

**Teachers' experiences of implementing value education in Rwandan schools**  
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**Abstract**

*The aim of this study was to assess and analyse lower primary school teachers' views on the implementation of value education and the problems they encounter in the teaching of values in Rwandan schools. In this research, qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that the word 'ubukeshya' used in Rwanda Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) to mean value has various interpretations among teachers. Hence, the teaching of values is hindered by this misleading terminology, 'ubukeshya'. The findings also revealed that, in their struggle to implement value education, teachers rely on indoctrination as their teaching strategy. It was suggested that constructivism theory of learning, which has been proven, should be prioritized in the teaching of values. It was recommended that training on value education be organized to enable teachers implement value education appropriately.*

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**Key words:** *Value, value education, curriculum, lower primary school*

**1. Introduction**

Education plays a crucial role in building a future strong society. Throughout history, its aim is to help a child grow up intellectually, socially and morally good. To achieve this valuable goal, a holistic development of a child is imperative. That is why education should focus on all aspects of human growth and development: physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development. To this end, value education plays an important role by affecting the manner in which a child behaves.

However, despite its crucial role in the development of a child, value education has been receiving little attention in the school curriculum compared to knowledge and skills. Hence some researchers found that the escalating children indiscipline is due, among other factors, from not acquiring necessary values to shape their behaviours. Sutrop (2015, p.193) argues that "to cope with today's challenges requires moving beyond the reproduction of accumulated knowledge and skills" and instead accommodate values which build appropriate behaviours among children.

To achieve government goal, value education should be more than words or the memorization of value concepts. But rather teach values by practice practicing these values. Apple and Beane (1995) assert that students learn values from their actions and the action of their peers. Value education is not only in the hands of the teacher. Lickona (1992) states that, values should be taught at home as well as at school. Nzahabwanayo (2018, p.73) goes further to stat that values can be transmitted via "family, church, school and the state." To avoid confusion, values taught at home and values taught at school should be in agreement. Halstead and Taylor (2000) point out that, schools have a socialization role by building on and supplementing the values children learn from their homes.

The basic values highlighted in Rwanda's curriculum are: "dignity and integrity, self-reliance, national and cultural identity, peace and tolerance, justice, respect for others and for human rights, solidarity and

democracy, patriotism, hard work, commitment and resilience” (MINEDUC/REB, 2015). According to Rwanda competency-based curriculum, values education as a crosscutting issue must be embedded and integrated into all subjects across the curricula (MINEDUC/REB, 2015).

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 What is a value?**

For Berkowitz (1996) and Oser (1996), values are stated via subjective judgment and via behaviour. Plunkett (1990), value means relatively established choices or preferences about how to be or to behave. Thus, the term value is regarded as desirable acts or conditions that are general guides to behaviour. In fact, each individual's ideas and actions are controlled by their values. Hence, a value or a group of values influence people's choices and decisions.

Some values are context bound (core values to a group of people) while others are universal (core values to all people). Schwartz (2000) lists patience, honesty and compassion among core values to be taught to children. The core values are basic values because various individuals regard them the same in terms of their importance, and find them to be instilled in young people. Nzahabwanayo (2016, p.40) argues that “there are values that can be established as meaningful to all humankind, irrespective of individual, social and cultural circumstances.”

Even if researchers do not concur on the common list of universal values, Arweck and Nesbitt (2004) support the following list of values: respect, peace, honesty, love, tolerance, humility, freedom, cooperation, simplicity, responsibility, happiness and unity. Therefore, “it is important for a society to transmit its core values to younger generations” (Nzahabwanayo, 2016, p.40).

The Law N° 010/2021 of 16/02/2021 determining the organization of education published in Rwanda Official gazette No Special of 18 February 2021 gives the basic co-values which are to be emphasized in Rwanda education. These are patriotism, peace, tolerance, justice, and respect for human rights, solidarity, democracy, and environmental protection. These values are to be emphasized to bring cohesion in Rwandan post genocide society.

Silay (2013) is of the view that values can be learned and taught. Values are also a target of influence. Naidoo (2013) concludes that values can be influenced by various factors such as, the media, friends, family members etc. Lickona (1992) quoted in Cohen (1995) believes that it is good to help the learners know the meaning and sense of the values but also help them to be responsible for their actions acted against values.

### **2.2 Need for value education**

The term value education is related to other terms which are sometimes used interchangeably. Some of them are education in virtues (Carr & Steutel, 1999), character education (Lickona, 1991), and the development of attitudes and personal qualities (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Veugelers (2000) provides other terms which are used in relation with values education such as ‘moral education’, ‘character education’, ‘personal and social education’, ‘civic education’ ‘citizenship education’, ‘religious education’, ‘democratic education’, among others.

Smith and Montgomery (1997) assert that the teaching of values and education are inseparable. They further explain that education at home and education at school are always continuous. When value education is not emphasized at school, learners may not give respect to one another, to teachers or to property. According to Hill (2004), value education is to help the learner know the good choice and then practice it in daily life. Hence, value education is about helping children improve or change behaviour—from negative behaviour to positive behaviour. Arweck and Nesbitt (2004) argue that value education is like a reminder to young people in reflecting about values in their lives, applying them to improve their relationships and respect of properties.

Doyle (1997) asserts that a school cannot operate without values. Indeed, the educational mandate of schools includes the transfer of values (Kopp, et al., 2017). Hence, besides knowledge and skills in various subjects, schools should give a valuable time on the teaching of values embedded in the subjects. Value education is vital as a way of cementing good relationship among children and curbing or preventing cases of inappropriate behaviours that may occur among children. UNESCO affirms that education should be based on four pillars: learning to live together; learning to be; learning to know and learning to do (Delors, et al. 1996). All these pillars should be implemented equally to ensure holistic learning of the child that will fully help him/her to cope with challenging life.

Schuitema, et al. (2003) point out that value education is essential to the development and welfare of the student in helping him/her to contribute to the quality of society. In fact, the aim of value education is to enable the individual towards achieving personal fulfilment for success in their life and work (Kumar, 2017). He argues that value education enables students to develop healthy interpersonal relationships at school, at home, and in society which are required for better adjustment. In the context of Rwanda, Nzahabwanayo (2018) stresses that value education is very crucial in post-genocide Rwanda to achieve 'social cohesion and peace building'.

### **2.3 Value education in Rwanda Competency Based Curriculum (CBC)**

Value education can be a subject standing alone, or a cross cutting issue embedded in other subjects such as geography, history, etc. CBC embedded value education as crosscutting issues to be delivered in all subjects (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). When preparing a lesson, the teacher has to identify which values to be promoted during the teaching and learning process.

The process of teaching values can be done via methods, attitudes, and content. Methods are based on an interactive and learner-centered approach to classroom instruction. The attitudes teachers employ in their teaching and in their everyday actions play an important role in helping learners learn those same positive attitudes and values. There are certain subject areas where it is possible to actually integrate content into the lesson that focuses on ideas related to peace and peace building. In a lesson focusing on international conflict, you help the learners to develop ideas about the root causes of conflict and how to prevent them (REB/Aegis Trust, 2018).

Values are absorbed not only in the classroom but also in the canteen, school corridors, toilets, and on

the bulletin board, among others. Likewise, Cengiz and Duran (2017) conclude that values education should be given in daily communication and activities. Values should be shared and discussed but not imposed (Reddy, Thankachan & Shailaja, 2013). Supporting this point, Veugelers, (2000) noted that students have to make up their minds about the values their teachers stimulate. To this end, in value education, constructivism teaching and learning approach should be adopted. Ferreira and Schulze (2014) sum up what scholars think of constructivism as follows:

- Learning, including the learning of values, is an active process.
- Knowledge and insight (e.g. knowledge of values) is constructed and not inborn or passively absorbed.
- Knowledge is formulated, rather than discovered.
- Although knowledge is individual and particular, it is also socially constructed.
- Learning is essentially a process of trying to understand the world.

For Önder and Kanak (2017), children should be allowed to talk about, discuss and respond to values. Moreover, Court and Rosental (2007) argue that teaching and value education are inseparable since the methods the teacher uses should be interweaved with values.

### **3. Methodology**

This research used a qualitative phenomenological approach to investigate teachers' views and experiences while implementing value education in Rwandan schools. The findings of this research are not for generalization as Maxwell (2013, p. 136) states that, "qualitative researchers usually study a single setting or a small number of individuals or sites using theoretical or purposeful rather than probability sampling, and rarely make explicit claims about the generalizability of their accounts." From this perspective, this research selected fourteen lower primary school teachers who were purposively selected with regard to their experience in teaching. However, Farber (2006) argues that qualitative research allows the researcher to get rich, deeper information from the natural setting in order to better understand the phenomenon being studied, and a phenomenological approach is used to describe and interpret an experience as perceived by the people who have participated in it (Ary et al., 2007). The main purpose of this study is to assess and analyze teachers' views on the implementation of value education and the challenges they encounter in the teaching of values across the curricula.

In this study, interviews and classroom observations were employed to find out how teachers incorporate values in the learning and teaching process. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The researchers developed the interview guide that consisted of six open-ended questions. Interviews were conducted face to face and through telephone in respect of COVID-19 pandemic procedures. The data obtained from observations and interviews were analysed via qualitative approach. Raw data was transcribed verbatim and the data were coded and grouped into small units to generate themes. Codes are developed via the words

used by participants or words used by the researcher (Creswell, 2012). Data analysis procedures generated results that are presented and discussed in the next section.

#### 4. Finding and discussions

During analysis of the findings, five themes emerged from the data: the problematic use of Kinyarwanda concept, 'ubukeshya; teachers' understanding of value and value education; challenges in value teaching; strategies that teachers use to teach values; and teachers' views on the strategies to be used in teaching value.

##### 4.1 Teachers' understanding of value (education), 'indangagaciro'

In spite of confusing the two concepts 'ubukeshya' and 'values education', majority of interviewed teachers demonstrated clear understanding that, the teaching of values should be integrated in all the subjects as indicated in Rwanda competence based curriculum (CBC). Teacher 10 re-iterated that: "Indangagaciro', *Values, should integrated in every subject we teach. Even the lesson plan template provided by REB has an entry indicating that values should be taught.*"

When asked the meaning of the word *indangagaciro* (value), Teacher 5 stated that: "*values are like guidelines, rules people fix so that they can guide and govern themselves and their society.*" This understanding aligns with Sari (2013) who states that "values are the basic principles that influence human behaviours." Teacher 7 added that: "*There are values which are common to all of us such as Rwandan values, Christian values, military values, etc.*" On this point, Gautam (2015) lists types of values such as "social values, cultural values, personal values, traditional values, modern values, moral values, religious values, etc.

Teacher 9 stated that, when iam teaching value in mathematical calculations such as multiplication, addition and subtraction, I advise pupils to be honest in calculation when they become businessmen. Then, I give them time to discuss honest and trust as values embedded in calculation lessons. I also advise them to calculate government taxes without lying. Teacher 6 too, went on to state that, 'mathematical fractions can be used to teach 'peace value. *I usually tell pupils that when people are sharing should not quarrel, they should share peacefully; they should share equally.*" This coincides with Lyer (2013) who observes that today's world is aware of the importance and relevance of value-based education but teachers often feel contented with covering the curriculum and producing intellectuals rather than humans. Knowledge and skills alone cannot play this role.

Teacher 12 stated that "*through values, pupils cement their good relationship. Besides knowledge and skills, pupils need values that would help them to know how to behave in everyday life, at home and in the society.* Algani and Eshan (2019) state that, values play a vital role in the development and cohesion of society. Veugelers (2000) noted that the subject a teacher teaches and the personal characteristics of the teacher, as well as the culture of the school, also have an influence on the specific values teachers stimulate in their students. In the same view, Thornberg and Oğuz (2013) highlights that values education should also be expressed in the informal curriculum.

#### 4.2 Challenges in value teaching

During the interviews, teachers gave some challenges they encounter while implementing value education. Across the study, all participants reported that the Kinyarwanda concept 'ubukeshya' is problematic in its usage. This concept 'ubukeshya' was incorporated in the Rwanda Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) to convey the meaning of both attitude and value. Since this study was on value education, the term 'ubukeshya' had to be respected and hence used during interviews to capture teachers' understanding of value education.

Informants especially teachers expressed various understanding and perception of the term 'ubukeshya'. Their understanding and perception of the term 'ubukeshya' in short 'value' was quite different from the meaning is assigned to it in Rwandan curriculum guidelines. Teacher 1 stated that: "the word 'ubukeshya' is difficult indeed. We are using it but, we, teachers, do not share a common understanding of it. Even the trainers who came to train us on CBC did not manage to give us the meaning of this concept, 'ubukeshya'".

The difficulty in perceiving the real meaning of the key term in curriculum is clear that the term 'ubukeshya' has multiple interpretations not only among teachers but also among trainers. The fact is that, 'ubukeshya' is a very new word in Kinyarwanda lexicon; it was coined by curriculum developers in 2015. This dilemma makes teachers fail to give the real meaning of value education. When the same teacher (teacher 1) was asked to find its equivalent in English, she stated: "I think this concept 'ubukeshya' can be translated as 'critical thinking'". Teacher 2 trying to describe it said: "'Ubukeshya' is like putting in action the knowledge. For instance when I am teaching, writing 'ubukeshya' means mastering writing. It means, 'ubukeshya' is achieved when my students are able to master writing capital letters or small letters. So 'ubukeshya' is when the child is able to put in action what he/she has learnt. Obviously Teacher 2 equates 'ubukeshya' with skills. Likewise, teacher 3 said: "'ubukeshya' means skills gained by the children, it is like what they do as a result of what they have learnt." Rwanda CBC is clear about 'ubukeshya' and skills; both (ubukeshya and skills) are key competencies, but not synonymous words which can be used interchangeably.

It was clear that, many teachers confuse the word 'ubukeshya' with knowledge transfer. Teacher 3 said that: "'ubukeshya' is about how pupils should use knowledge and skills at home or elsewhere'. Similarly, teacher stated that: "You know 'ubukeshya' is an application of knowledge outside the class, in other contexts rather than the class." The same teacher 2 gave some examples: "for instance after teaching measurement, the child goes home. When s/he is at home, the child uses a rope to measure the length of a wall of their house, or the length of the cloth or even to measure his/her height. Meaning that all these activities he/she is doing at home measuring is what we call 'ubukeshya'. The concept of 'ubukeshya' is therefore, misconceived by many teachers to mean the application of the knowledge learned at school.

Other challenges in terms of 'time', 'language of instruction' and 'COVID-19', were identified. For instance, Teacher 6 stated: "*The first challenge is time. We do not have time to teach values to integrate values in all the subjects we teach. The content itself is big and yet we have to finish it before national examinations. In*

the same view, Teacher 9 reported: *“Because of insufficient time, when we are teaching values, instead of having much time for discussion of values. Indeed, we do not spend time on values”.*

English as a language of instruction is another challenge teachers mentioned. For instance, Teacher 7 acknowledged not being used to English terminologies about values. He said that *“it is not easy for us to teach values in English. More so, pupils are not able to discuss these values in English.”*

It is worth noting that this language challenge arose after the ministry of education, contrary to multitude research findings, decided to change the language of instruction in lower primary school from mother tongue (Kinyarwanda) to English. Edward (2019) stresses that teaching learners in the language they don't understand well undermines the quality of education. Indeed values are better conveyed through mother tongue (Kinyarwanda) through which the Rwandan culture is transmitted. Furthermore, there is an acute lack of reference books which can help teachers improve the teaching of values.

#### **4.3 Strategies teachers should use to teach values**

Since 'ubukeshu' is a very new word and has created some misconceptions of the 'concept Ubukeshu' among teachers, it is better to abandon it and replace it with the word 'indangagaciro' which directly and simply means 'value' in Kinyarwanda language. That is why the researchers decided to use the Kinyarwanda term 'indangagaciro' in lieu of 'ubukeshu' throughout the interviews with the participants. The concept of 'Indangagaciro' is used in various governments of Rwanda official documents to mean 'value'. For instance, in the recent Rwanda official gazette of 2.2.2021, in its article 4: specific objectives of education in its two versions (Kinyarwanda and English), it is written as follows: *“kugira uruhare mu guteza imbere indangagaciro (Kinyarwanda version)”* which is translated in English as *“to contribute to the promotion of Rwandan values.”* In this study, findings show that many teachers rely on indoctrination as a value education strategy. Indoctrination as a teaching method is however criticised because it relies on content rather than on knowledge construction by the learners.

According to Chaitanya (2017) indoctrination forces pupils to specific desired values. It retards pupils' critical thinking and it is in conflict with constructivism theory of learning. This theory entails that children construct their knowledge, get time to discuss and sometimes question what they are learning contrary to pure memorization. Effective learning requires meaningful, open ended and challenging problems to solve. Hence, teachers are encouraged to use application of constructivism during the implementation of value education. There is a need to train Rwandan teachers in the teaching of values. Teacher 10 stated that: *“To better teach values, we need training on value education”.* This aligns with Lyer (2013) who says that the teachers are trained and qualified to teach subjects such as mathematics but are rarely trained to teach values.

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

The rationale for value education resides in the fact that the mastery of knowledge and skills alone cannot make pupils fully competent. Thus, teaching a CBC curriculum ignoring value education cannot benefit the learner. Values step in to fill in the gap by forming and cementing entity with knowledge and skills. In this regard, the role of the teachers is crucial to helping the students learn various values.

The findings have revealed that teachers misuse the Kinyarwanda term 'ubukeshya' used in CBC to mean value since confuse it with skills, knowledge transfer, character education. This misunderstanding hampers the implementation of value education. Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended that, teachers should be given training on the understanding and the teaching of values.

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