions are commendable, implementation frameworks are weak, and monitoring is often inconsistent. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act of 2004 also promotes access to quality basic education but gives little operational guidance on how ethical and values education should be monitored or evaluated. Moreover, the rise in examination malpractice, cultism, bullying, and corruption among students, even at the basic level—raises questions about how well these policies are being executed in practice. The link between ethical education and sustainable development is increasingly recognized in global and local educational agendas. UNESCO (2019) highlights that education must empower learners to become agents of sustainable change - socially, economically, and environmentally. Ethical and values education fosters civic

responsibility, community engagement, and peaceful coexistence, all of which are essential for long-term national development.

In Nigeria, the increasing levels of youth restiveness, cybercrime, drug abuse, and electoral violence suggest a disconnect between education and ethical development. If schools, especially basic schools, fail to instill strong moral values in children, national development goals may be undermined. As observed by Huang, Pagano and Marengo (2024), character education is not peripheral but central to achieving developmental objectives such as peace, equity, and democratic consolidation. While some studies have examined values education in secondary schools, tertiary institutions, or specific religious settings, few have focused on basic education and even fewer on the role of school managers in this process. Moreover, most prior research in Nigeria tends to be theoretical or descriptive, with little empirical investigation into how policies are translated into practice, what challenges managers face, and how these affect students' ethical development. This study addresses this empirical gap by providing field-based evidence from school pupils in basic schools, specifically within Imo State. It focuses on the implementation process, and the connection between ethical education and Nigeria's broader developmental goals.

The theory that guides this study is the Transformational leadership Theory, propounded by James MacGregor Burns in the year, 1978. Transformational Leadership Theory posits that effective leaders inspire, motivate, and elevate the moral consciousness of their followers. It emphasized that transformational leaders transcend self-interest to pursue higher goals and instill purpose in their teams.

This theory is relevant to this study in the sense that School managers who exhibit transformational leadership traits can shape school cultures that prioritize ethical conduct, civic responsibility, and moral discipline. This theory underpins the argument that the personal leadership style of school managers significantly influences the success of ethical and values education. If school leaders model integrity, respect, and fairness, they inspire similar behavior in staff and students, fostering a value-rich learning environment conducive to sustainable development.

Empirically, Ajayi & Ojo (2024) found that schools with active value-integration policies recorded fewer cases of indiscipline and higher academic achievement. Similarly, Uche & Okafor (2020) reported that ethical leadership of school heads influenced students' civic responsibility. However, these studies often focused on secondary education and rarely evaluated the full managerial ecosystem, institutional context and community participation in basic schools.

Statement of the Problem

The researchers observed a decline in ethics and values among school children, particularly in Imo State. Ethical and values education has been globally acknowledged as a foundational pillar for building a responsible, just, and sustainable society. In Nigeria, and specifically in Imo State, the increasing incidence of youth restiveness, indiscipline, examination malpractice, cultism, and other forms of moral degeneration among pupils raise critical concerns about the quality and effectiveness of values education at the foundational level. Basic education, which serves as the bedrock of all other levels of education, is ideally positioned to nurture children into morally upright and socially responsible citizens. However, the prevailing moral crisis in the state suggests that the transmission of ethical values in schools may be ineffective or inconsistently implemented. School managers, including head teachers and principals, are central to driving ethical standards and value-based instruction within the school system. Their leadership, decision-making, administrative policies, and interaction with staff and pupils shape the ethical climate of the school. In Imo State, while ethical and values education is embedded in the curriculum through subjects such as Civic Education, Religious Studies, and Social Studies, there remains a critical concern about whether school managers are adequately implementing these components in ways that promote sustainable national development. Issues such as lack of training, inadequate monitoring, weak enforcement of ethical standards, and insufficient stakeholder engagement may hinder the actualization of these goals. Despite the relevance of school managers in influencing the moral direction of basic schools, few empirical studies have examined the extent to which they implement ethical and values education in Imo State. Therefore, this study becomes imperative to assess how school managers in basic schools across Imo State are implementing ethical and values education, to identify gaps, and to offer actionable recommendations that can enhance moral development and contribute to sustainable national development.

Purpose of the Study

This study was focused the Assessment of School managers' Implementation of Ethical and Values Education in Basic Schools in Imo State, for Sustainable National Development. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the extent to which school managers implement ethical education in basic schools in Imo State.
2. Establish the extent to which school managers implement value education in basic schools in Imo State

Research Questions

1. To what extent do school managers implement ethical education in basic schools in Imo State?
2. To what extent do school managers implement value education in basic schools in Imo State?

Method

The research design adopted in this study was survey. The population was made up of 1,380 basic 5 pupils in the primary schools of Owerri Educational Zone I and Okigwe Educational Zone I of Imo State (Source: SEMB 2024). The sample size for this study is 138 pupils, representing 10% of the population. Other sampling techniques employed were multi-stage: purposive and clustered sampling techniques. Instrument used in this study was the rating scale, which was used to collect information on the school managers' extent of implementation of ethical and value education. The instrument was validated and the reliability test carried out. The researcher administered the instruments to the pupils themselves. They however solicited the assistance of some teachers in the selected schools in the collection of the data. The processes of administration and retrieval of the instruments lasted for two weeks. In order to analyze the data the was collected after the administration of the instrument, the researchers used mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions.

Results

Research Question One

1. To what extent do school managers implement ethical education in basic schools?

Table 1: Summaries of Analyses on the extent to which school managers implement ethical education

S/ N	ITEM STATEMENT	VH E	HE (3)	LE (2)	VL E (1)	Total	Std. Dev	MEA N	DECISION
	Our Head-Teacher implements ethical education that:	(4)							
1.	encourages display of honesty among pupils	3	6	118	11	138	0.88	2.03	DISAGREED

2.	encourage pupils to learn to maintain integrity in their dealings	7	4	123	4	138	0.91	2.37	DISAGREED
3.	cautions pupils to apply fairness in their dealings	4	122	4	8	138	0.90	2.58	AGREED
4.	encourage pupils to have act of tolerance for one another	4	4	122	8	138	0.86	2.11	DISAGREED
5.	encourage pupils to ensure accountability in their dealings	8	122	4	4	138	0.86	2.89	AGREED
OVERALL MEAN								2.40	OVERALL DISAGREEMENT

Table 1 shows the mean response scores of the pupils on the extent to which head-teachers implement ethical education. Items 1,2 and 4 had mean response scores below the criterion mean of 2.50, while items 3 and 5 had mean response scores above it. An overall mean of 2.40 was raised which shows an overall disagreement on the head-teachers' high implementation of ethical education in the basic schools. It is therefore concluded that head-teachers do not highly implement ethical education in the basic schools.

Research Question Two

To what extent do head-teachers implement value education in basic schools in Imo State?

Table 3: Summaries of Analyses on the extent to which head-teachers implement value education in basic schools

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	VH E	HE (3)	LE (2)	VL E (1)	Total	Std. Dev	MEA N	DECISION
Our Head-Teacher implements value education that:									
1.	ensures that pupils apply respect for human rights in all their dealings	2	7	18	111	38	0.83	2.00	DISAGREED

2.	encourages pupils to maintain their cultural identity.	4	4	120	10	38	0.9	2.05	DISAGREED
3.	encourages pupils to maintain unity in diversity when dealing with people from other ethnic groups	4	122	4	8	38	0.9	2.58	AGREED
4.	encourages pupils to have character reformation	4	4	122	8	38	0.8	2.11	DISAGREED
5.	encourages pupils to develop national consciousness	8	122	4	4	38	0.8	2.89	AGREED
OVERALL MEAN								2.33	OVERALL DISAGREEMENT

Table 2 shows the mean response scores of the pupils on the extent to which head-teachers implement value education in the basic schools. Items 1,2 and 4 had mean response scores below the criterion mean of 2.50, while items 3 and 5 had mean response scores above it. An overall mean of 2.33 was raised which shows an overall disagreement high implementation of value education by head-teachers in the basic schools. It is therefore concluded that the head-teachers do not highly implement value education in the basic schools.

Summary of Findings

1. Head-teachers do not highly implement ethical education in the basic schools.
2. Head-teachers do not highly implement value education in the basic schools.

Discussion of Findings

School Managers' Implementation of Ethical Education in the basic Schools

The first finding revealed that school managers do not highly implement ethical education in the basic schools. The fact that this finding revealed that head-teachers do not highly implement ethical education in the basic schools shows that the head-teachers in the basic schools are yet to fully inculcate ethical education by fostering it in their general leadership of the schools. This finding has confirmed the worry of the researcher concerning the moral degeneration of the pupils. This finding therefore supports that of Ajayi and Ojo (2024), which proves that schools with active value integration have recorded fewer cases of indiscipline. However, based on the finding of this

study, it can be concluded that school managers do not highly implement ethical education in the basic schools.

School Managers Implementation of Value Education in the Basic Schools

The other finding of this study revealed that school managers do not highly implement value education in the basic schools. This finding indicates that the school managers do not highly incorporate value education in their general leadership of the basic schools. It shows that they do not pay specific attention to the value orientation of pupils. This finding has equally validated the researchers' worries concerning the decadence of the pupils' civic responsibility. It has therefore corroborated the finding of Uche and Okafor (2020) which states that ethical leadership of school heads influences students' civic responsibility.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is hereby concluded that school managers do not highly implement ethical and value education in the basic schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government, through the Ministry of Education, should make efforts to revive ethical education curriculum.
2. School Managers should endeavour to incorporate the facilitation of value education in their supervisory roles in the basic schools.

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