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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

STRENGTHENING ETHICAL PRACTICES IN NIGERIAN EDUCATION: A PHILOSOPHICAL AND POLICY-BASED CRITIQUE

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Abstract

This study explores the ethical underpinnings of the Nigerian educational system, highlighting disconnect between national educational ideals and practical implementation. Using a conceptual analysis approach rooted in philosophical and normative inquiry, the paper identifies key ethical challenges in the sector, including weak moral education, inadequate teacher training, systemic corruption, and inequitable resource distribution. Drawing from classical and contemporary ethical theories, as well as religious traditions, the study critiques the erosion of integrity in teaching and assessment practices. It concludes that reinforcing ethical accountability and professional standards is essential to restoring public trust and improving educational outcomes. The paper recommends targeted policy reforms, improved teacher remuneration and training, and stronger regulatory oversight to rebuild the ethical foundation of education in Nigeria, as well as curriculum integration, whistleblower protection, digital transparency and community engagement in order to situate the educational system in an ethical base.

Keywords: Ethics in Education, Teacher Professionalism, Moral Development, Educational Corruption, Nigeria's Education Policy.

INTRODUCTION

No society can develop beyond the scope of its knowledge base. The knowledge transmission institution in any given society is crucial to its progress. The educational institution in Nigeria is charged with the task of knowledge transmission. Based on the national philosophy of education, the curriculum developed for the transmission of knowledge seeks to build a just and egalitarian society. While this is true in principle, in practice, the Nigerian society is riddled with a myriad of



challenges and contradictions. These contradictions have resulted in the society being a far cry of the ideal portrayed by the national goals and the national policy on education. The key factor behind this contradiction being the endemic corruption that pervades the Nigerian society and its subsequent effect on every facet of societal life. The educational sector is not spared from this corruption and this paper seeks to address the nexus between the principles of the philosophy of education and the state of the Nigerian educational sector. This nexus can be seen as the collapsing ethical foundation of the Nigerian educational sector.

Ethics in education refers to the principles that govern conduct within the educational environment such as integrity, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. In Nigeria, ethical challenges in education range from exam malpractice, corruption in admissions, certificate forgery, sexual harassment, absenteeism, certificate forgery, and favoritism (Adebayo, 2021; Okebukola, 2020).

Strengthening ethical practices is not just a moral obligation, but essential to ensuring the credibility and effectiveness of the educational system. This discourse provides a critique of the philosophical foundations, empirical realities and policy frameworks for ethics in Nigerian education. It draws on empirical studies, explores philosophical theories such as virtue ethics and social contract theory and offers critiques and recommendations for policy reforms.

In the field of education, several definitions exist that highlight its multifaceted nature. Education is generally understood as the process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes, enabling them to develop intellectually, socially, and morally (Biesta, 2016). It encompasses both formal and informal systems of learning, aimed at fostering critical thinking and personal growth (Kincheloe, 2020). Furthermore, education is seen as a means of preparing individuals for participation in society, promoting socialization and cultural transmission (Bruner, 1996).

Ethics plays a crucial role in education, guiding the behavior of educators, shaping the learning environment, and promoting fairness and respect. Ethical principles ensure that education fosters equity, protects students' rights, and encourages moral development (Campbell, 2018). Teachers act as role models, and their ethical conduct influences students' values and decision-making processes (Socckett, 2012). Moreover, ethics in education promotes an inclusive and just system, ensuring that all students have access to a quality education while preventing harm and maintaining accountability (Hansen, 2020).

Historical Perspectives on Ethics in Education

The Socratic Method, rooted in dialogue and critical questioning, plays a vital role in ethics in education by encouraging students to engage in moral reasoning and self-reflection. Through this method, educators foster an environment where students critically examine their beliefs, challenging assumptions to promote ethical understanding (Brickhouse & Smith, 2009). In contrast, moral injury occurs when individuals are exposed to situations that violate their deeply held ethical principles, leading to emotional and psychological distress (Litz et al., 2009). In education, this can happen when ethical standards are compromised, resulting in harm to both educators and students who feel their moral values are betrayed.



Aristotle's philosophy of education emphasizes the cultivation of virtue as central to human flourishing, arguing that education should aim to develop both intellectual and moral virtues. According to Aristotle, education is essential for guiding individuals toward 'eudaimonia' (the good life) by teaching them to reason and make ethical choices (Curren, 2010). His virtue ethics posits that moral character is developed through habituation, where individuals practice virtuous actions, such as courage and justice, until they become ingrained dispositions (Kristjánsson, 2007). Thus, education plays a crucial role in shaping ethical individuals capable of contributing positively to society.

Christian, Islamic, and Buddhist traditions have deeply influenced moral education by emphasizing values such as compassion, justice, and ethical living. In Christian education, moral development is often tied to the teachings of Christ, with a focus on love, forgiveness, and service to others as central virtues (Pazmiño, 2008).

Islamic education, or 'tarbiyah', stresses the cultivation of morality through obedience to divine laws and the development of virtues like honesty, humility, and justice, rooted in the Quran and Hadith (Halstead, 2004). Similarly, Buddhist education promotes ethical living through the principles of 'Sīla' (moral conduct), focusing on compassion, non-violence, and mindfulness as pathways to personal and societal harmony (Haynes, 2013).

John Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism emphasizes the idea that education should be rooted in real-world experiences and foster problem-solving skills. Dewey argued that learning is most effective when it engages students in active inquiry, critical thinking, and reflection on their experiences (Biesta, 2016). His concept of democratic education links education to the promotion of democratic values, where schools serve as mini-democracies that encourage collaboration, open dialogue, and respect for diverse perspectives. Biesta drawing from the philosophy of John Dewey believed that education should not only prepare individuals for participation in a democratic society but also cultivate the social and moral habits necessary for sustaining it (Garrison, 2003).

Respect for students' autonomy and individual choices is a key ethical principle in education, emphasizing the need for students to take ownership of their learning and decision-making processes. This respect encourages educators to create environments that honour students' independence, fostering self-determination and personal growth (Schinkel, 2010). Promoting critical thinking and self-directed learning further supports student autonomy by encouraging learners to question assumptions, engage in independent inquiry, and develop problem-solving skills. This approach helps students become active participants in their own education, capable of making informed and reflective choices (Brockett & Hiemstra, 2018).

Ethical Principles of Education

The ethical principles that form the foundation of education include autonomy, justice, beneficence, non-maleficence, and responsibility. Autonomy emphasizes respect for students' individual choices and fosters critical thinking (Burbules, 2019). Justice ensures fairness and equity in education, addressing inequalities in access and opportunities (Howe, 1997). While beneficence involves promoting the well-being of students, while non-maleficence stresses the importance of preventing harm



(Hansen, 2020). Responsibility refers to the accountability of educators to students, parents, and society in fostering ethical practices (Campbell, 2020).

Ethical principles in education significantly influence decision-making, curriculum design, and teacher-student interactions. Decision-making in education is shaped by principles such as justice and fairness, ensuring that policies and practices are equitable and inclusive (Katz, 2020). In curriculum design, ethics guide the selection of content that reflects diverse perspectives and avoids bias, promoting cultural sensitivity and respect for autonomy (Howe, 1997). In teacher-student interactions, ethics dictate respectful communication; fostering an environment of trust and moral development, while upholding beneficence and preventing harm (Campbell, 2020).

Non-adherence to ethical principles in education presents significant challenges, such as compromised fairness, student harm, and a loss of trust. When educators fail to uphold principles like justice and equity, students may face unequal treatment or discrimination, which can exacerbate educational disparities (Howe, 1997). Neglecting beneficence and non-maleficence can lead to emotional or psychological harm, undermining student well-being (Nucci, 2018). Additionally, unethical behavior by educators erodes trust within the classroom, diminishing the teacher-student relationship and negatively affecting the learning environment (Campbell, 2003).

Non-compliance with ethical principles in education can have far-reaching negative impacts on society. When ethical standards like justice and equity are not upheld, societal inequalities are perpetuated, contributing to a cycle of disadvantage for marginalized groups (Howe, 1997). Furthermore, the failure to adhere to ethical norms erodes trust in educational institutions, weakening social cohesion and the public's confidence in the education system (Campbell, 2020). This also undermines the moral development of students, who may carry unethical behaviors into broader societal roles, affecting civic responsibility and social ethics (Tirri, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, multi-method research design incorporating philosophical analysis, policy critique, and empirical synthesis. The design is suitable for interrogating normative issues, assessing systemic challenges, and offering integrative recommendations grounded in both theory and practice. The methodology draws from document analysis, literature review and critical interpretive synthesis. Philosophical frameworks such as virtue ethics (Aristotle), social contract theory (Hobbes, Rousseau) and Ubuntu (African Philosophy). While the normative analysis involved a deductive approach in applying these theories to existing ethical challenges within the Nigerian educational sector, empirical evidence review involved a systematic literature review of empirical studies, government reports, and investigative journalism. Selection criteria included:

Peer reviewed journal articles published between 2010 and 2024, reports from credible agencies such as JAMB, WAEC, UNESCO, ICPC, EFCC, BBC Africa Eye as well as grey literature such as policy documents, working papers, and institutional publications relevant to education and ethics in Nigeria. Data were coded thematically under categories such as examination malpractice, admission corruption, teacher absenteeism, and curriculum



ethics gap. These themes were triangulated to identify patterns and systemic failures. A document analysis method was applied to the National Policy on Education (NPE), National Ethics and Integration Policy (2020) and related education sector strategies. The analysis focused on ethical provisions within policy texts, implementation mechanisms, evaluation and enforcement frameworks and alignment with philosophical and empirical expectations. Critical discourse was also applied to identify the gaps between policy rhetoric and operational reality.

Critical interpretive synthesis (CIS) was used to integrate findings from philosophical, empirical, and policy analysis. This method enabled identification of contradictions and overlaps, construction of an integrative argument linking theory, data and institutional dynamics as well as development of actionable recommendations grounded in ethical theory and empirical validation.

LIMITATIONS

This study relies on secondary data which may reflect biases or gaps in official reporting. Additionally, the philosophical enquiry is interpretive and may not capture the full range of cultural and contextual ethical paradigms in Nigeria.

Philosophical Foundations of Ethics in Education

Virtue Ethics

Rooted in Aristotelian philosophy, virtue ethics emphasizes character development and moral virtues (Hursthouse, 1999). In the Nigeria educational context, the erosion of virtues such as honesty, and responsibility among educators and students contributes to unethical practices. Revitalizing moral education and modelling virtuous behavior are essential steps toward ethical reforms. Reviving character education (e.g. civic education, social studies and moral instruction) could help rebuild virtue (Oladipo, 2009). However, modern curricula often downplay character development. Integrating Aristotelian ethics demands that teachers themselves embody virtues – yet many operate within corrupt systems (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2008).

Social Contract Theory

Social contract theory posits that individuals consent either explicitly or implicitly to surrender some freedoms to authority in exchange for protection of remaining rights. In education, this translates to mutual responsibilities among stake holders. When institutions fail to uphold their part, through inadequate funding to lack of accountability-ethical breaches become more present. Social contract theory implies a mutual agreement between citizens and institutions (Rawls, 1971). In education, students, educators, and the government are all stakeholders. When the state underfunds education or neglects accountability, it breaks the contract, creating conditions for ethical decay (Ukeje, 2002). A social contract presumes trust and accountability. In Nigeria, broken systems (e.g., unpaid salaries, poor infrastructure) weaken the legitimacy of ethical expectations (Adeyemi, 2010).

Ubuntu Philosophy



Ubuntu, an African philosophy meaning 'I am because we are,' emphasizes communal relationships and shared humanity. Applying Ubuntu in education fosters a sense of collective responsibility and ethical behavior. However, the competitive nature of Nigeria's educational system often undermines these communal values. Ubuntu ("I am because we are") emphasizes communal ethics and shared responsibility (Letseka, 2012). Applying this could foster collaboration, empathy, and responsibility in the school environment. Nigerian education remains largely competitive and individualistic. Ubuntu's collectivist values often clash with neoliberal pressures and privatization (Amadi & Ogonor, 2015).

Ethical Challenges in Education

Ethical challenges in standardized testing, grading, and evaluations arise from concerns about fairness, bias, and the impact on students' learning. Standardized testing often prioritizes performance over holistic learning, creating ethical dilemmas when tests fail to account for diverse student backgrounds or abilities (Koretz, 2008). Teachers face ethical challenges in grading when balancing objectivity and compassion, particularly in cases where students face personal hardships that may affect their performance (Brookhart, 2017). Additionally, evaluations can lead to unethical practices such as teaching to the test or manipulating scores, which undermine educational integrity and equity (Popham, 2018). These challenges highlight the need for ethical accountability in ensuring fair assessments.

Emerging Areas of Ethical Challenges

Emerging ethical challenges in education, such as the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and the growing focus on climate education, present new dilemmas for educators. AI in education raises concerns about data privacy, bias in algorithms, and the potential loss of human interaction in learning processes (Williamson & Eynon, 2020). Similarly, climate education confronts ethical issues regarding the balance between promoting environmental awareness and respecting diverse political or cultural beliefs (Stevenson et al., 2017). These evolving challenges highlight the importance of ongoing ethical reflection in educational practice, ensuring that new technologies and topics are introduced in ways that respect students' rights, fairness, and inclusivity (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

Empirical Evidence of Ethical Challenges

The Nigerian educational scenario is fraught with challenges. This is as a result of several factors such as policy over turn, inconsistencies in government policy, non-implementation of government policies, the dominance of certificate or paper qualification above skills has resulted in the rampant engagement in all sorts of malpractices. A 2019 study by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) reported that over 25% of candidates were involved in some form of cheating (WAEC, 2019). This includes impersonation, leaked questions, and assistance from invigilators.

To obtain the 'almighty certificate' which can open doors to good quality jobs, government appointments and even elective positions. Literature has shown that there is a prevalence of unethical practices such as examination malpractice, admission fraud, teacher absenteeism, admission racketeering among others in



Nigeria. This study seeks to highlight empirical literature that reveal this trend as well as make recommendations.

Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice remains a pervasive issue. In 2019, the West African Examination Council (WAEC) withheld the results of 180,205 candidates, representing 11.33% of those who sat for the examination, due to malpractice concerns. Although technological advancements have reduced malpractice rates to 0.8% in recent years (Umeh, 2024), the problem persists indicating systemic issues (Ewuzie, 2019). Similarly, 2019 study by WAEC reported that 25% of candidates were involved in some form of cheating. This includes impersonation, leaked questions, and assistance from invigilators.

Admission Fraud

Admission processes are fraught with irregularities. Empirical data from The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences (ICPC), and the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) have identified cases where universities bypassed high scoring candidates in favor of those with lower scores, often due to bribery. At Imo state university for instance, more than 230 fake admissions were uncovered, leading to arrests and prosecutions (Aluko, 2020). Empirical data from ICPC and JAMB has shown irregularities in admission processes (JAMB, 2020; ICPC, 2021). Cases include “sorting” (bribing for grades or admission) and quota manipulation.

Sexual Harassment

A 2018 BBC Africa Eye investigation titled Sex for Grades exposed systemic sexual exploitation in Nigerian universities. Empirical studies confirm this is not isolated. Numerous female students report harassment, often with no institutional recourse (BBC, 2019; Alabi, 2010). A survey by (Bolaji 2024) reported that 63% of female students in Nigerian universities face sexual harassment, another study by (Ujah, 2023) cites a 2018 world bank study which posits that as much as 70% of female students face sexual harassment in Nigerian universities.

Teacher Absenteeism and Ghost Workers

According to UNESCO (2022), over 20% of public school teachers in rural areas are absent on any given school day. The proliferation of ghost workers also depletes educational budgets without contributing to learning outcomes.

Policy- Based Analysis and Critique National Policy on Education (NPE)

While the NPE outlines national standards and the importance of moral instructions, there is no strong institutional mechanism for to enforce the ethical standards across education sectors (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Policies are often theoretical, lacking proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Teachers receive inadequate training in ethics and schools lack resources for ethics education.

Anti-corruption Measures



Agencies like ICPC and EFCC have made efforts to curb corruption in education. ICPC's National Ethics and Integrity Policy (2020) targets integrity in institutions. These agencies operate reactively, not proactively. Their reach in rural and semi-urban schools is limited, and political interference hampers consistent enforcement.

Curriculum Content

Moral and civic education is included in the basic education curricula, but is marginalized at the secondary and tertiary levels (Nwaubani & Okafor, 2015). The ethical features in Nigerian education are a convergence of philosophical neglect, cultural decay, institutional weakness, and policy failure. Philosophically, the erosion of communal virtue and values (Ubuntu, virtue ethics) has left education morally rudderless.

Non-compliance with ethical principles in education has had significant consequences for the Nigerian society, particularly in terms of inequality and corruption. The failure to uphold justice and fairness has exacerbated educational disparities, particularly along socioeconomic, ethnic, and regional lines, leading to limited access to quality education for marginalized groups (Akinbote, 2007). Additionally, unethical practices such as bribery and favoritism in educational institutions have undermined the credibility of the system, fostering a culture of corruption that extends beyond education into broader societal structures (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). This erodes trust in educational institutions and weakens societal development.

The root of non-compliance with ethical principles in Nigerian education stems from systemic issues such as corruption, inadequate teacher training, and poor governance. Corruption in education, including practices like bribery and nepotism, has undermined fairness and transparency, leading to widespread inequality (Adebisi, 2013). Additionally, inadequate teacher preparation and lack of professional development contribute to poor adherence to ethical standards, as many educators are not equipped with the necessary ethical frameworks (Akinbote, 2007). Weak governance and ineffective educational policies further exacerbate the problem, resulting in a lack of accountability within the system (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2008).

Exam malpractice is a pervasive issue in Nigeria, undermining the validity and reliability of academic assessments (Oladimeji, 2014). According to the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), Nigeria records one of the highest rates of exam malpractice in West Africa (WAEC, 2020). Factors contributing to exam malpractice in Nigeria include:

Pressure to succeed: The high stakes attached to academic performance lead students to seek unfair advantages (Adebayo, 2017). This is evident in the fact that the Nigerian job market is more tailored towards paper qualification than skills. Thus, the acquisition of university degrees is seen as a do-or-die affair.

Poor teaching methods: Inadequate teaching and learning resources contribute to students' reliance on malpractice (Ogunyemi, 2015). Most educational facilities in Nigeria lack critical infrastructure for teaching and



learning. Many science students pass through secondary schools without ever seeing the basic science laboratory equipment or interacting with them.

Corruption: Weak institutional controls and corrupt practices among educators and administrators enable malpractice (Ololobo, 2018). The regulatory agencies are sometimes lax in the discharging of their duties thus impunity thrives in the unregulated academic space.

Socio-economic factors: Poverty, unemployment, and social inequality drive students to seek shortcuts (Adebayo, 2017).

The consequences of exam malpractice include:

Undermining academic standards: Malpractice compromises the integrity of academic qualifications (Oladimeji, 2014).

Unprepared workforce: Graduates lacking essential skills hinder national development (Ogunyemi, 2015).

Loss of public trust: Malpractice erodes confidence in the education system (Ololobo, 2018).

The Role of Educators in Upholding the Ethical Foundation of Education

Educators have a fundamental duty to act in the best interests of their students, prioritizing their well-being and fostering positive development. This duty, rooted in ethical principles, involves creating safe, supportive learning environments that promote both academic success and emotional growth (Noddings, 2020). Teachers are responsible for nurturing students' holistic development, including intellectual, moral, and social dimensions, and ensuring that their actions contribute positively to students' long-term well-being (Katz, 2020). By doing so, educators help students flourish not only academically but also personally, preparing them for responsible citizenship and lifelong learning.

Teachers hold multiple responsibilities toward students, parents, and society, requiring them to maintain high ethical standards in their professional conduct. They must act with fairness, transparency, and integrity, ensuring that their decisions and actions reflect the best interests of students while also addressing parental concerns and societal expectations (Campbell, 2003). In areas such as assessment and discipline, teachers are ethically accountable for being objective, just, and consistent, avoiding any bias or favoritism (Katz, 2020). Additionally, teachers' professional conduct must uphold the values of respect and responsibility, serving as role models for both students and the broader community (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

Also, teachers are required to act ethically and with accountability in their professional roles in the society. Toward students, teachers must ensure a fair, supportive learning environment that promotes intellectual and moral development (Campbell, 2018). They are also accountable to parents by maintaining open, respectful communication, fostering trust and collaboration in the educational process (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). For society, teachers serve as role models, upholding social values and contributing to the civic development of future citizens (Sokkett, 2012). Ethical accountability in assessment, discipline, and professional conduct involves fairness, transparency, and respect, avoiding bias and ensuring that all decisions are made in the best interest of students (Burbules, 2019).



Teachers' behavior plays a crucial role in shaping students' moral development, as they serve as role models whose actions significantly influence students' ethical thinking and behavior. By demonstrating integrity, empathy, and fairness, teachers help foster a moral climate in which students learn the importance of these virtues through observation and interaction (Campbell, 2020). Teachers who lead by example show students how to navigate moral dilemmas and treat others with respect and kindness, reinforcing positive values (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2011). This modelling of ethical behavior helps students internalize moral principles and apply them in their own lives.

In the present Nigerian society however, this lofty role has been eroded. The teaching profession has become an all comers affair as many in the profession lack basic teaching qualifications or the professional conduct associated with teaching. The low socio-economic status of teachers in the Nigerian society has resulted in a lot of teachers compromising their standards by engaging in unethical practices such as money for grades and other unethical practices. The teaching profession reflects the general malaise in the society as such; societal pressure forces the educators and teachers to adopt unethical standards. Parents offer gratification to ensure their children are placed in competitive schools; teachers are under pressure to ensure that their school is rated as a high scorer in external exams such as JAMB and WAEC exams. All this has resulted in a collapse of the ethical foundation of the Nigerian educational institution.

Provisions of Ethical Foundations in the Framework for Teacher Education

Ethical guidelines, such as the National Education Association (NEA) Code of Ethics, provide a framework for teachers to guide their professional behavior and decision-making. These codes emphasize the core responsibilities of teachers, including commitment to students' well-being, ensuring fairness, and promoting equal educational opportunities (NEA, 2020). They also stress the importance of maintaining professional integrity, avoiding conflicts of interest, and fostering a respectful learning environment. These ethical guidelines inform teachers' daily decision-making by helping them navigate complex dilemmas in areas such as assessment, discipline, and interactions with students, colleagues, and parents (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). By adhering to these codes, teachers ensure they act ethically and responsibly in fostering students' academic and moral development.

Nigeria's Code of Ethics for Teachers sets clear guidelines on professional conduct, outlining the responsibilities teachers have toward students, colleagues, parents, and society. The code emphasizes the importance of integrity, impartiality, and respect for students' rights and dignity, urging teachers to create supportive and inclusive learning environments (Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria [TRCN], 2005). It mandates that teachers uphold professional standards by avoiding bias and ensuring fairness in assessment, discipline, and instruction. Moreover, the code stresses the role of teachers as societal role models, calling for behavior that promotes ethical development and national unity (Nwokeocha, 2017). By adhering to these principles, teachers in Nigeria are expected to maintain high ethical standards in their professional and personal conduct.

While Adebayo (2017) argues that Socio-economic interventions such as addressing poverty and unemployment to reduce pressure on students, WAEC



(2020) suggests strengthened institutional controls through enhanced security measures will significantly curb exam malpractice. Ogunyemi (2015) emphasizes improved teaching methods including emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving skills as a panacea for curbing exam malpractice. Ololobo (2018) advocates anti-corruption measures such as prosecution of offenders and promotion of transparency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Education is inherently a moral enterprise, aiming to shape individuals and societies toward a more just and equitable future. It is not merely about transmitting knowledge but fostering moral and civic virtues, such as empathy, justice, and social responsibility (Noddings, 2020). Education's role in character development helps prepare individuals to contribute positively to society by promoting fairness and reducing inequality (Carr, 2005). By instilling ethical values, education contributes to societal progress, ensuring that future generations are equipped to address social injustices and work toward the common good (Biesta, 2016). The educational sector reflects the values of the society. Thus, the society must place greater premium on the quality of its education to enhance development. This can only be achieved through building a strong ethical foundation of education. This can be done by placing the right premium on education.

The following recommendations will aid in addressing the challenges of ethical practices in education:

The government and the regulatory agencies should become more proactive in ensuring that the quality of education available in Nigerian institutions is backed by a robust moral and ethical component.

Educators should be properly remunerated and given the conducive environment to transmit vision and mission to the next generation. An assessment of the state of the state-owned educational infrastructures across the nation shows a deep level of rot and neglect. The welfare of teachers must become paramount in the society for any meaningful progress to be made. The ethical foundations of education in Nigeria can only be strengthened by ethical justice as the state and the society gives priority to those charged with shaping its future.

Community based actions such as the involvement of stake holders such as parents through the Parent/Teachers Association (PTA), Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and government agencies working in collaboration with other stake holders in the education industry to ensure transparency and quality assurance. By their monitoring ethics in schools, educators will be more accountable to the society.

Curriculum integration; ethics modules should be made compulsory across all university programs. Moral instructions should be re-emphasized across primary and secondary education.

Teacher training should include intensive courses on professional ethics and value based pedagogy.

Whistleblower protections which entail the establishment of protected anonymous channels for reporting unethical practices in schools and universities,



Digital transparency would involve the use of AI and block chain to automate and audit exam processes, admissions, and certificates to reduce human corruption.

Ethics oversight bodies should be established or strengthened in institutions to investigate and adjudicate misconduct.

CONCLUSION

Strengthening ethical practices in Nigerian education requires a fundamental rethinking of moral values, power structures and institutional accountability. Philosophical grounding must be revived, policies must be action oriented, and evidence based interventions must shape future reforms. Only through this integrated approach can Nigeria build an education system that is not just literate, but morally sound.

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