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Reinstatement of National Values in Primary Education in Nigeria: A Better Way to Attain National Integrity

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ABSTRACT

The continuous increase in moral decadence among Nigerian youths has raised serious concerns in recent times. Examination malpractice, internet fraud, money rituals, social vices, dishonesty, laziness, political and economic fraud are now the order of the day in some Nigerian primary schools. This is due to a lackadaisical attitude toward the teaching of national values in Nigerian primary schools. Shortage of funds, inadequately trained teachers, political instability, and the failure of supporting social organizations in upholding the teachings of national values in primary schools were also identified as challenges facing the implementation of national values in primary schools in Nigeria. If all these should persist, it may lead to the complete loss of national values in primary education and an unhealthy foundation. Nevertheless, this paper is a call for the restoration of national values in primary education in Nigeria to attain national integrity. A conceptual framework on the reinstatement of national values in primary education in Nigeria was designed to explain the interconnectivity between national values, primary education in Nigeria, and national integrity. For the sake of clarity, the study is grounded in Bertalanffy's System Theory of 1968 that explains Nigerian primary school as a sub-system working towards the attainment of national integrity (Big System) through reinstatement of national values.

Keywords: National Values; Primary Education in Nigeria; National Integrity; Reinstatement; Bertalanffy's System Theory

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1. Introduction

The word value remains an important concept to any individual or group. Value is the worth or significance of anything, an individual, or a group. The existence of any community is based on its way of life, that what they value in their culture. Every society has its own culture (organizational culture), which makes such a society unique from another, and the culture is passed on to the upcoming generation. A society that is not concerned with value retention might struggle to fit into the developing world, and such a society may lack recognition in the outside world. Values serve as an overall guide to action, which is gained from induction into the ways of life of a community into an individual over time. Values and human life cannot be separated because humans are rational and thinking beings to consider good or bad matters [1].

Values are considered in making a final decision or judgment that has to do with human vision to achieve happiness and sustainable development. Value is the instigator for human actions. Values are seen as beliefs and standards that are essential to an individual or a group, which influence their behavior in a particular way [2]. For example, in Nigeria, national values are viewed as young individuals respecting elders, speaking the truth always, studying hard to become a useful and acceptable member of society; self-control, being humane, helping others, humility, and moderation, love not being wasteful, integrity, patriotism, being kind, hard work, and being punctual at any gatherings. All these values are what children learnt from their first school, which is home. Whatever foundation the home sets is what the school builds upon. The values are impressed by parents into their children in African culture. Africans, particularly the Yoruba tribe, hold values in high esteem and do not joke with them. They frown at children who resist these values, and they are punished for such resistance. The Africans passed the values from one generation to another, and they see it as a legacy that they should pass to their children. Value differs from culture to culture; the Yoruba girl/boy kneels or prostrates to greet elders, while this is absurd in Igbo culture.

Organizations with higher levels of cultural preservation can survive over a long period of time; furthermore, it is suggested that inculcation and induction of young ones into the ways of life of any organization can help in developing knowledge, potentials, and skills needed to support the existence of the human race on the surface of the earth [3]. The type of knowledge and value transferred to an individual may influence their decisions in life. There is a need to transfer the existing values from an experienced individual to a relatively inexperienced person. This is expressed as mentoring in an organization, which is an important leadership skill needed to manage and motivate people. It is an important method to help others learn, grow, and become more relevant in their line of duties [4].

National values are set standards and principles of good behaviour, attitudes exhibited by an individual or groups in society. National values represent the dominant worth upheld throughout the common cultural experience of any nation in the world. It is a mutual acquaintance needed by any nation to succeed. National values serve as a guide to the ways of life, conduct, judgments, choices, and relationships. In Nigeria, several measures have been put in place to incorporate Nigerian children into the ways of life of the country. The measures focus on building of a child to become a useful and acceptable member of the society. There is a crucial stage in the growth, development, and fortification of a child's character; this formative stage aids the sustenance of a child in life endevours.

The Nigerian primary education curriculum focuses mainly on the cultivation of a child to fit into the national values of the country. These. values are on a general phase and also limited to each culture and regions [5]. The guide to national values was first introduced by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in 2013, where the curriculum was set to capture the said national values, and the enforcement of such was encouraged. Basically, the inculcation of national values at the primary school level is embedded in teaching subjects such as English language, civic education, social studies, and Christian religious studies/Islamic religion studies. Primary education in Nigeria is to majorly inculcate values such as honesty, compassion, tolerance, courage, and truthfulness into a child to ensure a balanced living and positive human values for a better society at large [5].

In a research conducted to examine the effectiveness of implementing national values curriculum in primary school level in Oyo State, Nigeria, it was observed that teaching national values can help a growing child to be able to know the

required standard expected of him in society and it was then recommended that teachers and school heads are to be more familiar with the curriculum content for them to know the best method of inculcating national values into children in their schools [6]. There is a need for investing in high premium on value-based education in Nigeria, where subjects such as social studies, civic education, and related subjects would be taught [7]. National values should also be incorporated into teachers' training curriculum to ensure that national values are imbibed in them even before becoming a certified teacher to teach in class [8]. National values are like the driving force for the activities of individuals and lifestyle [9].

2. Primary Education in Nigeria

Primary education is established to promote the socio-physical and mental abilities of the children between the ages of 6–11 years [10]. The level of education is designed to inculcate a permanent literacy into learners who are relatively inexperienced in the ways of life, culture, societal expectations, and nationalism. A child between ages of 6–11 is expected to be subjected to compulsory six years pedagogy for such to be able to read, write, and communicate in simple English as an official language of the country and also for such a child to be inducted into the national ways of life expected of him to live.

Specifically, the goals of primary education in Nigeria, as indicated by the national policy on education [10], are to:

1. inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively.
2. lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.
3. give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
4. mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child's changing environment.
5. give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child to function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity.
6. provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trade and crafts of the locality.

It is worth noting that these set goals couldn't have been achieved over the years without the interference of a well-structured curriculum for primary education that captures the need for inclusion to teach national values. Primary education in Nigeria serves as an agent of socializing the younger generation towards acquiring their expected ways of living [11]. The school, on a general note, helps to preserve and transmit the cultural values of the society at large from one generation to another. Primary school is a feeder to secondary school; if these values are lacking at this stage, it will definitely affect education at the secondary school. Once the foundation is faulty at this stage, the whole body will be defective. Hence, there is a need to lay a solid foundation for the children in primary school to embrace and respect societal values for sustaining education development in Nigeria.

3. Roles of National Values in Attaining Primary Education Goals and National Integrity in Nigeria

As established above, national values are remains significant in the achievement of primary education goals and national integrity in Nigeria. National values is a source of provision of moral and civic foundation for pupils. National values are avenues for instilling values like integrity, honesty, and patriotism, thereby shaping the character of an individual, which on the later can help in building a just, united, and self-reliant nation [12].

Roles in Attaining Primary Education Goals

(1) Moulding Character and Morality: Primary school is an essential and critical educational level that can aid personality development in a child; primary schools then act as an avenue for moulding a child's morality, potentials, and character through incorporation and taught of national values [13].

(2) Inculcating Civic Duty: Continuous exposure to national values is capable of helping a child to understand his/her fundamental rights and civil duties, which are key objectives of primary education in Nigeria [14].

(3) Foundation for National Goals: National values' education helps achieve the national goals of Nigeria, such as building a free and democratic, just, and egal-

itarian society[14].

(4) Promoting Good Citizenship: Teaching National values in Primary schools helps in the development of values like hard work, honesty, selflessness, tolerance, and a high sense of responsibility, which are essentials of a good citizen[13].

Roles in Attaining National Integrity

(1) Overcoming Negative Values: Teaching national values on a continuous pace can help in addressing and combating the continuous increase in negative values like ethnic and religious intolerance, corruption, and insecurity that is threatening national unity[15].

(2) Building a Collective Identity: By teaching national values and norms in primary schools, a collective identity can be created that is capable of strengthening national integration, and helping Nigerians to feel a sense of belonging in the society[13].

(3) Promoting National Consciousness: National values' education in primary schools imbibe into pupils that spirit of national consciousness and patriotism, thereby encouraging them to prioritize the nation's interest over narrow and shallow interests[16].

(4) Fostering National Unity: Restatement of national values into the Nigerian primary education curriculum can help in building a spirit of unity by teaching pupils to respect the rights and values of others and also to embrace unity in diversity[16].

4. Operational Mechanism of Reinstatement of National Values in Primary Education in Nigeria

(1) Curriculum Integration: National values can be reintegrated into both the formal curriculum and extracurricular activities in primary schools aimed at achieving national integrity.

(2) Teacher's Role: Primary education teachers are to be trained and equipped to instil national values into pupils for them to be useful and relevant to the sustenance of national integrity of the country.

(3) Foundation for All Education: National values provide the foundation for all other levels of education, to ensure it is not just about knowledge, literacy and skills, but also about developing upright and morally sound individuals that is capable of solving rising problems in society and also capable of upholding the national integrity of the country.

5. Theoretical Underpinning

Bertalanffy System Theory

For the sake of clarity, this study is grounded in Bertalanffy's System Theory of 1968. The theory emphasizes on viewing any organization or sector of the economy as a system, whose behaviour is a result of the relationships between its components. The components are seen as sub-systems. The theory further identified a system as an arrangement with four things, namely:

(1) Characterized with objects, elements, parts, or variables which can be in physical, abstract forms, or even both, depending on the nature of the system.

(2) System consists of attributes, qualities, or characteristics and its objects.

(3) System is characterized by internal relationships among its variables or objects.

(4) Every system is an entity in an environment[17].

With these, it can be said that a system is a set of interconnected and interdependent entities that depend on themselves within a context of an environment to form a larger outline aimed at achieving a set goal[18]. The basic systems prototype of organizational analysis features the continual stages of input, processing, and output[18]. Two system characteristics are comprehensiveness and interdependence, which make the entire system the brain box of all parts of a larger system. Other characteristics include correlations, perceiving causes, power, authority, hierarchy, rules, supra-systems and subsystems, goals, environment, inputs, outputs, and all other relevant components. A system is the interconnectivity of more than one supra-system to form a super-system.

Bertalanffy System Theory is deemed fit for the study because it emphasizes on ensuring all needed components of the national integrity and development are in good shape, quantity, quality; working together towards the attainment of the aims, goals, and objectives of the national integrity. National integrity in Nigeria is seen as a larger system every

sector is working towards to present Nigeria as a country with a good reputation that is fulfilling its purpose in the sustainable socio-economic development of the world. The continuous use of national values in the primary education in Nigeria is one of the needed ways to attain National integrity. National values are a sub-system of the whole system aiming at national integrity which the absence of which can affect the smooth attainment of National integrity.

Primary education is a basic and foundational level of the Nigerian education system; this level of education ensures every child is grounded in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, identifying basic concepts of the economy, and learning the basic national values for such an individual to be a useful and relevant member of the society. If this level, which is a sub-system of the whole system of education in Nigeria fails to incorporate its expected functions, the whole educational sector may collapse, thereby making the sector an incomplete system. Reinstatement and continuous propagation of the national values in primary schools in Nigeria will surely make the educational system a complete one capable of maintaining the national integrity of the country among her counterparts all over the world. As expressed in the **Figure 1** below, there is an interconnectivity and interdependence between national values, primary education in Nigeria, and national integrity, where each has to be dependent on the other to be able to perform effectively.

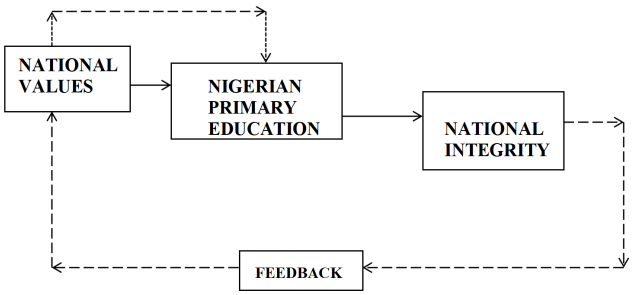


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework on Reinstatement of National Values in Primary Education in Nigeria.

Figure 1 above is a model with four boxes. The first box reveals national values as the system that is reintroduced into the Nigerian Primary Education System. The second box shows the Nigerian Primary Education system as the receiver of national values for it to be productive in producing individual or groups of pupils capable of upholding the national integrity of Nigeria. The third box reveals national integrity which is the possible outcomes that can be achieved by reinstatement of national values into the Nigerian primary education system. The feedback is essential in the model because it's an indicator for proper planning and implementation of National values in the Nigerian primary education.

6. Challenges of Reinstatement of National Values in Primary Education in Nigeria

As good as the national values are, the inclusion, inculcation, and development of them in the primary education system in Nigeria seem to be confronted with a lot of challenges. Evidences are seen in form of examination malpractices, internet frauds (cutting corners, internet frauds, and money rituals), social vices, dishonesty, arrogance, disobedience, laziness, and many more, which are now the order of the day in some primary schools in Nigeria.

The following were identified as challenges to the reinstatement of national values in Primary Education in Nigeria:

6.1. Insufficient Funds

Funds are needed for the successful implementation of curriculum-based policies. National value policies indicated in the primary curriculum of primary schools in Nigeria can only be implemented when there are enough funds to procure needed facilities, payment of staff, establishment of schools, training, and retraining of primary education staff towards the attainment of national values and maintenance services. Policies on the implementation of national values in primary education in Nigeria appear not to have been easy to actualize over the years due to inadequate allocation of funds to the educational sector at large. Inadequate funding has affected the inculcation of national values in Nigerian primary schools[19]. Over the years, the annual budget allocation for primary education in Nigeria seems to be grossly inadequate, as it is evident in the imbalances in the allocation of the required annual 26% of the national annual budget recommended by UNESCO. The recent allocated percentage of the national budget for 2023 was 5.14% of the National budget, which was against the recommended 26% by UNESCO; insufficient funding is the most prominent challenge to the

management of Nigerian primary education [20, 21]. The highest allocation ever recorded was in 2006 with 10.43%, far less than half of the recommended 26%. If this practice persists in the education sector, poor-quality primary education in Nigeria may not be averted soon [22]. Continuous existence of insufficient funds in the educational sector will definitely affect the implementation of the national values curriculum in primary school, which will on the long run, lead to moral decadence and a reduction in the national integrity.

6.2. Inadequately Trained Teachers

Shortage of trained teachers needed for the implementation of curriculum capturing the national values in primary schools in Nigeria may pose a serious challenge to the transfer of needed national values to generations to come. Teachers are the major instruments needed in implementation of set goals and objectives of education. In fact, teachers as seen as builders who ensure adequate production of a complete human sound in knowledge and understanding who can survive in the dynamic economy of the world. Teachers serve as channels through which national values are inculcated into relatively inexperienced learners. Unfortunately, it appears there is shortage of trained teachers in the primary education sector; the available seem to be less informed about the importance attached to the implementation of national values in primary education. This challenge seems to be a result of the negative influence of politics where teachers are employed based on connections they have with top officials in politics. In fact, in some cases, graduates without a background in teacher education are employed to teach at primary schools. In the long run, the dominant of this unfortunate development affects the production of sound primary school leavers.

The Nigerian education system is currently understaffed at all levels; some experienced teachers were said to have retired, resigned, died, while others with prevalent japa syndrome have left in search of better opportunities without being replaced with new ones, which has harshly increased the workload on the remaining ones [23]. Teachers in primary schools are grossly inadequate compared to the population explosion from the enrollment of pupils in primary schools in Nigeria; some available teachers in primary schools cannot display professionalism in teaching the expected national values and skills [24]. Over 90% of Nigerian school going children go to the public schools that lack the capacity to engage or retain qualified teachers, and the available ones are driven away by horrible conditions of service and poor welfare packages such as accommodation, transportation, health insurance, and many more [25]. The continuous existence of shortage of needed teachers can lead to decrease in the implementation of national values in primary education in Nigeria which on the long run may affect the national integrity of the country among her counterparts in the world.

6.3. Inadequate Cooperation from Related Social Agencies

There are other supporting social agencies aside the school that are engaged in upholding the teachings of national values to primary pupils in Nigeria. Religious agencies and community groups that engage in ensuring that a child is well developed towards the cultural ways of life of the country are no longer encouraged and they hardly exist. Unfortunately, it appears some of these supporting agencies are not encouraged and gradually phased out of existence. The joint responsibility of upbringing child in a community is now drifting to extinction as a result of so-called civilization where everybody maintains a nuclear family and not living in an extended family structure and they now mind their businesses. Churches and mosques appear not to be teaching the deep national values, while community groups such as Council of Elders Forum tell stories with moral lessons to learn from (e.g., the moonlight stories are shifting their attention away from the proper inculcation of national values into younger ones). In the time past, the way people lived in an extended family system and brought up their children was a joint responsibility, but now there are more nuclear families that extended; the avenue for a child to be exposed to the teachings of societal values is now being narrowed to a nuclear one. Everybody appears to be busy with acquisition of wealth, and the mentality has been imbibed by a larger percentage of youth in the society. This is evident in the continuous increase in internet fraud, money rituals, and other dubious means of acquiring wealth among youths in Nigeria. A phrase in pidgin English arose among the school-going age students in Nigeria in late 2020 as (*School na Scam*), i.e., going to school is a scam, and that education is no longer the key to success in life [26]. A child who grows up in a society with this erroneous mentality may never see any reason to

subject himself to learning the values of the society. These developments may lead to derailing from implementing the national values into primary school pupils.

6.4. Political and Economic Fraud

Continuous rise in the rate of political and economic fraud in Nigeria have affected a lot of things about national development, values, and integrity. Politicians embezzling and looting national treasury (in most cases, the perpetrator goes scot-free) have posed a bad mentality into primary school pupils as their parents discuss the evil practices at home[20]. Corruption is apparent in the Nigerian education system in the form of bribery, embezzlement, money laundering, and misappropriation of funds, falsification of records, non-remittance of tax and collected dues, inflation of contracts, and even ghost workers syndrome, as the case may be, which has caused great pain in the national development[27]. A case study of July 20, 2020 probes into the Niger Delta region of Nigeria as recorded that the scholarships and bursaries available for indigenous people from crude oil extraction regions to support them in acquiring standard education, at home and abroad, were poorly managed by the personnel of the commission, thereby leading to the underfunding of students with scholarships under the scheme[28].

Some of the pupils may even see it as the norm, whereby they can confidently say they want to become politicians when they grow up. There are cases of misappropriation of funds allocated to education, for which in the long run, nothing serious was done to check them. On the 18th of February 2018, Vanguard Newspaper reported the news of how a snake swallowed 36 million naira in Jamb office[29]. Also case of a monkey that swallowed 70 million naira in a farm, respectively[30]. One would ask why animals are now so powerful and capable of swallowing money meant for the welfare of humans. This shows how weak the justice section of the country is. A child that listens to such news may believe and develop a mentality that he can mismanage funds meant for the masses and lie that animals swallowed it. This is totally against the attribute embedded in the national values of the country. A child with such mentality may be difficult to be convinced in school that there is something called honesty and if such a child should have access into the economy, he will definite be a nuisance in the society which may affect the national integrity of the country.

6.5. Political Instability

A lot of things usually change when there is a change in power, policies, appointments, allocation of resources, etc. Political instability has affected a lot of policies that have to do with primary education and national values in Nigeria. This is because every government has its own vision and agenda to ensure pleasing the citizens. So, when they assume office in most cases, they abolish existing policies and ideas, and create another one. There is no continuity in most cases, and this may affect the sustenance of some policies. In fact, inculcation of national values in primary schools also suffers when there is change in power; what seems right to an administration may be wrong to another one. In most cases, governments come into power to abandon existing policies of previous administrations and in the end leads to poor implementation of policies on Nigerian education. The federal government in 2013 announced plans to create six regional mega-universities that have the capacity to admit 150,000 to 200,000 students in each[31]. Unfortunately, this blueprint went into extinction when another government came into power in 2015. The implication of this is that Nigeria is not giving educational plans enough time to mature before they are even terminated. The success of policies cannot be determined until their implementation is complete and an evaluation is done accordingly.

Politics and frequent changes in government can prevent the proper implementation of the National Policy on Education[32]. Political instability can lead to a change of ministers, policy makers, commissioners, and some personnel of education, which in turn leads to policies' instability. One can be sure that once there is a change in power, there will be a change in education personnel, policies, and standards of education, thereby making it difficult to implement the policies for a long period of time. Unhealthy politics lead to removal of subjects that could inculcate moral values into the pupils from the curriculum. Subjects such as religious studies were removed and replaced by social studies, security education, and civic education. Primary education suffers unnecessary changes in curriculum, because every incoming administration would like to effect a change whether positive or negative, which in the long run affects the coping mechanism of children in school[33]. When this continues, it likely impacts the implementation of national values into the curriculum of primary education

in Nigeria.

7. Conclusions

It can be concluded that national values play a vital role in shaping a child to be a good and acceptable member of the larger society and should be taught in Nigerian primary schools to prevent a child from moral decadence and from becoming irrelevant to the socioeconomic development of the country and the world at large. Primary education is seen as a sub-system of the whole educational system that can be used to incorporate national values capable of upholding the national integrity of Nigeria as a country. Despite this, the review identified some challenges facing the easy implementation of national values in primary education, such as broken homes or parents' negligence attitude, shortage of funds, shortage of trained teacher to implement national values in primary schools, political interference which leads to misappropriation of funds, and inconsistency of national values and have affected the attainment of national integrity of the nation Nigeria.

7.1. Suggestions

Drawing inferences from the above discussion, it is then suggested that the government, concerned personnel, agencies, parents, teachers, community groups, religious organizations, and relevant agencies should wake up to the task of upholding sustainable implementation of national values into the curriculum of the primary education system. Needed funds should be released to the sector as due to aid the easy implementation of national values. Adequately trained teachers should be employed to implement national values into primary school children, and everyone should endeavour to live right to be well emulated. With this, Nigeria will be a country free from moral decadence, which we have all been dreaming of. A well-trained child is a well-trained nation. Nigeria will be great again and claim its national integrity among its counterparts in the world at large. If national values are given high priority in the schools by restoring religious studies and other subjects that could help a child to be morally sound, they should be restored in the primary school curriculum. Parents should endeavour to see to the proper training of their children by inculcating the necessary values in them. With this, the Nigerian education system will be able to maintain its position in aiding the national integrity of the country.

7.2. Research Gap

It was established that teaching national values in primary schools is capable of shaping a child towards living as a useful and acceptable member of the society without being a liability to the socioeconomic development of the country. Unfortunately, it was discovered that there are challenges facing adequate implementation of national values in primary education in Nigeria. Challenges such as insufficient funds, inadequately trained primary school teachers, inadequate cooperation from related social agencies, politics, economic fraud and political instability were identified as hinderances towards the adequate implementation of national values in Nigerian primary schools. This study then calls for restoration of national values aimed at attaining national integrity in primary schools in Nigeria.

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Conceptualization, review, editing, and supervision, E.O.O.; writing original draft preparation, and visualization, I.S.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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