

## **CURRICULUM STUDIES: A TOOL FOR RE-ENGINEERING ETHICS, INTEGRITY AND REBUILDING TRUST IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY EDUCATION FACULTY IN THE UNIVERSITIES**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explored curriculum studies: a tool for reengineering ethics and integrity for rebuilding trust in the 21<sup>st</sup> century faculty of education in universities. The concepts of curriculum studies, ethics, integrity, trust and faculty of education were discussed. The paper also discussed how curriculum studies could build ethics and integrity in education faculty in universities, re-initiation of ethics and integrity in rebuilding trust in the 21<sup>st</sup> century universities. Subsequently, the paper considered prospects for rebuilding ethics and integrity in education faculty in universities. The paper concluded that curriculum studies could serve in reinitiating ethics and integrity for rebuilding trust in education faculty in universities in this century. The paper thus recommended that university administrators should do regular evaluation to determine the extent of decay in the universities and find ways to remedy it, university lecturers should unlearn all the unethical lifestyle they have imbibed over time to bring back trust, students should desist from indulging in unwholesome practices that defy integrity and dent the image of their institutions etc.

**Key words:** Curriculum studies, ethics, integrity, trust and faculty of education

### **Introduction**

Ethics may mean what the society deems fit to serve as a standard upon which to measure the behavioural expectations of the society. This presents the fact that when a group of people agrees on what they would want to use as the yardstick on which to measure the behaviour of its people whether it is right or wrong that becomes the ethics of the people or society. Valasquez, Andrew Thomas-Shanks and Meyer (2010) describes ethics as standard of right and wrong that lay out what people should do but based on rights, obligations, benefits to the people, fairness or particular embodiments of character. The description is indicative that issues relating to how a society would operate and enjoy a hitch free and peaceful co-existence among her populace should be the reason for ethics. More so, it is expected that a society of individuals also shares her right freely without fear of molestation.

The researchers perceive that the term of ethics is a complex one, considering that it could only be described but not defined especially because from describing it a lot more other terms which may also be complex on their own appear, owing to the fact that different societies have different ethical standards. Perhaps the reason Lumen Candela (LC, 2018) in trying to bring simplicity to the description of ethics sees it as a set of moral principles that orders the behaviour of people. However, it must be made clear as it is widely argued that morality alone may not be able to convey the message desired to fully describe ethics especially because what is moral in one location differs from what is moral in another location even on the same matter of discourse or interest. Ethics as a concept is much more complex than usual, nonetheless, it seem to mean that if ethics would find true relevance, then, it must go in partnership with integrity, another concept that could only be described and not defined yet it is what would allow ethical practices to survive the test of time because one of its major feature is impeccability, thus, the two concepts ethics and integrity are knitted together and related.

Integrity is having high moral and principled pattern of living one's life. Here, this individual is committed to foundational fundamental rules that would not be easily given away. This is a quality of being whole with strong principles for living (CD, n.d). The idea behind the above is that integrity is a quality or character trait that someone comes to possess at a certain point in time in life. This means it could be learnt, thus, if it could be learnt, then, it could be taught to learners. According to White (2016) it is a concept that explains an individual's level of honesty, morality and willingness to be associated with what is right. This description further buttresses the fact that living with integrity is a choice padded with determined effort. It was further added that every sphere of human existence seem to have it and this may include the academic, political, legal, economic etc.

Among other societal point of view, these two concepts: ethics and integrity most often go together, however, while ethical behaviour could help a person develop integrity. A person of integrity may be acknowledged as such not necessarily because of his/her awareness of ethical rule or knowledge but owing to the fact that the character of integrity had been built in the person over a period of time. More often than not, for individuals who have built integrity, trusting them may not be difficult at all because over time such people would have shown what they are made of. Thus, integrity builds trust; therefore, it could help do the reengineering for rebuilding trust in the 21<sup>st</sup> century faculty of education university practices. University education has become synonymous with corruption as many people claim in certain quarters these days and that the graduate from the university education system are unemployable and unreliable. This is based on the fact that they did not get learning in character and even if they did gain some level of knowledge, the scores obtained in the courses are given due to bribery, sex for marks, and the use of other forms of gratification for obtaining academic success. Then the question should be what went wrong with our university education practices?

The history of university education in Nigeria has it that in the past when people were awarded degrees in education, they were certified as worthy in character and learning but these days that cannot be said to be true of the university graduates any more. The graduates from

universities these days as claimed have superfluous lifestyle when going through university education, this wealth is presumed to be acquired illicitly, what most of them now parade as a culture. Just in 2017, David Cameron, the then Prime minister of the United Kingdom described Nigeria as a nation as being 'Fantastically corrupt' (Channels Television, 2016) and in 2018 Transparency International ranked Nigeria 144 out of 180 country on the corruption index, in 2019, the rating stood at 146, a sign that Nigeria had become more corrupt by two steps than the previous year (Transparency International, 2019). This simply indicates that Nigeria and Nigerians have rather degenerated in honesty hence, they cannot be trusted. In the words of Veaux (2019) integrity without knowledge is weak but knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful. This means that no matter the amount of knowledge tanks Nigeria possess, this wealth of knowledge represent danger and dreads other humans away from them. This is coming because the university education practice is not being done in isolation of the society, therefore, there would have been a mix of this challenge in the university practice in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, perhaps, the reason, it may be necessary to itemize the different shades of ill- practices that negate ethics and integrity as state by Okoromah (2018) which may include: Examination malpractice, embezzlements, bribery, substituting self for others in screening processes, writing projects and term papers for others, etc. These are some of the shades of lack of integrity that are truly apparent in the faculty of education university practices in Nigeria. Thus, the challenge would be the question, how do we stamp it out? Hence, the need to carry out this study on curriculum studies: a reengineering tool for ethics and integrity for rebuilding trust in the 21<sup>st</sup> century faculty of education university practices.

### **Conceptual Framework: Concept of Curriculum Studies**

Curriculum has been difficult to define by a single definition, but this is based on several factors according to (Amadioha & Akor, 2019) which may include fundamental assumptions about the concept, the perception of the various experts and lay persons on it and probably the near emphasis placed on certain aspects of it and not others. All these could be traced to the various thought patterns and ideology being held on the concept of curriculum. Nonetheless, the traditional views hold the idea of the curriculum as all the subjects taught by the school to the learners (Angadi, 2016). It is seen as all the learning experience with which students are associated in a learning process (Akor, 2013). But the more recent views see the curriculum as the bridge linking the school and society (Esu, 2010). While (Amadioha & Akor 2018) have simply put that it is the instrument used in facilitating the expected change needed in a learner for his/her betterment and for the progressive advancement of the society in which he/she lives. This last definition of curriculum describes it as an object for a continuous and unbroken reward of betterment which the larger society expects to enjoy, thus, curriculum studies.

Curriculum studies could mean the study of curriculum in terms of what, why, when, where and how. It could be perceived to be all encompassing, noting that all that is required for everyone who studies it benefits from it. According to Akor (2019) curriculum became an object of formal study beginning with the University of Glasgow in Scotland which tested it on their surgery students in 1829. Later in 1918, John Franklin Bobbit a renowned expert published his book called 'The curriculum' and since then it has been used formally though to mean several terms like subject, learning experience, teaching plan, means to an end and/or as an instrument social

reconstruction but conspicuously, it has found more relevance with education and education students in particular are expected to take courses on it throughout their stay in the tertiary institution. Onwuka (2002) describes it by saying that it is a subject that teachers and in particularly would be teachers know about essentially for the following reasons: Because it is an unavoidable educational aspect, it makes meaningful background for education, helps users create knowledge, help users carryout duties with ease, enable users develop template for evaluation process etc. Hence, curriculum studies as a course of study is a big deal in education, it simply means that without curriculum, formal education would be hanging in the air. Thus, curriculums studies is a sine-qua-non because of the function it performs in bringing about education to meet proposed goals, it then means that every education students must be abreast with developments and changing trends about curriculum and of course curriculum studies considering that it is an effective instrument for driving home the rules and practices of education (ethics).

### **Concept of Ethics**

Ethics from the earlier description sounds to stand for the rules, regulations and procedural practices perceived to be the right or wrong with regards to life practices but in this case educational practices. Ethics are proven yardsticks that determine what to do and what not to do, delineating values like integrity, honesty, discipline, contentment etc. This idea presents ethics as a group of principles held by a person or a people based on the value placed on those principles and they would not want to break such principles considering the after effect of doing so. It could also mean taking time out to find out more about the ethical practices of humans in their various locations (Essay UK, 2018). However, in the context of use here, it does just apply to professional teachers and would be educational practitioners. Ethics in this sense is that which would require these individuals to see themselves in place of leadership whether they officially hold an office position or not considering that it is an obligation, a role right of the educators themselves and that of those who are learning under them. Ethics as principles regulates the professional conduct of the individual in the field, the curriculum presents itself as a veritable tools for enforcing ethical conduct here. In contrast Futterman (2015) has said that ethics is different from morals in that it comes with personal decision to stand by a particular standard while moral standards are imposed by others, hence, whether you are able to cope with it or not it is unimportant to those who imposed such moral standards on you but ethics is lived out based on a personal decision and standing on proven and existing principles of life that could make anybody a better person. But whatever the case, it is vital to say some importance of ethics within and outside of the school walls.

- a. It influences behavior and ability to make right or wrong choices.
- b. They are instrumental to running a smooth system.
- c. Ethics protects the interest of all.
- d. It builds in fair judgment for all.
- e. It helps develop empathy in people.
- f. Ethics consciously or unconsciously builds in the role of a mentor in its practitioners.
- g. Ethics develops discipline for further progress while curriculum builds ethics; ethics run the life and lifestyle displayed by one over time leading to the development and practice of integrity.

### **Concept of Integrity**

From the earlier description of ethics, it seem to be that ethics produces integrity, that is, that integrity forms an integral part of ethics, a kind of practice done overtime to produces integrity. Integrity may then mean that it is a product of ethics and it connotes an idea of being whole, complete, without spot or blemishes. In others, one who is able to observe to do what is right at the right time in the right place for the right reasons could be described as a person of integrity. Integrity as described by White (2016) presents an attribute of an individual with a higher degree of forthrightness, moral adherence and the yieldedness to always act rightly. The above description presents integrity as not just a concept but a concept used in describing the extent to which a person is perceived to have acted rightly or acts rightly. The idea above also represents two things:

- a. That integrity is of various levels (high or low).
- b. That integrity could be taught and learnt over a period of time or a given time.

Thus, it is possible that the degree of consistency to which a person shows in compliance with issues related to integrity determines the degree of integrity that may be found in the person hence, ethical codes would be helpful in helping anyone build a life of integrity. Again, there seem to be opportunity for someone whose life of integrity had previously weathered to rebuild it, particularly, because anything that has been learnt could be relearnt or unlearned. The above process of rebuilding integrity is very important for a lot of people who have gone ahead with living in the past without proper guidance in terms of ethical living and living a life of integrity. Kang (2017) clearly stated that most times once people become inconsistent in their actions, untruthful and gullible, they loss their integrity, therefore, for such a person to buy back the trust of those who had lost confidence in him/her, there is a need to turn a new leaf and begin a rebuilding process.

### **Concept of Trust**

Trust on the one hand is reposing confidence in a person that would live up to his/her words in the past while on the other hand it is feeling safe when around someone that one can confide without fear of being sold out by that person. As a matter of fact, considering all that is going on with the University education practice around the world today one could only wonder if there is still any level of trust left to be reposed on the 21<sup>st</sup> century university education. Be that as it may, it is important to reiterate some of the factors that has led to the breach of trust and deserting the university education practices and they are: alarming rate of sexual harassment in the university, score for money or money for score scandals all around, examination malpractices and impersonation for various reasons, certificate forgery, corruption in the management and administration of universities, diversion of funds meant for building new facilities or even for refurbishing or outright upgrade, electoral fraud in students elections and imposition of candidates by high ranking university officers for personal gains etc. All these and more have led to the need to use curriculum studies as a frontline course of study in the faculty of education in universities in order to reengineer ethics and integrity as a fulcrum for rebuilding trust in the 21<sup>st</sup> century faculty of education in universities.

### **Concept of Faculty of Education**

Faculty of education is one of the faculties of learning in the university system that educates would be teachers for all levels of education. This faculty houses many departments which may include: educational foundations, educational management, guidance and counseling, curriculum studies and educational technology, business education, vocational and technical education etc depending on the capacity of the institution in terms of personnel and infrastructure. This faculty of the university train people to earn certificates, degrees both bachelors and higher degrees.

### **Building Ethics and Integrity in the Department of Curriculum Studies, Faculty of Education in Universities**

Curriculum studies has already been agreed on to be a course or subject that every student in the faculty of education must take and in different aspects, hence, it would be worthwhile to state clearly how it could be instrumental to the development of ethics and integrity in the faculty of education in universities:

- a. Curriculum is Polymorphous:** Curriculum is more than teaching in a classroom. It deals with the needs, aspiration and the well-being of the society, thus, it would be right to say that curriculum be used as the vehicle for driving societal needs and yearning by helping ensuring that proper design and planning for the future of the society is put into account. For example, this is 21<sup>st</sup> century an age where virtually everything is gone digital and has to do with information and communication technology, therefore, the curriculum must be tilted towards the digital direction in order to accommodate all for all.
- b. The origin of Ethics in Reflection:** This is true as the idea behind right or wrong that led to man developing the concept of ethics and integrity emerged from reflections, in the same manner curriculum studies emerged as a result of man reflecting on his current state and bearing thought of where he wants to be and developing ideas and trainings towards achieving such desires, it then means that ethics and curriculum studies bear semblance therefore, are inseparable (Singer, 2020).
- c. Ethics is Communicating Value and Good Conduct:** Curriculum studies also communicates values considering that the major pursuit it has is to make everyone that comes through it to become a functional member of the society, thus, curriculum studies would produce the capacity to transform people to be people of value and good conduct and above all transform the raw potentials of the people to utilizable potentials that could be used for the betterment of the individuals and wider society.
- d. Ethics and Integrity is Concerned with Brotherhood:** The pursuit of curriculum studies is to develop a full man who is conscientious of his surrounding this is inclusive of the other people around. It would be vital to say that ethics and integrity would be of no essence in a vacuum but the value is immeasurable when fellow men help each, compliments each other in every aspect of life, so curriculum studies as a tool for teachers would find more relevance for man to himself and the society at large, tin this guise curriculum studies is the soup with which ethics and integrity and eaten.
- e. Curriculum is an Instrument for Change:** Ethics and Integrity are teachable and learnable attributes which are aimed at producing a better person, therefore, the essence of these life

characteristics would not be a fact without curriculum studies. The use of curriculum would make the impact of ethics and integrity felt in the society more.

- f. **Define your Choices and Decision:** The curriculum and of course curriculum studies serves as a screen by which the society determines right choices and wrong ones and even decisions, so with the idea of curriculum studies, ethics and integrity could be preserve from one generation to another (Brault, 2020).

### **Re-initiation of Ethics and Integrity in Rebuilding Trust in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Education Faculty in Universities**

It is possible to reinitiate ethical and integrity lifestyle in the university system in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, to do this, the following are probable steps to be taken to ensure for a better foothold.

1. Analysis of the present state of ethical practices and integrity level of the education faculty in the universities environment.
2. Outline the extent of objectives, goals and aims to be met within a given time.
3. Develop the content that would match with objectives, goals and aims so stated.
4. Prioritize the content in an orderly manner to build from known to unknown, simple to complex it etc.
5. Evaluate the process regularly to determine if the objectives are being met.
6. Reform as may be necessary from the evaluation carried out.

When these steps are taken it would help to build a conscious society driven towards rebuilding trust for ethics and integrity life.

### **Prospects for Rebuilding Ethics and Integrity in the Education Faculty in Universities**

The rebuilding of ethical practices and reintroduction of integrity in the life of a university community would indeed produce the following:

1. For stronger reputation: In life, almost everything is reputation, the teacher and students should trust each other in the teaching and learning process, so too should the school administrator trust his/her employees and students as well and the only instruments for achieving these goals when curriculum and of course curriculum studies is used (Blackman, 2018).
2. It helps in having nothing to hide that would come to incriminate the institution and people. When an institution and the people therein have nothing to hide, transparency does have a good parol in a place. (Mentz-Gibbons, 2009).
3. People would count on you for being genuine: There will always be a recommendation for anyone and institution that acts genuine (ethically and for integrity) they would not have anything to loss but gain all the time (Dsouza, 2018).
4. Ethics leads to competitive advantage: In our world today, behaviours which are acceptable to the society enables the institution and persons to be at advantage when competing with others over anything and often they end up being chosen over others and the ripple effect of come-back sales continues.
5. Ethical practice enables an institution or people to leave legacies for generations to come, as they would be acclaimed to have etched their name in gold.

## Conclusion

The research has presented that ethics and integrity needs curriculum studies as an instrument to drive it to the final consumers. Moreso, these people and the future generations have a lot to benefit from getting involved with ethics and integrity. Conclusively, ethics and integrity could be used to rebuild persons and the society, why curriculum studies as a vehicle particularly in the education faculty in universities education would help bring trust, confidence, and more to the system and system practice.

## Recommendations

The following are the recommendations for supporting this research study.

1. The university administrators should do an evaluation to determine the extent of decay that has taken place in the university and aim towards remedy.
2. University lecturers should unlearn all unethical lifestyle they have imbibed over time to bring back trust to their practices in the universities.
3. Students should desist from indulging themselves in unwholesome practices that defy integrity and dent their image and that of their institution of learning.
4. National University Commission (NUC) should plan the curriculum with the use of other resource persons in mind that could help build or rebuild trust in the university system.
5. Individual universities should lay out punishment for offenders of certain ethical codes and those in integrity practices in order to serve as a deterrent for others.

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