

## THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION AND VALUE IN NIGERIA EDUCATION

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**Abstract** – The National Policy on Education in Nigeria outlines the nation's intentions, goals, and standards for achieving quality education. At the heart of this policy is the recognition of education as a transformative tool for instilling core values in learners. The policy emphasizes the importance of universal moral values such as honesty, integrity, humanness, and respect for others' rights and property. These values, embedded within the school curriculum, aim to produce responsible citizens who contribute meaningfully to both personal and national development. This paper examines how the policy supports value transmission through education and highlights the central role of the teacher as a moral agent responsible for shaping the character and behavior of students. By engaging with both cognitive and affective domains, learners are expected to develop into morally sound, patriotic, and productive members of society. Notwithstanding these good intentions, the implementation of value-based education in Nigeria faces significant obstacles. These include inconsistencies in policy enforcement, inadequate teacher preparation, lack of motivation, and a mismatch between societal practices and the values taught in schools. These challenges limit the impact of the policy on character formation. To move forward, there is a need for renewed political will, improved teacher training, curriculum revision to meet contemporary ethical realities, and community involvement in value reorientation. When these measures are in place, education in Nigeria will be better positioned to produce citizens who uphold the values necessary for national growth, unity, and sustainable development.

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**Keywords:** National policy, education, values, curriculum

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### Introduction

The development and direction of any nation's educational system are fundamentally guided by clearly articulated policies that reflect the values, priorities, and aspirations of its people. In Nigeria, the formulation of the National Policy on Education emerged as a response to the urgent call for a unified and purposeful educational structure following the disruptions caused by the Nigerian Civil War. The need to redefine the goals of education to support national reconstruction, social integration, and economic development led to the convening of the National Curriculum Conference in Lagos in September 1969. This conference was a historic gathering of educators, policymakers, scholars, and representatives from various sectors, brought together to examine the existing educational practices and to propose a new direction that would serve both the youth and adult population in the pursuit of national development.

The outcome of this conference formed the foundation for the first edition of the National Policy on Education, which was later published in 1977. This policy document sought to promote a system of education that would instill in learners the values of unity,

patriotism, self-discipline, and respect for human dignity. It also aimed at ensuring equal educational opportunities, eliminating illiteracy, and fostering a sense of national identity among citizens. According to Fafunwa (2004), the policy was not only designed to provide academic and technical training but also to promote moral and civic values that are essential for the overall well-being of the individual and society. The policy thus represents a deliberate effort by the Nigerian government to align educational objectives with the broader goals of national integration and socio-economic transformation. Out of the 65 specific recommendations; nos, 3, 4, 7, 18, 23, 27 and 48 emphasize national unity, citizenship, national consciousness, nationalism and national reconstruction. Specifically, recommendation 48 laid emphasis on moral value. “Education for living must make children and adults reader to be leaders and followers in the task of nation-building. Although it is not specifically job-oriented, the school aim at giving children the basis concepts, understanding, values attitudes, abilities and skills that they require to enter into the world of world and establish themselves in it. Such education must therefore release the springs of personality development, be concerned with the individual child’s needs, emotions, wants, fears, intellectual and spiritual and physical growth into mature adult capable of self-direction through self-discipline. It must be geared towards national reconstruction and social as well as economic progress (Fafunwa, 2004:24).

The National Curriculum Conference critically examined the philosophical foundation that should shape the direction of Nigeria’s education system. This examination culminated in the drafting of a new national policy intended to reflect the collective aspirations of the Nigerian people. A national seminar was subsequently convened, during which the five national objectives of the Second National Development Plan (1970–1974) were formally adopted as the core goals of the national education system. These objectives aimed to foster a free and democratic society, promote a just and egalitarian social order, build a united, strong and self-reliant nation, establish a vibrant and dynamic economy, and ensure a land of bright and full opportunities for every citizen. The philosophical underpinnings of the education policy were designed to align with these national ideals, with the intent of promoting self-realization, responsible citizenship, and social cohesion. The seminar, under the theme “Imperatives for a National Policy on Education,” articulated guiding principles for education in Nigeria. It emphasized the central role of education in the cultivation of moral values and personal integrity. Specifically, one of the recommendations asserted that education should be used to nurture and reinforce moral values and attitudes conducive to good character. This was clearly expressed in Recommendation 48, which emphasized the need for educational structures that support the full development of individual personality traits.

The final version of the National Policy on Education underscored moral values such as unity, peaceful co-existence, equality, democratic participation, patriotism, and global awareness. These values were not to be instilled solely through formal schooling but also through the collaborative roles of the family, religious institutions, and societal organizations. As observed by Nwankwo, Chukwuma, and Agbo (2020), the integration of value education within both formal and informal learning environments is essential for producing responsible citizens. Similarly, Eze, Nwachukwu, and Ude (2021) affirmed that educational systems must serve not just academic goals but also socio-moral development, which remains crucial for national transformation. Umeh and Okeke (2019) further

emphasized that value orientation must be purposefully embedded within school curricula to ensure holistic development.

### **Concept of Value and Morality**

For any nation to attain greatness moral values must be emphasized. Morality develops an individual's capacity for value judgment, sound character and good citizenship. (Ngwu, Uche, 2016). Denga (2005) refers to the concept of morality to peoples' belief about what is right or wrong. He further refer to morality as obedience and adherence to those behaviour approved by the society. The connection between moral education and character development is most important in Education. Education without sound moral foundation is lopsided and incomplete. An educated person with sound moral character is more useful to the society than one without moral conscience. The school must stress the important of moral instructions. The concept of morality refers to people's beliefs about what is right or wrong. Morality refers to obedience adherence to those behaviour approved by the society (Ayacho, 2005). This means that any behaviour which cuts across the norms and values of the society is immoral. The concept of morality is concerned with developing an individual's capacity for moral judgement and sound character. Virtues subsumed by morality include, goodness, rightness, truth, forgiving, honesty, sympathy, diligence, discipline, obedience, loyalty, justice and fearfulness. This type of value are intrinsic enduring and are important value that should be sought for through education do not change and can determine permanent characteristics of learner's behaviour (Obot, 2015).

The concept of values according to Enukoha, Asuquo and Inaja (2004) is the preference for good or what is important or unimportant to a person in any given situation. It is the worth a person sees in a thing or wants to attribute to it. The worthwhileness in this contest may mean different thing to different people. Universal values that are accepted or culture. The virtues of honesty, humanness, respect for others people's property and rights are fundamental moral values across culture. Obot (2015) in the common sense understanding moral value can be said to refer to things that are worthwhile by an individual or group of persons, he added that value refer to beliefs or way of life of a person or persons. Value arises from nature and propels man to various actions and behavioural pattern he exhibits. From Durkheim (1984) perspective, value can be a way of life which involves the personal or groups, physical and mental life. Obot (2015) emphasis that moral guide our personal or collective way of life, and the way we relate with others. And this values such as honesty, justice, liberty, kindness, fortitude and prudence. Hence, Nigeria needs to improve its system by making a lot of change so it can operate in a fairer way; to also change the behaviour of Nigerian and become better citizen (Olufemi, 2019).

### **Nigerian Society and Values**

Denga (2005) that modern societies are pre-occupied with the issues of morality which is regarded as one of the virtues to enhance the greatness of any nation. Anyacho (2005) assert that mortality often focus on values, derogate from man to man relationship, with emphasis on social relationship, good, right, feature, prominently, insecurity, unrest and disorderliness (National Teachers Institute, NTi, 2000, & Arobanya, 2002). The Nigerian society today places a central emphasis on morality as an essential ingredient for the

development of an ideal characters, desirable education and good citizenship. Nigerian society is plagued with many vices, the craves for material wealth has lead the youths into diverse evil ways of making money, the get rich quick syndrome, corruption of all forms from the politician to all sectors, tribalism, nepotism, disvalue disregard, lack of respect of the people of Nigerian, no fairness, no justice, character, equity.

The moral's value of the society have become severally eroded resulting to respect for law and constituted authority as well as respect for other people's right, lives and property has diminished. Unemployment has resulted to many jobless youths resorting to unwholesome activities like kidnapping, armed robber, yahoo and other causes of moral decadence include, indifference to religious teaching, parent indifference to their children's behaviour. Some parents are so busy to supervise their children's behaviours. Some parents think since we are living in democratic and permissive age, children should be left alone or given several degrees of freedom to live the way they choose. Ethnic plurality of Nigeria society is also a conductor of immoral behaviours. This has resulted in nepotism, tribalism; merit is thrown over-board and favouritism (Denga, 2005). The school does not adequately emphasis moral instruction and teachers not trained in moral educations. There must be constant interaction with what we and our society values. Those which will help individual achieve the final aim of human existence here on earth. It is against his backdrop that the teachers should be seen as the agent of morals transmission (Ducasse, 1958).

### **Concept of Education**

Education, as a concept, has been historically and philosophically examined through multiple lenses. Etymologically, the term "education" is often traced to two Latin roots: *educere*, meaning "to lead out" or "to bring forth," and *educare*, meaning "to rear," "to bring up," or "to train." According to Ducasse (1958), the distinction between *educere* and *educare* captures the twofold nature of education as both the process of drawing out potential and the formal training or formation of character and intellect. Philosopher R. S. Peters (1966) provided a structured philosophical outlook on education by proposing three fundamental criteria that characterize true education. Firstly, Peters stated that education must involve the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who are committed to it. Secondly, he emphasized that education must engage learners cognitively, involving knowledge, understanding, and a meaningful perspective. Thirdly, Peters argued that the process of education must be marked by voluntariness and consciousness on the part of the learner—implying that rote indoctrination or forced assimilation does not qualify as true education. In alignment with Schofield (1981), the emphasis on "criteria" reflects the existence of standards by which human behavior and thinking are judged, forming the foundation for a responsible way of life. The first criterion highlights the notion that education entails the transmission of values and culture that are considered worthwhile. What is deemed "worthwhile" is that which bears personal, societal, and intrinsic value. According to Okafor (2021), education ought to equip learners not merely with academic knowledge but with the capacity to discern what is morally and socially significant. In this regard, education becomes a means through which individuals are cultivated into socially responsible and ethically grounded citizens.

Furthermore, education is widely recognized as a process that consists of both content and method. The content refers to knowledge, skills, and values regarded as

essential for personal and social transformation. The method, on the other hand, must facilitate understanding and critical engagement on the part of the learner. Eze and Nwachukwu (2020) posit that meaningful education requires teaching approaches that stimulate reflective thinking and personal growth, thus linking pedagogy with transformation. The second criterion articulated by Peters underscores the importance of cognitive development, emphasizing that education should result in deeper understanding that benefits both the individual and society. In this sense, education serves not only the individual learner but also the collective social fabric by instilling values, fostering innovation, and promoting national development. As observed by Chukwu and Agbo (2018), education becomes a strategic tool for social change, progress, and national reconstruction when it prioritizes the cultivation of socially relevant knowledge and values. Hence, education must be understood as both a personal journey of enlightenment and a collective instrument for moral and social regeneration. It is the vehicle through which societies transmit culture, ethics, and responsibility across generations while equipping learners to become agents of societal transformation.

The definition of education by Plato shows that education should have a moral aim which affects the content and curriculum to produce good citizens. For example, education in Japan was to produce sound character; therefore, the content which would make the achievement of this aim possible consisted of the confusion principle of morality (Schofield, 1981). But the content of Japanese education is now technological because the aim is to produce technological supremacy. Following the above analogy, for Nigeria to achieve moral value oriented education. The content of the curriculum should reflect such. Since education takes place in the society, it has interconnectiveness between education and culture, both which appear to involve values and transmission. Education as an instrumentation of change can be used in transmitting those value with a change of mindset to values that will bring about a better society and greater nation (Ngwu, Uche, 2016). Sociologically culture includes all behaviour which human beings exhibits in conformity with his family, his play group and social class, the church and all other human groups (Schofield, 1981). This definition is all embracing as values stresses the behaviour being expected from individuals in the society, doing what is right and acceptable in the society. Behaving in a cultured or educated way both refer to a way of life". In school, teachers try to educate by initiating people into knowledge, ideas and beliefs, all embraced in value, which correspond with those generally accepted by the society. It determines what desirable form of behaviour in the individual is, the school takes over from home as an agent of producing desirable behaviour. Certain values and standards are learned long before the child arrives at school. His character is form in accordance with this standards and values. The school takes over and enforces these values into the child. Obot (2015) emphasize that moral education should be emphasized for what it is. Education should transmit things that are considered as object, important and worthwhile by the society.

### **Content of the Curriculum/Values**

Curriculum implies the content, aims, training worthwhileness and culture of all which we have considered as values to be transmitted to the child though school. Modal (2015) in Ngwu, Uche (2016) emphasized that education provide conscious teaching program that inculcates values, norms social skills that enable the individual develop his personality and sustain social system; it an indispensable tool in which individuals learns the norms and

value of the society. The curriculum is the ventricle by which the school communicates element of the general culture, transmits what is worthwhile, it produces the awareness of the standards. The content of the curriculum is therefore concerned with knowledge, beliefs and values which become the basis of the curriculum which produced the educated, cultured man. Thus Peter assert that content of the curriculum should revolves round the knowledge, ideas and beliefs, “set of values”, norms standards all of which will produced the cultured and educated man.

Values are concern with standards and with human behaviour. To this end, people will behaviour emotionally or rationally in relation to the values which they hold or which society hold. The set of value could be in form of subject which emphasizes morality, which includes goodness, rightness, truth, honesty, sympathy, diligence, discipline, loyalty, justice, fairplay. This value does not change, and are objective This will make up the aims of education which has the task of reaching the individual those skills which enable him to take his place in the society. Unless the individual can accept certain moral demands which society will make of him, and unless he has the knowledge necessary for making moral choices, and experiences which teaches him the right choice, he will not fit into the society as a good citizen. A specific content and body of knowledge guided by its own philosophy, focused on transmitting what is worthwhile to the child. Curriculum should not focus on individual's interest but should be an objective standard by which a good curriculum and its content should be measured and evaluated. Others include social values that are held to be important from one society to another which include patriotism, peaceful co-existence tolerance integrity among others.

### **The Teacher as Society Moral Agent**

Apart from the home which is the first school the child is introduced to moral teaching. The school also has a major role to play in transmitting moral values; through the content in the curriculum since values and morals are connected the teacher is a position to help children reconcile the demands made by the general code of behaviour established by the society. The teacher is to bring his pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong, between good (or socially accepted) conduct and bad (or socially unacceptable) conduct. A teacher is in position to influence the thinking of the child. The mindset of the child is worked on through education, with emphasis on moral values from cradle to the highest level of education. The teacher is the practical interpreter for the pupils of the theoretical morality of the society, and knows what characteristics he wishes to develop in all children so that they will behave in a socially acceptable ways. The teacher contributes in their different ways to the achievement of the aim of education.

### **Challenges in Implementation**

Regardless of the well-intentioned provisions of the National Policy on Education, the implementation of value-based education in Nigeria has encountered numerous systemic and contextual challenges. One of the most prominent obstacles is the inconsistent application of educational policies across different states and regions. Although the policy advocates for a unified national direction in education, the decentralized nature of the Nigerian federal structure often leads to varying degrees of commitment and interpretation at the sub-national levels (Okebukola, 2021). Another critical challenge is the insufficient preparation of teachers to effectively deliver value-laden content. Many teacher education programmes focus largely on subject matter content and neglect the ethical and civic

responsibilities teachers are expected to instill in learners. This gap results in a workforce that may be technically competent but morally disengaged (Omede and Eghaghara, 2018). Furthermore, the lack of motivation among teachers, stemming from poor remuneration, delayed salaries, and inadequate working conditions, weakens their enthusiasm and sense of purpose in transmitting societal values (Adesulu, 2020). In addition, cultural and regional diversity in value systems across Nigeria often leads to disagreements on which values should be prioritized in school curricula. What is considered morally acceptable or worthwhile in one part of the country may be contested in another, complicating efforts to formulate universally accepted ethical standards for schools (Eya, 2019). This pluralism poses a serious challenge to the development of a coherent and inclusive national value framework.

Moreover, there exists disconnect between the values taught in schools and those demonstrated in wider society. Students are often exposed to social realities such as corruption, nepotism, and political instability, which contradict the ideals of integrity, equity, and patriotism promoted in educational settings. These contradictions undermine the credibility of value-based instruction and may foster cynicism among learners (Igbokwe and Nwachukwu, 2020). Lastly, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for enforcing value education policies remain weak. The absence of clear benchmarks, evaluation tools, and enforcement agencies makes it difficult to track progress and ensure accountability in the integration of moral instruction within the school system (Ololube, 2016). Hence, addressing these challenges is essential for the realization of an education system that not only imparts knowledge but also fosters responsible citizenship and social cohesion.

## **Conclusion**

The paper critically examined the National Policy on Education in relation to values in Nigeria's educational system. It highlighted the core objectives embedded in the policy, which are rooted in national ideals such as moral integrity, social justice, and unity. Central to the policy is the emphasis on moral and civic values, with education viewed as a transformative tool for building an enlightened and ethically grounded society. The curriculum content is designed not only to transmit knowledge but also to instill moral principles that shape character. In this process, the teacher plays a pivotal role as the primary agent of value transmission, guiding learners toward becoming responsible and cultured citizens. Hence, the success of the National Policy on Education is closely tied to the commitment of educators in modeling and promoting values essential for national development.

## **The Way Forward**

To effectively implement value-based education as envisioned in the National Policy on Education, there is a pressing need to strengthen institutional and human capacity within the education sector. Teacher training institutions should revise their curricula to incorporate value education methodologies, ensuring that educators are well-prepared to model and transmit ethical behaviour. In-service training should also be prioritized to equip practicing teachers with the competence and motivation to uphold moral values in their instructional delivery. Government and education stakeholders must ensure that the values promoted through the school curriculum align with societal practices. This calls for synergy between the home, the school, religious bodies, and the wider community in

shaping children's moral consciousness. Furthermore, educational monitoring and evaluation agencies should intensify oversight functions to ensure that the moral and civic objectives of the curriculum are being properly implemented in schools. Adequate funding must be allocated for instructional materials that reflect Nigeria's cultural and moral ideals, while also promoting unity and civic responsibility. Public enlightenment campaigns and community engagement initiatives can also serve as vehicles for reinforcing shared national values. Emphasis should be placed on reducing contradictions between taught values and societal realities such as corruption, injustice, and impunity, which often undermine the moral lessons students receive in the classroom. Importantly, if these steps are taken with genuine commitment and accountability, the Nigerian education system will be better positioned to cultivate a generation of responsible, ethical, and productive citizens in line with the goals of national development.

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