

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR HIGHER INSTITUTIONS THROUGH ETHICAL AND VALUES EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

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Abstract

This paper explores the strategies and challenges of integrating ethics and values education into the management and administration of higher education institutions in Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study is made up of all the academic staff and Degree learners of the Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education (AIFUE) which stood at 3640. This study adopted the purposive sampling technique in selecting 360 respondents comprising of 80 Lecturers and 280 final year Degree Learners to whom the researcher-made questionnaire was administered. The instrument titled: Strategies of Managing Higher Education through Ethical and Values Education for Re-engineering Sustainability (SMHEEVERS) is 4 point likert structured rating scale which was validated for content and face validity by 3 experts. The questionnaire which recorded a reliability coefficient of 0.86 was administered face to face to the 360 respondents by a researcher assistant who also retrieved same. The data collected were analysed with mean and standard deviation and the null hypotheses were tested using the z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The research concluded that Policy Reforms and Ethical Governance, Leadership by Example, Curriculum Development and Integration of Ethics, Stakeholder Engagement and Value Re-orientation Campaigns are the management strategies while Corruption and Examination Malpractice, leadership deficits and poor governance, Erosion of Moral Standards among Students and Staff and Curriculum Limitations forms the Challenges of managing in Higher Education through Ethical and Values Education for Re-engineering sustainability and recommended that effective management of higher education

must extend beyond the delivery of academic knowledge to the intentional inculcation of ethical values in students, staff, and institutional frameworks and more.

Keywords: Management strategies, Ethics and Values Education.

Introduction

Higher education occupies a strategic position in the socio-economic and political development of any nation. It is not only a means for the transmission of knowledge and the development of critical human capital but also a crucible for shaping societal values, fostering innovation, and driving transformation. Across the globe, countries that have attained high levels of development have done so through deliberate investment in their higher education systems. These institutions serve as breeding grounds for future leaders, policy makers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and professionals whose ideas and actions ultimately determine the course of national progress. In the Nigerian context, higher education is expected to play a similar transformative role. Nigeria, with its vast population and youthful demographic, depends heavily on its universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education to nurture competent graduates capable of addressing national challenges and contributing to global discourse. However, the potential of higher education to drive meaningful development in Nigeria is increasingly being undermined by systemic dysfunctions, particularly the erosion of ethics and values across all levels of institutional management and student life (Owan & Agunwa, 2020)

According to Wordu (2021), corruption has become deeply entrenched within many higher institutions, manifesting in various forms such as bribery for grades or admissions, favoritism in staff recruitment and promotions, sexual harassment, contract inflation, and the diversion of funds meant for academic and infrastructural development. These vices are not limited to administrative offices but also pervade classrooms, examination halls, and student hostels. The integrity of academic assessments is often compromised through examination malpractice, plagiarism, impersonation, and certificate forgery. Furthermore, cultism, drug abuse, and acts of indiscipline have become normalized in many campuses, reflecting a broader crisis in values that pervades the nation at large (Ngonso, 2022). The failure to uphold ethical standards in Nigerian higher education institutions is both a reflection of and a contributor to the national moral decline. Institutions that should be leading by example are instead mirroring the very corruption, lawlessness, and impunity they ought to challenge. Consequently, the education system is producing graduates who may possess technical knowledge but lack the moral compass to apply their skills for the public good. This disconnect between intellectual formation and ethical development is a major obstacle to the achievement of sustainable national development (Ofogbe, 2018)

Importantly, these problems are not insurmountable. At the heart of the solution lies the re-engineering of ethics and values education within the higher education system. This involves not just incorporating ethical studies into the curriculum, but also embedding moral principles into institutional policies, administrative processes, staff conduct, and student life.

Management practices in higher institutions must reflect transparency, accountability, and fairness, thereby setting the tone for an institutional culture that upholds integrity as a core value. This paper therefore seeks to investigate the management imperative of embedding ethics and values education into the structure and operation of Nigerian higher education institutions. It contends that without a moral and ethical revival within the education sector, efforts toward national development will continue to falter. Through a detailed exploration of the challenges facing the sector, the strategic role of ethical education, and actionable recommendations for institutional reform, the paper offers a roadmap for repositioning higher education as a catalyst for sustainable national transformation (Asiyai, 2015).

The Role of Ethics and Values in Higher Education

Ethics refers to the set of moral principles that govern behavior, while values are the core beliefs and standards that guide individuals and institutions in determining what is right, just, and desirable. In higher education, ethics and values go beyond compliance with institutional rules; they form the foundation of academic integrity, professional responsibility, and civic engagement (Okai & Wordu, 2019). Ethics and values education seeks to instill in learners a sense of responsibility, respect for others, honesty, fairness, patriotism, and social justice. These principles are not only crucial for personal development but also indispensable for building a cohesive and prosperous society. A value-deficient education system produces graduates who may be intellectually equipped but morally bankrupt individuals who are more likely to perpetuate societal corruption, abuse of power, and public distrust. Incorporating ethics and values into higher education serves several important functions. First, it cultivates students' character and prepares them for responsible citizenship. Second, it promotes a culture of accountability and transparency within academic institutions, reducing incidences of malpractice and misconduct. Third, it enhances the credibility and social relevance of education by aligning academic excellence with moral responsibility (Globethics, 2018). As asserted by FGN (2014), there is a growing recognition that education should not only be about producing skilled workers, but also about nurturing ethical leaders. Countries that have successfully integrated ethical education into their higher education systems, such as Finland and Singapore, demonstrate higher levels of institutional trust, innovation, and sustainable development. For Nigeria to realize similar progress, ethics and values must become central pillars of its educational philosophy, particularly in the management of its higher institutions (Okai & Wordu, 2019).

Management Strategies for Ethics and Values Education

Reforming higher education to prioritize ethics and values requires a comprehensive approach led by institutional management. Several key strategies can help reposition higher education as a tool for moral and national regeneration (Obizue, 2022):

Policy Reforms and Ethical Governance

Management must develop and enforce clear ethical codes of conduct for students, staff, and administrators. These codes should be supported by institutional policies that outline

consequences for ethical violations and reward systems for integrity. Anti-corruption units and whistleblowing mechanisms can enhance transparency and foster a culture of accountability.

Leadership by Example

Ethical leadership begins at the top. University administrators must model integrity, fairness, and professionalism in their decisions and interactions. Leadership development programs for academic and non-academic leaders should emphasize moral reasoning, servant leadership, and value-driven decision-making (Uzoigwe, et al, 2022).

Curriculum Development and Integration of Ethics

Ethics and values should be mainstreamed across all disciplines—not restricted to philosophy or religious studies. Faculties should be empowered to incorporate ethical dimensions into professional courses such as engineering, medicine, business, and education. The use of real-life case studies and community service projects can also enhance moral engagement.

Stakeholder Engagement and Value Re-orientation Campaigns

Management should involve students, parents, alumni, employers, and civil society organizations in the ethical transformation of campuses. Institutions can organize ethics-focused workshops, debates, public lectures, and mentoring programs to deepen students' understanding of values. Collaborating with national bodies such as the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) can add credibility and broader impact (Olasehinde, 2018)

Challenges in the Nigerian Higher Education System

While Nigeria boasts a large network of universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, the sector is riddled with systemic issues that compromise its capacity to serve as a moral compass for society. According to Obizue, Enomah & Onyebu (2025), chief among these challenges are:

Corruption and Examination Malpractice

Corruption in Nigerian higher education takes various forms, including the demand for bribes in exchange for grades or admission, manipulation of academic records, and embezzlement of institutional funds. Examination malpractice has become endemic, with students, and sometimes staff, participating in cheating rings that undermine the sanctity of academic assessments. This has grave implications for the quality of graduates produced and, ultimately, for the country's labor force and leadership.

Leadership Deficits and Poor Governance

Institutional leadership is often marred by favoritism, lack of transparency, and weak accountability mechanisms. Vice-chancellors and principal officers may be appointed based on political affiliations rather than merit, resulting in ineffective governance and the

suppression of meritocratic values (Uzoigwe et al., 2022). The absence of servant leadership erodes institutional morale and contributes to a culture of impunity.

Erosion of Moral Standards among Students and Staff

The declining moral behavior among students manifested in cultism, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, and disrespect for authority is a reflection of the value crisis plaguing society at large. Ngonso (2022) highlighted several ethical issues prevalent in Nigerian higher education, including frequent absenteeism by lecturers, unavailability of project supervisors, delayed commencement and incomplete delivery of course content, the administration of overly difficult assessments, campus prostitution, cultism, drug and substance abuse, and the monetization of intellectual efforts such as lecturers writing students' projects. Additional concerns include examination malpractice, falsification of research data, and plagiarism. Ogunleye (2000) also identified issues like sexual harassment, abuse of office, corruption, and embezzlement. Academic staff, too, have been implicated in cases of sexual harassment, nepotism, and dereliction of duty. The normalization of such behaviors reflects an institutional failure to enforce ethical standards consistently.

Curriculum Limitations

Many programs in Nigerian higher education institutions do not adequately address ethics, civic education, or critical thinking. Where such topics exist, they are often taught superficially or treated as electives with minimal practical relevance. This limits students' exposure to ethical frameworks that are necessary for moral reasoning and responsible action.

Implications for Sustainable National Development

The moral regeneration of higher education holds significant implications for Nigeria's national development:

Quality Human Capital

Ethically educated graduates are more likely to exhibit discipline, integrity, and social responsibility qualities essential for building strong public and private institutions. They can become transformational leaders, entrepreneurs, civil servants, and educators who resist corrupt practices and champion national interest.

Good Governance and Civic Responsibility

An educational system that emphasizes ethics fosters a culture of good governance and democratic participation. Graduates trained to value justice, equity, and accountability are more likely to engage in civic duties and demand transparency from leadership.

Social Cohesion and National Unity

A value-based education promotes tolerance, empathy, and peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnic and religious groups. This is critical in a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria where tensions often arise from perceived marginalization or injustice.

Economic Sustainability

Corruption and unethical business practices drain national resources and scare away investors. A generation of ethically minded professionals can stimulate economic growth through honest entrepreneurship, ethical investment practices, and innovative problem-solving.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to examine the strategies of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability. Specifically, the study sought to examine;

1. the mean scores of Lecturers and Learners of AIFUE on the strategies of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability
2. the mean scores of Lecturers and Learners of AIFUE on the Challenged of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability

The following research questions are posed to guide this study;

1. What are the strategies of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability?
2. What are the Challenges of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability?

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. **H₀₁:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Lecturers and Learners of AIFUE on the strategies of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability
- 2 **H₀₂:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Lecturers and Learners of AIFUE on the Challenges of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability

Method

The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study is made up of all the academic staff and Degree learners of the Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education (AIFUE) which stood at 3640. This study adopted the purposive sampling technique in selecting 360 respondents comprising of 80 Lecturers and 280 final year Degree Learners to whom the researcher-made questionnaire was administered. The instrument titled: Strategies of Managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for Sustainability (SMHEEVERS) is 4 point likert structured rating scale which was validated for content and face validity by 3 experts, two from educational management, one from measurement and evaluation. The questionnaire which recorded a reliability coefficient of 0.86 was administered face to face to the 360 respondents by a researcher assistant who also retrieved same. The data

collected were analysed with mean and standard deviation and the null hypotheses were tested using the z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results are presented in tables according to the research questions.

Research Question One

What are the strategies of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability?

Table 1: The Mean Score of the mean scores of Lecturers and Learners of AIFUE on the strategies of managing Higher Institutions Through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability

S/ N	ITEMS	LECTURERS		LEARNERS		X	REMARK
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂		
1	Policy Reforms and Ethical Governance	2.69	1.07	2.65	1.11	2.67	Accepted
2	Leadership by Example	2.81	1.08	2.57	1.17	2.69	Accepted
3	Curriculum Development and Integration of Ethics	2.61	1.06	2.68	1.18	2.64	Accepted
4	Stakeholder Engagement and Value Re-orientation Campaigns	2.38	1.10	2.45	1.09	2.41	Rejected

Table 1: shows the responses of AIFCE Lecturers and Learners on the strategies of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability and the result shows means scores of 2.67, 2.69, 2.64 and 2.41 for items 1 to 4 respectively. All the items with mean scores that are above the critical mean of 2.5 are accepted as the strategies of

managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability except the mean score of 2.41 for item 4 which is below the critical value hence rejected. This implies that all the Lecturers and Learners accepted items 1, 2 and 3 but rejected item 4 as a strategy of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability

Testing Hypothesis One

1. **H₀₁** there is no significant difference between the mean scores of Lecturers and Learners of AIFUE on the strategies of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability

Table 2: Summary of Z-test Analysis on the Mean Responses of Lecturers and Learners of AIFUE on the strategies of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability

Subjects	N ₃₆₀	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal	z-critical	Decision
Lecturers	80	2.67	1.07	198	1.17	1.96	Accept
Learners	280	2.59	1.12				

The data on table 2 showed the summaries of the scores, means, standard deviations and the z-test of difference between the mean responses of Lecturers and Learners of AIFUE on the strategies of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability. The data revealed that the z-test calculated value stood at 1.17 while the z-critical showed a higher value of 1.96, hence the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that both lecturers and learners are of the same view on the items in research question one of the study hence the conclusion that there is no significant difference between the mean rating of Lecturers and Learners of AIFUE on the strategies of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability

Research Question Two

What are the Challenges of managing Higher through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability?

Table 3: The Mean Score of Lecturers and Learners of AIFUE on the challenges of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability

S/N	ITEMS	LECTURERS		LEARNERS			REMARK
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	\bar{X}	
5	Corruption and Examination Malpractice	2.72	1.05	2.66	1.06	2.69	Accepted
6	Leadership Deficits and Poor Governance	2.58	1.12	2.78	1.18	2.68	Accepted
7	Erosion of Moral Standards among Students and Staff	2.56	1.16	2.59	1.28	2.57	Accepted
8	Curriculum Limitations	2.69	1.04	2.65	1.16	2.67	Accepted

Table 3 represents the responses of the respondents on challenges of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability. A critical look at the result showed that all the items in table 2 recorded mean scores higher than the 2.5 critical value and this indicates that both the Lecturers and Learners perfectly agreed to the fact that item numbers 5 to 8 are the challenges of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability.

Testing Hypothesis Two

- 2 **HO₂** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Lecturers and Learners of AIFUE on the Challenges of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability

Table 4: Summary of Z-test Analysis on the Mean Responses of Lecturers and Learners of AIFUE on the Challenges of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability

Subjects	N ₃₆₀	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal	z-critical	Decision
Lecturers	80	2.65	1.08	198	1.17	1.96	Accept
Learners	280	2.67	1.14				

Table 4 above showed the summaries of the scores, means, standard deviations and the z-test of difference between the mean responses of Lecturers and Learners of AIFCE on the Challenges of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for Sustainability. The table further showed that z-calculated is 1.17 while the z-critical is 1.96. given that z-critical is higher than z-calculated, the null hypothesis is hereby accepted indicating that there is no significant difference on the mean rating of the lecturers and learners of AIFCE hence they generally agree on items 5 to 8 as the Challenges of managing Higher Education through Ethical and Values Institutions for sustainability

Discussion of findings

From the above analysis, the researchers found that Nigeria's higher education sector stands at a critical juncture, where the urgent need for ethical and moral reorientation cannot be overstated. The persistent challenges of corruption, unethical conduct, academic dishonesty, and declining institutional credibility are not isolated operational anomalies they are symptomatic of a deeper erosion of core societal values. The researchers sought for two main purposes; the first sought for the strategies of managing Higher Education through Ethical and Values Education for Re-engineering sustainability, while the second sought for the Challenged of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability. The first finding indicates that Policy Reforms and Ethical Governance, Leadership by Example, Curriculum Development and Integration of Ethics, Stakeholder Engagement and Value Re-orientation Campaigns are the management strategies in Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability. This finding is in line with the finding of Obizue (2020), that, reforming higher education to prioritize ethics and values requires a comprehensive approach led by institutional management. Several key strategies can help reposition higher education as a tool for moral and national regeneration. The second finding of this study shows that Corruption and Examination Malpractice, leadership deficits and poor governance, Erosion of Moral Standards among Students and Staff and Curriculum Limitations forms the Challenged of managing Higher Institutions through Ethical and Values Education for sustainability. This finding conforms with the result of Uzoigwe et al. (2022), who concluded that While Nigeria boasts a large network of universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, the sector is riddled with systemic issues that compromise its capacity to serve as a moral compass for society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the researchers recommended the following;

1. Effective management of higher education must extend beyond the delivery of academic knowledge to the intentional inculcation of ethical values in students, staff, and institutional frameworks.

2. Management must actively shape institutional culture through leadership modeling, curriculum reforms, code of conduct enforcement, and stakeholder collaboration. By aligning higher education management with ethical imperatives, Nigeria can cultivate a new generation of morally upright graduates, promote institutional accountability, and foster national cohesion and progress.

3. Policy reforms, leadership capacity development, curricular innovation, and inclusive stakeholder engagement as pathways toward transforming Nigeria's higher education into a morally responsive and development-oriented sector.

Conclusion

Nigeria's higher education sector stands at a critical juncture, where the urgent need for ethical and moral reorientation cannot be overstated. The persistent challenges of corruption, unethical conduct, academic dishonesty, and declining institutional credibility are not isolated operational anomalies; they are symptomatic of a deeper erosion of core societal values. These crises have significantly impaired the ability of higher education institutions to fulfill their mandate of developing competent, responsible, and morally upright citizens who can contribute meaningfully to national development. Efforts to improve funding, infrastructure, and enrollment rates though important are insufficient without corresponding reforms in the ethical architecture of the system. The foundational values of integrity, accountability, equity, diligence, and respect for human dignity must be deliberately reintegrated into the academic, administrative, and social life of tertiary institutions. This re-engineering requires institutional leadership to set a clear ethical vision, supported by robust governance frameworks that reward good conduct and penalize misconduct consistently. Moreover, the role of curriculum development is central in this transformation. Ethics and values education should not be relegated to the margins of academic programs; rather, it must be mainstreamed across all disciplines and delivered in ways that connect theory with practice. Pedagogical approaches must encourage critical moral reasoning, civic responsibility, and ethical decision-making through case studies, service learning, debates, and mentorship. Institutional management must also foster partnerships with stakeholders including government agencies, civil society, religious organizations, employers, and alumni networks—to drive a culture of integrity and value-based leadership. Interventions such as ethics workshops, campus-wide value campaigns, and transparent administrative practices can collectively help reposition higher education as an ethical model for the broader society. Ultimately, the sustainability of national development efforts hinges not only on producing skilled manpower but also on nurturing morally grounded leaders and professionals. Higher education, when anchored in sound ethical principles, becomes a transformative force for national cohesion, innovation, and socio-economic growth. As such, ethical and values education must no longer be treated as an afterthought; it must become the cornerstone upon which Nigeria builds an inclusive, just, and prosperous society that is capable of navigating the complex demands of the 21st century.

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