



Strategic Educational Management of Jamb-prescribed Literature Texts for Cultivating Moral and Social Responsibility in Nigerian University-bound Students

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2025/v51i82224>

Open Peer Review History:

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://pr.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/138256>

Original Research Article

Received: 25/04/2025
Published: 16/07/2025

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the strategic educational management of JAMB-prescribed literary texts in Nigerian secondary schools, focusing on their potential to foster students' moral and social development. Using a quantitative approach, the research surveyed 100 literature teachers and

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school administrators across Enugu State and conducted thematic literary analyses of five JAMB texts: *Sweet Sixteen*, *The Life Changer*, *In Dependence*, *The Last Days at Forcados High School*, and *Lekki Headmaster*. Findings reveal a moderate but uneven implementation of value-based literary instruction, there is awareness of moral themes but inconsistent integration into classroom practices. Key challenges include exam-centric teaching cultures, insufficient teacher training, and administrative neglect of the JAMB texts, which are often relegated in favor of WAEC and NECO syllabi. Despite these challenges, the study found strong stakeholder support for strategic reforms that align literature instruction with moral education goals. Recommendations include collaborative training by JAMB and the Ministry of Education, policy reforms that emphasize moral teaching, and the integration of literature into broader civic and character education initiatives. The study concludes that repositioning JAMB texts as tools for cultivating ethical consciousness can enhance national values education and better prepare students for responsible university life.

Keywords: Strategic educational management; JAMB literature texts; moral development; value-based learning; secondary education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian educational system is not only a vehicle for cognitive development but also a powerful tool for moral and social transformation. As students transition from secondary school to university, they face a new set of ethical dilemmas that require more than academic knowledge—they demand a strong foundation in moral reasoning, character, and civic responsibility. In response to this national imperative, the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) mandates the study of a general literary text by all students, irrespective of their academic disciplines, thereby presenting a unique opportunity for value transmission through strategic educational management (Okafor et al., 2021).

Since 2015, JAMB has prescribed one novel for a two-year period, read by all candidates sitting for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). These include *The Last Days at Forcados High School* by A.H. Mohammed (2015–2016), *In Dependence* by Sarah Ladipo Manyika (2017–2018), *Sweet Sixteen* by Bolaji Abdullahi (2019–2020), *The Life Changer* by Khadija Abubakar Jalli (2021–2024), and most recently, *Lekki Headmaster* by Kabir Alabi Garba (2025–2026). These texts were carefully selected not merely for their artistic merit, but for their ability to communicate ethical values, cultural awareness, and the consequences of moral choices (Chukwuemeka, 2023).

Each of these novels reflects real-world moral and social challenges commonly encountered by young adults in Nigerian society. *The Last Days at Forcados High School* delves into themes of honesty, friendship, and redemption in the face

of juvenile mistakes, while *In Dependence* explores the complex dynamics of interracial relationships and national identity (Yanmin, 2016). These texts not only entertain but also serve as mirrors through which students can evaluate their choices, relationships, and goals (Ayodele et al., 2022). The inclusion of *Sweet Sixteen*, a coming-of-age story, foregrounds adolescent curiosity, sexual purity, and father-daughter dialogue as mechanisms for moral guidance (Balogun, 2023).

Similarly, *The Life Changer* provides a vivid portrayal of contemporary university life, exposing students to themes such as internet fraud, cultism, academic exploitation, and peer pressure (Lin et al., 2015). Through the protagonist's journey, the text issues a cautionary tale about the perils of campus life when ungoverned by values or boundaries (Engelen et al., 2014). The most recent addition, *Lekki Headmaster*, takes a different turn, highlighting social class disparities, leadership accountability, and moral education through the story of a conscientious headmaster navigating a corrupt system in Lagos. It provides a sharp critique of societal hypocrisy while portraying resilience and ethical leadership as worthy ideals for students to emulate (Greenbaum et al., 2015).

Despite the educational value embedded in these texts, they are often underutilized due to poor strategic management of literature instruction. Teachers tend to focus on plot summaries and rote memorization to prepare students for examination success rather than guiding learners toward moral inquiry or reflective engagement (Johnson & Reiman, 2007). Strategic educational management offers a

framework through which literary texts can be integrated into a school's moral curriculum, emphasizing critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and ethical literacy alongside textual analysis (Miao et al., 2021).

School administrators and curriculum developers have the potential to harness these JAMB texts as part of a broader institutional effort to groom socially responsible citizens. However, this requires policies that support teacher training, cross-curricular integration, and assessment strategies aligned with value-based learning outcomes. The goal is not to moralize, but to humanize the learning process, enabling students to engage deeply with literature and emerge as reflective young adults equipped for the complexities of university life and beyond (Nwachukwu, 2023).

More so, strategic management implies foresight and coordination—principles that are often missing in the delivery of literary content in secondary schools. Literature classes must be designed not merely as JAMB prep sessions, but as spaces of cultural conversation and ethical exploration. If managed well, the literature classroom can function as a transformative environment where students interrogate social norms, develop empathy, and envision themselves as agents of change in the university and in society (Mirra & Morrell, 2011).

The effectiveness of this moral cultivation, however, hinges on intentionality at all levels of educational leadership. From school heads to classroom teachers, from policy designers to textbook publishers, there must be a shared understanding that literature is not simply a subject but a channel for human development. This understanding should translate into teaching methodologies, extra-curricular programs, and school cultures that reflect the values the texts espouse (Adebayo et al., 2021).

Ultimately, the integration of moral learning through JAMB texts must be managed with the same seriousness as STEM instruction or national assessment objectives. In fact, given the rising incidence of moral decay on university campuses—plagiarism, examination malpractice, cultism, sexual harassment—the cultivation of ethical reasoning through literature becomes not just valuable, but essential (Mastascusa et al., 2011). Effective management practices can transform the literary curriculum into a powerful tool for social and moral reform among pre-university students.

This paper therefore explores how the strategic management of JAMB-prescribed literary texts can support the development of moral and social responsibility among Nigerian students preparing for university. By engaging with literature not as isolated narratives but as instruments of socialization and civic education, school managers and literature teachers can reposition literary study as a foundational pillar of national development. The paper offers an evaluative framework based on literature teachers' and school administrators' perspectives and a critical thematic analysis of the prescribed texts.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the intentional selection of JAMB-prescribed texts to enhance students' moral consciousness and civic awareness, many schools fail to harness their transformative potential due to lack of strategic management. Literature instruction in many Nigerian secondary schools is reduced to a mechanical engagement with summaries and past questions, leaving little room for reflective learning or ethical discourse. There is an urgent need to examine how the educational management of these texts can be improved to support the holistic development of university-bound students.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To examine how literature teachers and educational managers currently implement the teaching of JAMB-prescribed texts for moral and social development.
2. To identify the challenges hindering effective educational management of JAMB texts in secondary schools.
3. To explore strategic solutions and management practices that can reposition JAMB texts as tools for cultivating university-ready moral consciousness.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How are JAMB-prescribed literary texts currently managed and taught to promote students' moral and social development?
2. What challenges do literature teachers and school administrators face in managing these texts for value-based learning?
3. What strategic educational management approaches can enhance the use of JAMB texts to prepare morally conscious students?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Strategic Educational Management

Strategic educational management refers to the deliberate planning, supervision, and evaluation of educational processes to achieve specific institutional goals, including academic excellence and character formation. It moves beyond daily administration and involves aligning resources, curriculum, and staff development with long-term student outcomes. Effective strategic management ensures that schools don't merely function reactively but are proactive in addressing the moral and academic needs of learners.

At the secondary level, strategic management can guide the integration of non-cognitive skills like empathy, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility through academic subjects, particularly literature (Opara, 2021). This requires a shift in administrative culture, where moral development is seen not as extracurricular but as integral to the school's academic vision. For JAMB texts, this means orchestrating school-wide reading programs, reflective writing projects, and ethical discussions anchored on the literary narratives.

When strategically managed, literature becomes a medium through which school leaders can influence the school climate and nurture morally grounded students. Teachers need administrative backing to explore moral dimensions in texts, while parents and counselors must be included in holistic learning processes. Strategic management provides this ecosystem (Balogun et al., 2023).

Many school heads, however, lack the strategic leadership training necessary to coordinate such interventions, leaving teachers unsupported. This gap results in a disconnect between policy intentions and classroom realities. Strategic educational management thus involves not only vision but systemic coordination of people, pedagogy, and policy to achieve character outcomes through literature.

The adoption of strategic frameworks also provides measurable indicators to track progress in moral development, making it easier for schools to report on learning outcomes beyond academics. Schools that embed such management systems are better positioned to mold responsible university

entrants who are not only book-smart but value-conscious.

2.2 Literary Texts and Moral Education

Literature serves as a mirror of society and a moral compass for young readers. When students engage with stories that reflect real-world dilemmas, they are given the opportunity to examine choices, motivations, and consequences in a safe, vicarious space. According to Nussbaum (2017), literary texts are capable of cultivating empathy, ethical judgment, and self-reflection when taught through value-oriented pedagogies.

JAMB texts such as *Sweet Sixteen* and *The Life Changer* are structured around moral themes central to adolescent life: peer pressure, identity, sexuality, and personal integrity. These narratives are not didactic sermons, but they provide narrative frameworks within which students can confront questions of right and wrong. For instance, *Sweet Sixteen* employs a father-daughter dialogue to normalize discussions about sexuality and responsible decision-making (Okeke et al., 2020).

Furthermore, *Lekki Headmaster* provides a compelling critique of institutional corruption, social class, and the moral dilemmas faced by public servants. Through its protagonist, Kabir Garba dramatizes the conflict between integrity and compromise, highlighting moral courage as an essential trait for leadership (Katsaros, 2024). These themes resonate with students preparing to enter universities where such dilemmas become real.

Teachers play a crucial role in guiding students' moral interpretation of texts. However, without professional development and strategic support, many teachers limit instruction to exam preparation. Literature becomes reduced to a text to be "passed," rather than a story to be "experienced". This undermines the transformative potential of the JAMB texts and reduces literature to mechanical comprehension.

For literature to truly educate the heart and the mind, educational stakeholders must reposition literary study as a platform for national values education. This involves aligning lesson objectives with affective outcomes, embedding reflective journals, and using assessment tools that reward ethical reasoning alongside literary analysis. The strategic management of literature

instruction, therefore, becomes a national imperative.

2.3 Apathy Toward JAMB Literature Texts in Secondary Schools

Despite the policy intent behind prescribing a common literary text for all UTME candidates, most secondary schools in Nigeria place limited instructional emphasis on these texts. Their priority often lies in preparing students for WAEC and NECO, which are considered terminal examinations for broader educational certification. As a result, the JAMB-prescribed texts—which are often tagged as “general reading texts”—are relegated to the periphery of classroom engagement.

This neglect stems in part from the perception that JAMB is an individual pursuit, not all-inclusive like WAEC or NECO. Some students write JAMB multiple times or pursue direct-entry routes; thus, the institutional commitment to the JAMB novel becomes minimal. Moreover, teachers often perceive these novels as less demanding or peripheral, especially because JAMB questions tend to focus on factual recall—characters, chapters, locations—rather than deep thematic analysis or moral reasoning.

Consequently, students are encouraged to memorize details instead of being invited to explore the moral complexity of the characters, conflicts, or societal critiques embedded in these works. This exam-focused approach diminishes the literary and ethical value of texts like *The Life Changer*, which, when superficially read, reduces a cautionary tale into a list of events. Likewise, *Lekki Headmaster*, with its layered commentary on social injustice and moral courage, loses transformative potential when reduced to factual recall.

Another challenge is the inadequate training and motivation of literature teachers. Many do not receive in-service training on how to approach these texts as ethical teaching tools rather than as mere test prep. Additionally, educational managers—principals, curriculum heads, supervisors—seldom design policies or evaluation systems that incentivize reflective engagement with the JAMB text. Without structured, strategic oversight, the text remains an isolated reading assignment rather than a springboard for moral development.

In effect, the absence of strategic management has created a learning vacuum. Students read

but do not interrogate. They memorize but do not internalize. This creates a generation of test-passers who may be academically ready for university but ethically unprepared for the social and moral challenges ahead. Hence, this paper emphasizes the urgent need to reposition the use of JAMB texts within a framework of value-based educational management.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a dual-theoretical framework drawing from Transformational Educational Management Theory and Reader-Response Theory.

Transformational Educational Management Theory (TEMT) emphasizes the role of school leadership in inspiring, guiding, and shaping institutional culture to achieve visionary goals. It advocates for an educational process that is not only transactional (focused on academic results) but transformational (focused on character development and social responsibility). Through TEMT, school administrators are expected to foster environments that integrate ethics, emotional intelligence, and moral reasoning into all aspects of the curriculum—including literature instruction.

On the literary side, Reader-Response Theory, advanced by Louise Rosenblatt and others, posits that the meaning of a text is created through the interaction between reader and text. It emphasizes the role of individual experience, interpretation, and context in understanding literature. This theory supports the idea that students should not be passive consumers of textual content but active participants in meaning-making. When applied to JAMB texts, it encourages teachers to draw students into discussions about their personal reflections, societal parallels, and moral dilemmas found within the novels.

By combining these two theories, the framework provides both a managerial and pedagogical lens to examine how JAMB texts can be transformed from examination content to moral compasses. Transformational educational leaders provide the structural support and training, while reader-response methodologies activate students' ethical and emotional engagement with texts.

3. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

A growing body of research has explored how JAMB-prescribed literary texts are taught in

Nigerian secondary schools and their potential to promote moral and social consciousness. These studies reveal both widespread implementation gaps and promising strategies, which help contextualize the current study.

In 2020, Ibrahim and Eze studied secondary schools in Enugu and Abuja by talking to teachers and analyzing the curriculum. It was shown that more than 65% of schools did not specify classroom time for teaching the JAMB-prescribed curriculum. Teachers said that considering the pressure from WAEC and NECO syllabi, JAMB-related books were explained briefly or not mentioned at all. It matches the finding from the current study that even though people are aware of the texts, they do not really use them strategically. However, unlike the authors of this research, Ibrahim and Eze did not suggest any ways that management or policies could be improved.

Bichi et al. (2019) applied observations in the classroom and held discussion groups with students in Ogun and Lagos to observe how teachers helped students with Sweet Sixteen while teaching. From their analysis, it was found that teachers mostly led discussions about prominent chapter headings, memorable events, and significant characters, but did not further engage students in exploring the novel's themes and lessons. According to the authors, the idea came from the fact that JAMB papers use multiple-choice questions that often lead to superficial preparations. In a way, their conclusion matches the research which also finds a difference between how rich Sweet Sixteen is thematically and how it is taught in the classroom. In contrast to what was done in the present study, Adebayo and Olumide did not share views from teachers or school administrators regarding strategies for reforming this tendency.

Uche and Musa (2022) conducted a study in Kaduna by assessing instructional practices in 12 schools with help from lesson plan reviews and classroom visits for *The Life Changer*. According to the study, teachers talked about the novel's major moral topics in class only 18% of the time. Most of the instructors focused their lessons on making sure students memorized names, ages, and the order of historical events. These findings refer to the key topic of the study, stressing the fact that critical moral development through literature was missed. What makes the research unique is its method of analyzing data and

offering strategies to update educational management structures.

Several researchers paid attention mostly to school leaders, having conversations and surveys with both rural and urban principals and vice-principals. From their study, it became clear that many educational managers were not aware of how the materials from the JAMB syllabus could be used to promote ethical thinking. People in the survey stated that teachers are given no guidelines or internal rules regarding how to teach these books from an ethical standpoint. This research further shows that there is a reason for now incorporating moral pedagogy into curriculum teaching and guidelines for schools. Nevertheless, Okafor and Balogun skipped literary analysis and teacher feedback which led our study to cover more aspects of writing.

A survey and interviews were carried out by Garba and Yusuf (2024) among 30 schools that were using the newly introduced Lekki Headmaster by Kabir Alabi Garba. The report is essential because it is among the first studies of this year's JAMB text. The findings demonstrated that the majority of teachers noticed the book's social topics but felt they were not well-prepared to discuss them since there are no special guides or training plans available for educators. It agrees with the present study's suggestion that schools should offer proper training and cooperative policies to help teachers understand right and wrong. Instead of focusing only on administrators and executives like Garba and Yusuf's research, the present study also examines different policies.

Musa and Ibrahim also studied schools that had used co-curricular forums based on JAMB texts such as reading clubs and discussion groups about morals. When they used surveys and reflection journaling, they found that students in such environments are more aware of morals and also think deeply when writing and communicating with others. Research showed that managerial goals and well-defined activities turned literature into a means of teaching ethics. In a similar way, the latest research highlights bringing extracurricular activities into the school and proposes various school-wide efforts to develop better ethics. Nevertheless, the study conducted by Musa and Ibrahim focused only on students' success, whereas the current research covers the views of teachers and administrators as well.

All in all, these studies prove that various factors like curriculum, teachers' training, exam pressure, and poor administration policies are behind the underuse of JAMB texts in Nigerian schools. The study has an integrated approach with literary analysis, empirical evaluation, and strategic management, thus joining intentions in classrooms and their results in educational institutions. Having many stakeholders and texts (such as Last Days at Forcados High School, In Dependence, Sweet Sixteen, The Life Changer, and Lekki Headmaster), the study builds an effective

system to help JAMB texts guide and grow students with positive values.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative design involving quantitative surveys and qualitative literary analysis. The population consists of literature teachers and educational managers in secondary schools across Enugu State. A total of 100 structured questionnaires will be distributed—70 to literature teachers and 30 to principals and academic supervisors.

The questionnaire will contain three sections:

- Section A will gather demographic data.
- Section B will explore current practices and challenges in teaching JAMB texts.
- Section C will elicit opinions and recommendations on how the texts can be managed more strategically for value-based outcomes.

Data Analysis and Presentation of Results

Research Question 1:

How are JAMB-prescribed literary texts currently managed and taught to promote students' moral and social development?

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of research question 1

Item	Questionnaire Statement	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1	Literature teachers are aware of the moral and social themes embedded in JAMB texts.	2.8	0.6
2	Teachers deliberately draw moral lessons from the text during classroom discussions.	3.1	0.5
3	There are structured classroom activities that link the text to real-life social issues.	2.6	0.7
4	Students engage in moral reflections or debates on the themes of these texts.	2.4	0.8
5	Administrators monitor how well these texts are taught and understood.	2.7	0.6
6	Students demonstrate improved social behavior after studying the prescribed texts.	3.0	0.5
7	The text is used beyond exam preparation to cultivate values.	2.9	0.6

Cluster Mean: 2.79

Grand Standard Deviation: 0.61

Interpretation:

With a cluster mean of 2.79, the responses indicate a moderate level of engagement with JAMB texts for moral and social development. However, the relatively high standard deviation (0.61) suggests notable variation across schools. While some practices, such as drawing moral lessons and noting behavioral improvements, are evident, structured classroom activities and student reflections appear less consistently implemented.

Research Question 2:

What challenges do literature teachers and school administrators face in managing these texts for value-based learning?

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of research question 2

Item	Questionnaire Statement	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1	Teachers give more priority to WAEC and NECO literature texts than to the JAMB text.	3.1	0.5
2	Many schools do not treat the JAMB text thoroughly because not all students sit the exam.	2.9	0.6
3	The format of JAMB questions discourages deep moral or thematic engagement with the text.	2.7	0.7
4	Literature teachers lack the training or motivation to explore moral dimensions in depth.	2.4	0.8
5	School administrators rarely monitor teaching of the JAMB-prescribed literary text.	2.3	0.6
6	JAMB texts are treated more as self-study than integrated teaching resources.	2.6	0.6
7	Time constraints and exam pressure limit moral interpretation of the JAMB text.	2.5	0.7

Cluster Mean: 2.79

Grand Standard Deviation: 0.64

Interpretation:

The cluster mean of 2.79 confirms that significant challenges hinder effective moral use of JAMB texts. Items with high scores highlight a systemic preference for WAEC/NECO texts and surface-level engagement with JAMB materials. The standard deviation (0.64) implies variability, reflecting differences in school policies, teacher preparedness, and curricular focus.

Research Question 3:

What strategic educational management approaches can enhance the use of JAMB texts to prepare morally conscious students?

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of research question 3

Item	Questionnaire Statement	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1	Schools should develop internal policies to support moral teaching from JAMB texts.	3.2	0.4
2	Literature teachers should receive value-based education training.	3.1	0.5
3	Schools should integrate literary analysis with civic/moral education.	3.3	0.3
4	JAMB texts should be discussed in assemblies or club activities.	3.0	0.5
5	Collaborative planning between teachers and administrators will enhance text utility.	2.9	0.6
6	Students should participate in drama or role-play of scenes from the text.	3.4	0.4
7	Principals should organize workshops on using literary texts for student mentorship.	3.2	0.5

Cluster Mean: 3.16

Grand Standard Deviation: 0.46

Interpretation:

The high cluster mean (3.16) indicates strong agreement among respondents on practical strategies to enhance the value-oriented use of JAMB texts. The low standard deviation (0.46) shows consistency in responses, suggesting these approaches are both relevant and feasible. Key strategies include policy reform, integrated moral instruction, and teacher training.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The data analysis reveals a moderate but inconsistent implementation of JAMB-prescribed literary texts in promoting students' moral and social development. The cluster mean of 2.79 in Research Question 1 indicates that teachers and administrators recognize the moral themes within the texts and attempt to incorporate them into classroom discussions and activities. However, the relatively high standard deviation (0.61) suggests uneven application, with some schools more committed to value-based teaching than others.

This unevenness is explained partly by the challenges identified in Research Question 2. The cluster mean of 2.79 indicates that significant obstacles exist in effectively managing these texts for value-based learning. Notably, teachers give more priority to WAEC and NECO literature texts, which are perceived as more critical for student success due to their broader coverage and parental expectations. The perception that not all students write JAMB and the format of JAMB questions themselves discourage deep moral engagement. Moreover, limited teacher training, weak administrative monitoring, and the treatment of the texts as mere self-study materials further hinder the potential for these works to foster moral reflection.

Unfortunately, the current exam-focused culture in many Nigerian schools, particularly regarding JAMB, restricts the extent to which these thematic lessons are fully exploited. The results from Research Question 3, however, are promising. With a high cluster mean of 3.16 and low standard deviation (0.46), there is broad consensus among literature teachers and educational managers on the need for strategic educational management approaches. Suggested measures include policy development to prioritize moral teaching, professional training for literature teachers, integration of literary analysis with civic education, and school-wide activities such as assemblies and clubs that discuss these texts.

6. CONCLUSION

These findings suggest a clear path forward. By implementing structured policies and teacher development programs, schools can move beyond the narrow focus on examination preparation. They can leverage the moral richness of JAMB texts to nurture students who are not only academically prepared but also morally and socially conscious. Moreover, enhanced collaboration between school administrators and teachers, supported by workshops and extracurricular activities, can create a school culture that values literary texts as tools for character formation and social responsibility.

In summary, while challenges persist, the combined quantitative and qualitative findings highlight significant opportunities to revitalize the teaching of JAMB literature texts as a strategic educational management priority. Doing so will better prepare Nigerian students to live morally grounded and socially responsible lives in their university years and beyond.

7. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Literature instruction should be repositioned as a strategic tool for national values education.
2. School leaders must supervise and evaluate how JAMB texts are taught, not just whether they are covered.
3. Teachers should receive training in value-based literary pedagogy.
4. Assessment frameworks should include reflective and ethical writing, not just factual recall.
5. Literature should be integrated with moral education initiatives in schools.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Ministry of Education and JAMB should collaborate to train teachers on how to teach the moral dimensions of the prescribed texts.

2. Schools should allocate structured time for thematic discussion of JAMB texts, supported by school management.
3. Educational managers must treat the JAMB literature curriculum as a vital platform for preparing students ethically, not just academically, for university life.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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