MORAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT CHARACTER FORMATION IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstracts

This paper examines how moral and values education has been integrated into Nigerian secondary school curricula and evaluates its effectiveness for student character formation. It situates the discussion within Nigeria's National Policy on Education and the National Values/Religion & National Values curricula, reviews empirical studies on implementation and outcomes, analyses structural and pedagogical challenges, and offers practical recommendations for strengthening values education. Evidence suggests that while policy frameworks and dedicated curricula exist, implementation gaps including resource constraints, teacher preparedness, overcrowded curricula, and weak school-home-community linkages limit effectiveness. A multi-stakeholder, whole-school approach, supported by targeted teacher training, curricular realignment, assessment reform, and community partnerships, is proposed to improve character formation outcomes.

Keywords: Moral Education, Character Formation, Values Education, National Policy on Education (NPE), Nigerian Secondary Schools and Curriculum Implementation.

Introduction

Education is universally regarded not only as a means of transmitting knowledge and skills but also as a transformative tool for shaping attitudes, values, and behaviors that sustain individuals and societies. Among its fundamental purposes is the formation of character, which can be understood as the deliberate development of habits, dispositions, and moral reasoning that guide individuals toward responsible, ethical, and pro-social conduct. This perspective aligns with the broader view of education as both an intellectual and moral enterprise, preparing learners to function effectively within society while upholding shared norms and values (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). In the Nigerian context, the role of education in moral orientation and citizenship formation is especially critical. The National Policy on Education explicitly positions schools as agents of not just intellectual growth, but also of moral soundness, social acceptability, and civic responsibility. This dual role reflects the historical recognition that education is integral to the nation-building project and to the cultivation of citizens who can contribute to sustainable development and social cohesion.

Contemporary Nigerian society is faced with challenges such as corruption, youth restiveness, examination malpractice, cultism, and general moral decline. These issues are often linked to weak moral foundations and inadequate reinforcement of values during formative years. Consequently, questions arise about how well schools are fulfilling their mandate to nurture virtues such as honesty, respect for law, tolerance, diligence, and patriotism. Scholars argue that without strong emphasis on values education, the younger generation risks internalizing distorted priorities that undermine both personal growth and collective national progress (Lijadu & Adediran, 2021). Given these realities, it becomes urgent for educators, policymakers, and communities to critically evaluate the role of schools in values transmission and character formation. The central questions guiding this inquiry include:

1. How are values and moral education formally and informally integrated into the Nigerian secondary school curriculum?

2. How effective are these curricular arrangements in producing measurable character outcomes among students?

3. What barriers hinder the effectiveness of these programs, and what reforms are necessary to strengthen impact and sustainability?

By addressing these questions, this paper seeks to highlight both the achievements and the shortcomings in Nigeria's approach to moral education, while suggesting actionable reforms that can reposition schools as genuine incubators of national values and responsible citizenship.

Policy and Curriculum Frameworks for Values Education in Nigeria

1. National Policy and Educational Philosophy

The National Policy on Education (NPE) serves as Nigeria's primary guiding document for the philosophy, goals, and implementation of education at all levels. The policy underscores that

education must produce "individuals who are morally sound, socially acceptable and useful to society" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013, p. 8). This phrase establishes character formation not as an optional supplement to academic achievement, but as a core objective of the entire educational process. The NPE also identifies the inculcation of national consciousness, national unity, and respect for the dignity of labor as critical components of the educational mission. In doing so, it ties character formation directly to national development goals, recognizing that moral citizens are essential for the building of a stable, prosperous, and democratic Nigeria. Thus, the policy provides the top-level mandate for the integration of moral and civic education into curricula, teacher training, and school life. However, while the policy presents clear intentions, the translation into practice has been uneven. Implementation depends heavily on curriculum design, teacher capacity, school culture, and community engagement. Therefore, the curriculum frameworks that operationalize the policy become critical points of analysis.

2. National Values / Religion & National Values Curricula

To give effect to the NPE's moral and civic goals, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) undertook significant reforms in basic and secondary education. These reforms resulted in the development of curriculum frameworks such as the *National Values* and *Religion & National Values* curricula, introduced at the basic and junior secondary levels (NERDC, 2012).

These curricula provide explicit content areas that promote virtues and civic responsibilities, including:

- Patriotism and loyalty to the nation;

- Respect for law and authority as foundations for social order;

- Honesty and integrity as antidotes to corruption and dishonesty;

- Tolerance, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence as responses to Nigeria's ethnic and religious diversity;

- Civic duties and responsibilities, such as voting, community service, and participation in democratic processes.

The NERDC curricula outline learning objectives, content topics, and teaching strategies that teachers can use to promote values in classroom practice. In addition, they encourage participatory methods such as debates, role plays, and community-based projects to move beyond rote learning toward practical engagement. At the international level, frameworks such as UNESCO's *Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future* (2010) complement Nigeria's efforts by emphasizing participatory, competence-based approaches to values education. UNESCO's perspective highlights that values education should not be restricted to abstract moral instruction but should be connected to real-life decision-making, critical thinking, and sustainable citizenship. Thus, Nigeria's curriculum development efforts reflect both a local response to national challenges and an alignment with global standards for Education for

Sustainable Development. However, the success of these curricula depends on consistent implementation, teacher preparation, and adequate monitoring — issues that remain at the heart of Nigeria's educational discourse.

Modes of Integration: Explicit and Implicit Approaches

Values education in Nigerian secondary schools is not confined to a single subject or instructional strategy; rather, it is integrated into the educational process through explicit and implicit pathways. These dual modes ensure that both the formal curriculum (what is intentionally planned and taught) and the hidden curriculum (what is absorbed through school culture and informal interactions) contribute to the shaping of students' character and moral outlook.

1. Explicit Subjects and Curricular Units

According to Obizue, Enomah & Onyebu (2025), the most direct form of values education comes through explicit subjects and designated curricular units. Key subjects such as Civic Education, Social Studies, Religious Studies (Christian Religious Studies and Islamic Studies), and National Values (particularly at the basic and junior secondary school levels) provide structured content designed to instill values of citizenship, ethics, civic responsibility, and social harmony (NERDC, 2012). For example, the Civic Education curriculum explicitly teaches topics such as democracy, rights and responsibilities of citizens, rule of law, corruption and its consequences, and the importance of national unity (Kayode-Olawoyin & Omolola, 2017). Similarly, Social Studies engages learners with issues of family life, cultural diversity, environmental responsibility, and interpersonal relations, while Religious Studies emphasizes moral virtues, empathy, honesty, and reverence for spiritual principles. These subjects provide the cognitive scaffolding upon which moral reasoning is built. Beyond content, explicit curricula often specify learning outcomes and pedagogical strategies. Teachers are encouraged to use role play, debates, group discussions, storytelling, and case studies to make values lessons experiential rather than purely theoretical. For instance, role plays on conflict resolution or debates on ethical dilemmas encourage students to critically evaluate options and internalize pro-social decision-making. Thus, explicit curricular units serve as the formal and intentional channels for teaching moral and civic values.

2. Implicit or Hidden Curriculum

While explicit instruction is important, much of character formation occurs indirectly through the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum refers to the unspoken values, attitudes, and expectations that are communicated through school culture, teacher behavior, institutional routines, and extracurricular activities (Lijadu & Adediran, 2021). Daily assemblies, school rules, disciplinary procedures, and peer interactions provide situated contexts in which students observe, imitate, and negotiate values. For instance:

- Teacher modelling: Teachers who demonstrate punctuality, fairness, and respect for students, model integrity and discipline far more effectively than lectures alone could achieve.

- Extracurricular clubs and associations: Clubs such as debate societies, road safety clubs, peer counselling groups, Red Cross, and anti-drug brigades transmit values of leadership, responsibility, cooperation, and service.

- School rituals and symbols: Singing the national anthem, observing school mottos, and participating in community service projects reinforce patriotism, discipline, and collective identity.

- Disciplinary systems: The manner in which discipline is enforced whether punitive, authoritarian, or restorative teaches implicit lessons about justice, fairness, and authority.

Empirical evidence shows that the hidden curriculum often has as much, if not more, influence on student behavior than formal lessons (Ukpabio et al., 2017). For example, if a school formally teaches honesty but tolerates examination malpractice or extortion by staff, students are more likely to internalize dishonesty as acceptable. Conversely, schools with consistent rules, transparent disciplinary systems, and caring relationships often produce students who exhibit stronger moral dispositions. In sum, values education in Nigeria is dual-tracked: the explicit curriculum provides knowledge and structured moral reasoning, while the hidden curriculum supplies lived experiences that either reinforce or undermine formal instruction. The balance between these modes largely determines the authenticity and effectiveness of character formation in schools.

Evidence on Effectiveness: What Research Shows

1. Positive Findings and Strengths

Research across different Nigerian states demonstrates that values education can yield measurable positive outcomes when effectively implemented. Several studies report that students exposed to values-oriented teaching demonstrate:

- Improved self-esteem and self-concept, as they gain clarity on moral expectations and their role as citizens;

- Better classroom behavior, including punctuality, respect for peers and teachers, and attentiveness;

- Enhanced pro-social conduct, such as honesty, cooperation, and willingness to engage in community service (Lijadu & Adediran, 2021; Yayi & Abilagbo, 2020).

For example, evaluations of the National Values Curriculum at the basic school level found that the content and objectives are well-structured and relevant to Nigerian realities. Teachers who employed active learning strategies such as role play, debates, and field trips reported

greater student engagement and more visible behavioral improvements compared to those who relied solely on lecture methods (Yayi & Abilagbo, 2020). Religious and Civic Education classes, in particular, have been found to help students develop civic consciousness and discourage anti-social behaviors such as cultism and examination malpractice (Kayode-Olawoyin & Omolola, 2017). Moreover, some quasi-experimental studies have shown that values-focused interventions (like peer mentoring programs or anti-corruption clubs) significantly reduce instances of truancy and misconduct. These findings underscore that when values education is given adequate attention, resourced appropriately, and taught through participatory pedagogies, it can serve as a powerful instrument of character formation and social reorientation in Nigerian secondary schools.

2. Implementation Gaps and Limitations

Despite these successes, a consistent theme in the literature is that the implementation of values education is uneven and often inadequate. Several key limitations hinder the full realization of the curriculum's objectives:

1. Resource and Materials Shortfalls: Many schools, particularly in rural areas, lack textbooks, visual aids, and multimedia resources necessary to bring values education to life. Without these tools, lessons often become abstract and unengaging, reducing their impact on students (Yayi & Abilagbo, 2020).

2. Teacher Preparedness: A critical barrier is the lack of specialized training for teachers. Most teachers have not received sufficient pre-service or in-service training in values pedagogy, ethical classroom facilitation, or assessment of moral outcomes. Consequently, many deliver Civic or Religious Education in the same didactic manner as other cognitive subjects, missing opportunities for deeper engagement (classroom studies; Brunel/Lagos theses).

3. Curricular Overload and Marginalisation: Nigeria's school timetable is often overcrowded, with priority given to STEM and examinable subjects like Mathematics, English, and Sciences. As a result, values-oriented subjects are sometimes sidelined, receiving less instructional time or being taught superficially. In some schools, Civic Education is treated as a "less important" subject, undermining its intended role (content analyses of Civic Education curricula).

4. Assessment Mismatch: Assessing character formation poses unique challenges. Current assessment systems in Nigeria are largely examination-driven and focus on cognitive recall rather than behavioral change. Teachers, therefore, emphasize exam preparation instead of formative evaluation of attitudes, habits, and values (Yayi & Abilagbo, 2020).

5. Weak School–Home–Community Alignment: Perhaps the most significant limitation is the contradiction between school-taught values and societal practices. Students may learn about honesty, respect, and accountability in school, yet witness corruption,

dishonesty, and lawlessness in their communities. This dissonance reduces the carryover effect of values education. Without strong partnerships between schools, families, religious institutions, and the wider community, school-based moral instruction may not translate into long-term behavioral change (Ukpabio et al., 2017).

3. Overall Appraisal

Taken together, these findings suggest that Nigeria possesses a strong curricular framework and policy mandate for values education, but the translation into practice remains inconsistent and fragile. Where teachers are trained, resources are available, and school–community alignment is strong, values education contributes significantly to student character formation. However, without systemic reforms in pedagogy, assessment, and community involvement, the broader goal of using education as a vehicle for moral reorientation remains only partially fulfilled.

Pedagogy and Assessment for Character Formation

1. Effective Pedagogies

The effectiveness of moral education in shaping students' values and character depends not only on curriculum design but also on the teaching methods employed in classrooms. Research and international best practices suggest that certain pedagogical approaches are more impactful in cultivating moral reasoning, empathy, and socially responsible behavior.

- **Interactive and Experiential Learning:**
  Interactive pedagogies such as role plays, debates, service learning, and community-based projects are particularly effective in bridging the gap between abstract moral principles and real-life situations. For instance, when students engage in environmental clean-up campaigns or community service activities, they internalize values such as responsibility, empathy, and collective action. UNESCO (2010) notes that experiential learning provides opportunities for students to grapple with moral dilemmas and reflect on the consequences of their decisions, thereby deepening moral reasoning.

- **Teacher Modelling and Reflective Practice:**
  Teachers are not only conveyors of knowledge but also role models whose behaviors strongly influence students. The "hidden curriculum" the implicit messages conveyed through teachers' attitudes, fairness, integrity, and interpersonal relationships often has a greater impact on student character than formal instruction (Lickona, 1991). Nigerian studies emphasize that when teachers model virtues such as honesty, punctuality, and respect, students are more likely to adopt these behaviors (Omebe, 2014). Thus, teacher preparation and professional ethics are critical to successful moral education.

- **Integrative and Cross-Curricular Approaches:**
  Limiting values education to a single subject like Civic Education risks compartmentalizing morality as something separate from everyday learning. Instead, embedding values across subjects such as teaching fairness and accountability in

Mathematics (through group projects), environmental stewardship in Geography, and honesty in Science creates opportunities for reinforcement in diverse contexts. International evidence suggests that this cross-curricular infusion strengthens moral learning (Arthur et al., 2017). In Nigeria, the Religion and National Values curriculum attempts this integration, though its implementation often suffers from teacher overload and lack of pedagogical creativity (NERDC, 2012).

2. Assessing Values and Character

Assessment in moral education is particularly challenging because values, unlike academic knowledge, are not easily measurable through conventional testing. Overreliance on high-stakes written examinations, which dominate the Nigerian education system, risks reducing values education to rote memorization of civic facts rather than genuine internalization of virtues.

- **Formative and Continuous Assessment Methods:**
  Alternative methods such as portfolios, reflective journals, behavior logs, peer evaluations, and records of participation in community projects offer richer evidence of students' moral development (Lovat & Toomey, 2009). These methods emphasize growth, self-awareness, and behavioral consistency rather than one-off performance. For example, a reflective journal on resolving conflicts peacefully may reveal deeper shifts in students' moral reasoning compared to multiple-choice test answers.

- **Holistic Evaluation of Dispositions:**
  Values assessment must focus on both cognitive understanding (knowing what honesty or tolerance means) and affective-behavioral outcomes (demonstrating honesty in practice). Nigerian education stakeholders have called for balanced evaluation frameworks that capture both domains (Yayi & Abilagbo, 2020). However, empirical findings highlight systemic reluctance to adopt such methods, largely due to teacher workload, insufficient training, and accountability pressures that prioritize cognitive achievement over affective development.

- **Challenges and Contextual Constraints:**
  In Nigeria, the absence of institutional incentives to prioritize character assessment remains a barrier. Large class sizes, inadequate teacher preparation, and limited administrative support further complicate the effective monitoring of students' moral growth. As a result, assessment practices often remain symbolic rather than substantive.

In sum, while pedagogical strategies for character formation are well established in theory, their practical adoption in Nigerian secondary schools requires systemic reforms—particularly in teacher training, assessment policy, and school leadership culture. Without addressing these structural barriers, the transformative potential of moral education remains under-realized.

Structural and Contextual Challenges

The integration of moral education into the Nigerian secondary school system does not take place in a vacuum. It is heavily influenced by structural weaknesses within the education sector and broader societal contradictions. These challenges often hinder the effective teaching, internalization, and demonstration of values by students.

1. Systemic Constraints

- **Funding and infrastructure:**
  Many Nigerian secondary schools operate in contexts of limited financial resources. Inadequate funding at both state and school levels makes it difficult to provide teaching aids, multimedia materials, libraries, and extracurricular platforms that are crucial for moral education. When schools lack adequate classrooms, laboratories, or even electricity, character education programs are often deprioritized in favor of survival-level teaching of examinable subjects (Obioma, 2014). Without consistent and deliberate investment, values education becomes symbolic rather than transformative.

- **Teacher supply and quality:**
  The shortage of qualified and motivated teachers presents another constraint. Some regions, especially rural and conflict-prone areas, face acute shortages of well-trained educators capable of delivering the moral education curriculum. In addition, many teachers are overburdened by large class sizes, inadequate remuneration, and lack of incentives, which undermines their ability to consistently model and integrate values instruction. This weakens the credibility of values messages taught in the classroom (Okeke & Mbah, 2019).

- **Accountability and examination culture:**
  The dominance of national and state examinations in shaping teaching practices creates a culture of "teaching to the test." Because moral education is not directly assessed in most high-stakes exams, teachers often devote more time to mathematics, sciences, and English language at the expense of civic and values-based content (Omede & Omede, 2015). Consequently, students may leave school with high cognitive achievement but with limited exposure to structured moral reasoning or character formation experiences.

2. Societal Contradictions

- **Influence of media and peer culture:**
  Young people are embedded in a media-saturated environment that often projects materialism, violence, and hyper-individualism. These messages may contradict the values of empathy, honesty, and service being taught in schools (Ogunyemi, 2010). Peer networks also exert strong influence, and when peer norms are shaped by unethical practices such as exam malpractice or cultism they can dilute or even reverse school efforts.

- **Family practices and community tensions:**
  The family, traditionally the first moral educator, sometimes undermines school messages through inconsistent practices. For instance, while schools may promote tolerance, equity, and integrity, students may observe parents engaging in nepotism, corruption, or ethno-religious bias. Furthermore, Nigeria's plural society is periodically disrupted by communal tensions, ethno-religious clashes, and political instability. These realities can make values such as tolerance and peaceful coexistence difficult to translate into lived experiences (Ukpabio et al., 2017).

Without addressing systemic weaknesses and societal contradictions, values education risks remaining rhetorical rather than transformative.

Wayforward: Strengthening Integration and Effectiveness

To make moral education meaningful, stakeholders at multiple levels policy, school leadership, and classroom practice must take deliberate action. Below are evidence-informed strategies tailored to the Nigerian context.

Policy and Curriculum Level

1. **prioritize values in national/state accountability frameworks:**
   Values education must be formally recognized in the national quality assurance and accountability systems. This means including indicators for school climate, civic engagement, incidences of discipline, and evidence of values program implementation in monitoring reports. When policy frameworks reward schools not only for exam performance but also for positive student behavior, the incentive structure shifts towards holistic education.

2. **Mainstream the National Values Curriculum across levels:**
   Nigeria's National Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) has developed curriculum components on religion, civic education, and social studies. However, fragmentation exists between junior and senior secondary levels. A coherent sequencing of values education should be ensured so that skills and attitudes are built cumulatively rather than repetitively or in isolation (NERDC, 2013).

3. **Resource targeted grants and programs:**
   Government and donor agencies should establish ring-fenced funds for moral education programs covering teaching materials, student clubs, and community service projects. Grants should especially target disadvantaged districts, where moral education efforts are most likely to be constrained by poverty and weak infrastructure.

School and Teacher Level

4. **Adopt a whole-school approach:**
   Moral education should not be confined to a single subject or lesson. It should permeate

the hidden curriculum school rules, assembly programs, disciplinary approaches, teacher-student interactions, and extracurricular activities. Schools with consistent values-aligned cultures are more effective in shaping student behavior than those that rely solely on formal instruction (Arthur et al., 2017).

5. **In-service training and professional learning communities:**
Teachers require ongoing training in interactive pedagogies for moral reasoning, restorative approaches to discipline, and formative assessment of character. Establishing professional learning communities across schools can enable teachers to share experiences, innovate, and refine values instruction practices. This will help reduce teacher burnout while also elevating the quality of delivery.

6. **Use project-based and service learning:**
Linking classroom instruction to community service activities such as environmental sanitation campaigns, intergenerational mentoring, or social entrepreneurship projects provides students with practical contexts for applying values. Such experiential learning deepens empathy, responsibility, and a sense of citizenship beyond theoretical lessons (UNESCO, 2010).

Assessment and Research

Effective values education cannot rely solely on traditional examinations that test recall or comprehension. To properly evaluate whether learners are internalizing and demonstrating values such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility, a mixed assessment system is essential.

7. **Deploy mixed assessment systems.**

Beyond cognitive tests, schools should introduce validated formative instruments such as behavioral rubrics, reflective journals, peer evaluations, and portfolios. Behavior rubrics can capture observable actions (e.g., collaboration, respect for rules), while reflective portfolios allow students to self-assess and articulate their moral reasoning. Such approaches promote *holistic assessment* recognizing not only "what students know" but also "who they are becoming" (UNESCO, 2010).

8. **Support implementation research and impact evaluation**

Without systematic research, values education risks remaining aspirational. Longitudinal studies are particularly valuable, as they help track whether students sustain values over time and in varied social contexts. Funding should priorities research that investigates program fidelity (whether teachers are implementing values curricula as intended), contextual variations (urban vs. rural schools), and long-term outcomes (such as civic engagement, conflict resolution, and tolerance). Evidence from Nigeria and other African countries suggests that consistent monitoring enhances accountability and provides data to refine strategies (Yayi & Abilagbo, 2020).

Community and Parental Engagement

Values education cannot succeed in isolation; the school–home–community nexus is crucial. Children often face contradictions between what they are taught in school and what they observe in the media, peer groups, or even at home. Therefore, fostering alignment across these domains is key.

9. Strengthen school–home partnerships

Schools should actively engage parents through regular workshops on themes such as discipline, civic responsibility, and digital ethics. These workshops empower parents to reinforce values learned in school, thereby creating consistency between home and classroom.

10. Promote community dialogues.

Forums involving teachers, religious leaders, traditional authorities, and youth groups can create locally grounded consensus on the values schools should priorities. This fosters community ownership, reducing resistance to school initiatives.

11. Collaborative codes of conduct

When students, parents, and teachers jointly draft behavioral expectations, compliance increases because rules are perceived as legitimate and fair. Such collaborative agreements also nurture *collective responsibility* in upholding school norms (Ukpabio et al., 2017).

Practical Roadmap for Implementation (Brief)

To move from policy rhetoric to sustainable practice, Nigeria needs a phased, realistic roadmap. A time-bound sequence ensures that schools are not overwhelmed and that reforms can be tested before scaling.

Policy update (0–6 months).

The Federal Ministry of Education, working with state boards, should issue a circular elevating values education as a measurable school outcome. This should include clear indicators, such as participation in civic clubs, frequency of community service projects, and integration of values themes across subjects.

Capacity building (6–18 months).

Training programs should adopt a "train-the-trainer" model where master trainers are first equipped with pedagogical skills in moral reasoning, participatory learning, and restorative discipline. These trainers then cascade knowledge to other teachers. Communities of practice where teachers share challenges and solutions should be institutionalized for sustainability.

Pilot assessments (12–24 months).

Before national rollout, selected schools across diverse contexts (urban, pre-urban, rural) should trial innovative assessment tools such as values rubrics and service-learning portfolios.

Lessons from these pilots should inform refinements to ensure cultural relevance and feasibility.

Scale with evaluation (24–60 months).

Proven models should then be scaled nationally, but with embedded evaluation mechanisms. Continuous monitoring, mid-term reviews, and feedback loops will prevent stagnation and allow for adaptation to emerging social issues such as digital ethics and climate responsibility.

Conclusion

Nigeria's educational system already rests on a solid foundation for the promotion of moral and values education, with policy directives articulated in the National Policy on Education and curriculum resources developed by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). These provisions underscore the importance of nurturing students who are not only academically competent but also morally upright and socially responsible. However, while these policy frameworks demonstrate commendable foresight, the reality within many secondary schools highlights a troubling gap between intention and implementation. Persistent systemic challenges including inadequate funding, shortages of qualified teachers, insufficient training in values pedagogy, and an assessment culture dominated by high-stakes examinations continue to undermine the effectiveness of values education in practice. Equally concerning is the misalignment between the values promoted in school settings and the contradictory moral signals students receive from the larger Nigerian society. Issues such as widespread corruption, social inequality, intolerance, and weak civic accountability dilute the influence of formal moral instruction, often leaving students caught between conflicting value systems. For values education to have transformative potential, it must therefore be reinforced through a multi-layered and integrated approach that extends beyond the classroom.

At the policy level, there is a pressing need for government and educational authorities to elevate values education into measurable goals within accountability frameworks. This requires targeted funding, strategic guidance, and consistent monitoring mechanisms that ensure schools are not only teaching values but also nurturing observable behavioral change among learners. At the school and teacher level, educators should be empowered through continuous professional development, collaborative peer-learning structures, and the provision of practical classroom tools that enable the integration of moral lessons into everyday subjects and activities. Teachers, as custodians of moral modelling, must themselves be adequately supported to embody and transmit these values effectively.

At the assessment and research level, innovation is crucial. Moving beyond an overreliance on examinations, schools should employ formative assessment instruments such as reflective journals, behavioral rubrics, and portfolios that capture the affective and dispositional aspects of learning. Rigorous research, particularly longitudinal studies, should also be conducted to track the long-term effects of values education, helping policymakers and practitioners to refine strategies based on evidence. Finally, at the community level, strong partnerships between schools, parents, and civil society are indispensable. Values nurtured within the classroom must

find reinforcement within homes and communities, creating a consistent moral environment for students to internalize and practice. Ultimately, investing in values education cannot be regarded as an optional or peripheral activity; rather, it is a national imperative tied to Nigeria's broader development trajectory. A society where honesty, empathy, tolerance, respect, and civic responsibility are actively cultivated will be better positioned to address enduring challenges such as corruption, ethnic and religious conflict, poor governance, and environmental degradation. When values education is elevated from rhetoric to measurable practice, Nigeria can raise a generation of citizens who are not only intellectually capable but also morally grounded, socially conscious, and globally responsible. In doing so, the education system will fulfil its dual mandate of producing both knowledgeable individuals and virtuous citizens who can contribute meaningfully to nation-building and sustainable development.

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