



Gender, Education and Cultural Values

Prof. Mkpa Agu Mkpa (OFR)

Faculty of Education, Abia State University, Uturu

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on ways we can educate children to cultivate social and cultural values at home, school and in the wider society bearing in mind the gender of the children. It discusses the concept of cultural values and examines the reduced emphasis given to it in the basic education curriculum. Undoubtedly the home/family should play the foundational role in the task of planting and nurturing cultural values in the lives of children. Parents, guardians and significant others are expected to play the roles through personal examples, direct instructions, use of wise sayings and proverbs, storytelling, morning devotions, rewards for good behaviours, mutual support to/from schools, active participation of children in religious and extra-curricular activities in schools, parental censorship of the company their children keep at home and in school, provision at home of value-oriented literature books, among others. In our formal and non-formal educational institutions, values need to be deliberately taught to cultivate generations of disciplined citizenry. Formal educational institutions need to teach values through direct institution, discussion of value-oriented issues, role-play /drama/simulations, group work, projects, use of film strips/slides, individual tasks/self-study and research; etc. Teachers state affective educational objectives but hardly teach for their attainment because such objectives are hardly examinable with paper-pencil tests among other reasons. The wider society can hardly teach children sound moral values largely due to contradictions between precepts and practices. The place of gender in the educative process was treated with appropriate recommendations made on the way forward.

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural values are key to the stability of every society, state and nation. When a people endorse and relentlessly pursue a set of meaningful and progressive values, the character of the people can easily be predicted; the developmental strides of the nation can be imagined. Thus, if the cultural values are retrogressive, the developmental status of the nation will be grossly diminished. If on the other hand, the values are positive, forward-looking and developmental then the nation is bound to advance correspondingly. Every social environment is characterized by a peculiar culture which develops over time through interactions with other cultures or by its unique experiences. As groups of persons interact and exchange visits, cultural values are transferred from one community to another. Overtime the values stabilize and become entrenched in the environments.

Cultural values can be taught consciously in formal, informal and non-formal settings. Formal education is the use of educational institution – schools of various sorts with well defined curricula. Informal education takes place in homes, wider society, among peer groups, and age groups. Non formal education takes place in entrepreneurial centers especially of the traditional settings. Examples are where skills are taught, such as crafts, iron works, wood-works, weaving and textiles. Various cultural values may be taught or cultivated through a variety of instructional strategies.

Gender plays a significant role in determining how various cultural values are communicated or inculcated in learners. For example the value of neatness and personal hygiene would be taught to male and female learners slightly differently and expectedly by different instructors for obvious reasons. This paper addresses the issue of ways we can educate to inculcate social/cultural values with due regard to gender. Put differently, how does gender influence how we educate to inculcate cultural values? In response to the question, we shall examine the concepts of cultural values, education and gender to analyze a range of behaviours that constitute cultural values. We shall then examine various procedures for educating our children in order to successfully inculcate those values in them. Finally we shall determine how the concept of gender plays out in the educative process. Appropriate recommendation will be made on the way forward for achieving quality education in this regard.

THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL VALUES

Culture; according to Taylor [1] is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Alternatively, culture is defined as a social domain that emphasizes the practices, discourses and material expressions, which, over time, express the continuities and discontinuities of social meaning of a life held in common. [2] In a simpler expression, culture is the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at the particular time: [3]

Cultural values, sometimes called family values are based on traditional family structures, function, roles, beliefs, attitudes and ideals. Family values are the moral and ethical principles traditionally upheld and passed on within the family as fidelity, honesty, truth, and faith [4]. Values are held to promote the sound functioning of the family and by extension the societal fabric [5]; Values are held to be traditionally taught or reinforced within a family, such as those of high moral standards and discipline[6].

In politics, **familialism** or **familism** is the ideology that puts priority on the family and family values. It advocates that the family rather than government should take responsibility for the care of their members. [7]. Social conservatives in the United States have used the banner of family values to oppose abortion, feminism, pornography, comprehensive sex education, divorce, homo-sexuality, same-sex marriage, civil unions, secularism and atheism [8]. Substantial progress has been made to import these policies into Africa such that many African nations and religious organizations stand in opposition to such practices [9]

Cultural values are traditional ways of life that define what a people cherish, the principles that guide their daily lives; the practices acceptable in a given society, the dos and don'ts by which a people are known; the acceptable traditions that reflect the codes of ethics, the ethos of a people; the approved or acceptable ways of life of a community; the welcome behaviours that distinguish a group from others; the practices that govern the ways people are brought up in a given society; the tested and sustained ways by which a people cultivate the character of their off-springs which are expected to be passed on to future generations; the principles by which a people live and thrive.

We may attempt to itemize certain cultural values by which the traditional Nigerian societies are known; These include: accommodation, accountability, appreciation, boldness, bravery, caution, charity, chastity, commitment, consistency, contentment, courage, courtesy, creativity, decency, dedication, determination, diligence, effectiveness, efficiency, endurance, excellence, fairness, fair-play, faithfulness, forgiveness, friendliness, generosity, gentleness, gratitude, hard-work, high productivity, holiness, honesty, honour, humility, hygiene, independence, industry, joy, kindness, love, moderation, modesty, moral courage, neatness, peace, perseverance, physical courage, probity, punctuality, readiness to work, regularity, respect for age, respect for authority, righteousness, self-control, selflessness, self-reliance, service, shared responsibility, sincerity, slow-to-anger, spiritual courage, temperance, transparency, truthfulness, willingness to assist persons in need.

MERITS OF CULTURAL VALUES

A critical examination of the above stated values would reveal that if our citizens, male and females, young and old, literate and non-literate, urban dwellers and rural dwellers, employed and unemployed, believers and unbelievers, could imbibe and live by those values, as in-built and enduring features of our culture, not many nations would be greater than Nigeria. If we were to educate our children to imbibe those cultural values the result would be.

- Improved standard of living, for all Nigerians
- Improved productivity in all economic sectors,
- Improved harmony among ethnic groups in Nigeria
- Improved security of lives and properties
- Improved life expectancy for Nigerians
- Reduced unemployment among our youths
- Reduced criminality in the society
- Reduced poverty among Nigerians
- Improved technological development in the country
- Improved public image of the country
- Improved investment in Nigeria by foreign countries
- Improved morality that attracts divine blessings
- Improved quality of leadership and followership.
- Improved quality of education and educative products
- Improved mental, physical, and psychological health of individuals.

HOW DO WE EDUCATE FOR CULTURAL VALUES?

Education as a concept may be perceived as a process, a product, a system or an institution. In each case certain persons and instruments are involved in the educative activity. The following are usually active in the process of educating for the inculcation of cultural values: the home; the wider society, the school or formal educational institutions, religious organizations such as the churches, mosques etc other social institutions such as age-grades and peer groups, work places and entrepreneurial centers, and individual self-study. We shall briefly examine the roles of each of these educative channels in the teaching of cultural values:

THE HOME: Why Parents Must Educate Children in Values

The child is born into a home and it is the duty and responsibilities of parents to play the role of the first teachers to introduce the child some of the cultural values of the society.

It is a divine mandate of parents to teach salient values. The Bible states it thus “Teach a child the way he should go, when he grows up he will not depart from it”. The child is more often under the control of the parents until they become adults. The implication of that biblical task or injunction is that values should be taught by parents and the “significant others” within the family and socio-cultural environment. The values should also be taught starting early in life when the child is amenable to learning. Parents understand their child better than anyone else; as a result they (parents) are in the best position to know how best to handle them. The behaviour of a child is often perceived as a reflection of the type of family he/she comes from. As a result parents should be enthusiastic to teach them sound values. Parents, ordinarily, should be the first beneficiaries of whatever their child achieves or becomes in future. They (parents) should therefore take on the task of cultural value education with enthusiasm. The child bears the name of the parents/family as a result; whatever he/she does is traceable to and associated with the parents. No parents would cherish to be embarrassed by the children’s behavior. They rather would enjoy to hear success stories. Parents spend on/pay for their children’s up-bringing and so would not want to waste their money or spend in vain. Therefore they (parents) ought to be deeply involved in the children’s up-bringing. Children are expected to be part of their parents social/economic insurance and security. As a result they have a role to play in ensuring that children are well bred. Parents love to see their children as successful in life. They must therefore work towards the actualization of the aspiration by getting actively involved in teaching children.

HOW SHOULD PARENTS TEACH CHILDREN CULTURAL VALUES?

Parents may not be professional teachers but can play a vital role in the educative process. They may apply a variety of strategies to inculcate cultural values. The following may be used in combination of other approaches.

- **Personal examples** and actions are usually better than any other approach. Children tend to copy what they observe their parents do. Parents should therefore endeavour to demonstrate the values they want their children to imbibe.
- **Direct instructions** and percepts are equally effective in inculcating values. Many children receive direct instructions from their parents. Depending on a number of factors which include the seriousness of the parents, the attitude of children to instructions, the values are successfully inculcated to a greater or lesser extent,
- **Use of proverbs, anecdotes, parables** and other figures of speech are often effective in inculcating cultural values. Anecdotes are usually short narratives of interesting, amusing or biographical events that often contain significant value lessons. A parable is usually a short fictitious story that illustrates a moral value, attitude or religious principle. A proverb is a brief popular epigram or adage. An adage is a saying often in a metaphorical form that typically embodies a common observation. An examples is: “A penny saved is a penny earned”.
- **Story telling** with children can be a very effective measure of conveying cultural values to children and adults. In Africa, there are countless short stories that are intensely value laden and are useful; in teaching a variety of lessons such as punctuality, contentment, and selflessness. Such stories may be folklores or real stories of events that convey specific moral values.
- **Morning devotions** in homes where such are practiced can be very effective in conveying and inculcating sound moral values in children and adults. Depending on how this is done, we know that the scriptures contain lots of moral lessons which may be deliberately selected by parents or guardians for the purpose of inculcating in the family members sound values and good conduct.
- **Reward for good behaviour** and/or for the demonstration of specific cultural values will obviously encourage the cultivation and consolidation of such values. Rewards and incentives should be wisely applied in order to produce the desired effect. If care is not taken to use rewards wisely, a learner’s interest may be diverted from the desirable behaviour to the incentive or reward, particularly if such reward is pecuniary or material.
- **Collaboration for mutual support between the home and school.** This will go a long way in supporting the consolidation of sound cultural values in the life of children/learners. The home and school, (that is, parents/guardians and teachers) need to work in synergy towards the inculcation of desirable values in the lives of children. Both should seek to achieve similar moral goals and to reinforce, not sabotage, the efforts of one another.

- **Encouragement of learners' participation in religious activities and programmes.** This is one sure way of achieving learner's growth and development in cultural values. Most religious programmes such as concert shows, music, debate, roleplay, holiday – camping, writing short stories, with moral implications, choir practice, entrepreneurial engagements and several other similar programmes are useful in promoting sound moral values. We must however caution that involvement in religious programmes should be done within reasonable limits. This should not be done at the expense of the main reason for being in school.
- **Censorship of the company/friends and peer groups kept by our children** both in school and out of school settings will ensure that our children do not get influenced negatively by their friends. Bad company corrupts good conduct. Adult members of our societies need to be active in this regard. They should act as watch-dogs to speak-out, counsel and correct erring children identified as doing the wrong things in our societies irrespective of the parentage of children. A child belongs to all in the African society.
- **Encouragement of Children and Youths with success stories** of well-behaved persons and the benefits of sound cultural values. Such stories that are laden with affective lessons go a long way in encouraging the youths to emulate the successful persons. In the same way, stories that portray the dangers of undisciplined behavior tend to discourage the cultivation of bad behaviour. As often as such stories are told and reinforced, so long shall the cultural values implied in such stories be reinforced to the point of being cultivated in the hearers' minds.
- **The provision of appropriate literature story books, novels and other forms of reading materials** will be a good approach towards assisting our young people cultivate desirable cultural values. At higher educational levels, speeches of great world leaders, writings of great philosophers, poems of great poets, and biographies of renowned heroes and heroines. If productively utilized for example through dramatization, can greatly be effective in cultivating cherished cultural values.
- **Proximity of parents and significant others** to young people contribute immensely towards shaping their character, particularly if the influence is a positive one. Children by their nature, tend to perceive the behaviour pattern they grow up with as the ideal one that should be emulated. Adults should therefore mind the type of behaviour they display in the presence of children. In addition, parents and guardians need to create the time to relate cordially with their children in order to afford them the opportunity to learn from them.

THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE TEACHING OF VALUES:

It is the duty of our schools to teach the learners the cultural values of our society. Such content ought to feature prominently in the curricula of schools at all levels of the educational system. The lessons should begin as early in the life as possible such that the home and school work in synergy to inculcate in children the desirable values of the society. The child is a product of the society and so is expected to function within the society during and after the educational programmes. The child is not expected to be a deviant at any stage of his/her development. As a result, the school should play significant roles in the cultivation of a disciplined child who is at home with the cultural values of the environment.

The fact that teachers are expected to teach for affective outcomes which they state in their lesson notes/plans indicates that cultural values are part of the tasks of the school to teach for. At the tertiary educational level, graduates are certified to be worthy first in character and then in learning. The character aspect of the education anchors on cultural values.

The question arises as to whether the schools really consciously teach for the attainment of cultural values. The schools ought to teach for cultural values through a variety of strategies:

- Direct instruction,
- Role-play, drama, simulation,
- Group work- large groups, medium and small groups,
- Projects, tasks and assignments,
- Film strips, slides and pictures,
- Individual task, research, self-study,
- Social media
- A combination of the above stated strategies.

Values In The School Curriculum

The Federal Ministry of Education, in its 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum for Religion and National Values focuses attention on the following values: Honesty, Regard and concern for the interest of others, Justice, Discipline, Right attitude to work, Courage and National consciousness [10]. The curriculum adopts a spiral approach to curriculum organization whereby the topics are supposed to be reiterated along the hierarchy of class levels in an ascending order of conceptual complexity from the primary through the Junior Secondary School levels.

A critical examination of the objectives listed in the curriculum reveals that the learners were not taught to cultivate the values implied in the contents. They were only made to “**list, mention and identify** values that can be developed to avoid irresponsible parenthood” - (For primary 5) For primary six, learners are expected to “**mention** the characteristics of tolerance; **describe** the attributes of cooperation; **identify** what makes good and healthy boy-girl relationship.

At the Junior Secondary School (JSS) 1 Level, the values are studied at a higher level of intellectual complexity namely; honesty, cooperation and self reliance.

At the Junior Secondary School (JSS) 2 level, the following values re studied: Integrity, contentment, discipline and courage.

At the JSS3 level, the content centers on the “Rights Attitudes to Work”- its meaning, attributes, rewards for it and consequences of its absence, it also examines the negative behaviours; such as - dishonesty, excessive love of money, ostentatious living, disregard for time (African time), drug trafficking; examination malpractice, cultism[11].

The school system ought to have trained teachers in the use of the above stated methods but unfortunately the products of our schools who today are leaders do not show any convincing evidence of having been thoroughly equipped with the affective learning outcomes and/or cultural values. They can speak about the values but hardly do they live by the said values. Some teachers list the affective outcomes in their lesson notes but hardly do they consciously teach for the attainment of the values. Except for moral instruction, hardly do teachers consciously teach for cultural values. Moral instructions is one of the many school subjects taught at the lower and middle basic education levels. Many teachers teach it for the sake of getting children understand and pass examination in the subject matter rather than to bring about an observable permanent change in the behaviour of the learners.

Why Many Teachers Hardly Teach For Affective Learning Outcomes or Cultural Values.

Many teachers do not teach or assess for affective outcomes for the following reasons:

- **There is a little time to cover a lot of content in the syllabus.** As a result the teachers are in a hurry to cover the vast array of topics prescribed in the syllabus. The teachers are more interested in teaching for the examinable content areas.
- **West African Examination Council/Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination/Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination do not set questions that test for affective outcomes.** As a result teachers do not strive to teach for affective outcomes.
- **It is difficult to test** or assess learners’ attainment of affective learning. No instrument has been developed for use in assessing attainment or cultural values.
- **Teachers want to cover the syllabus in good time** and so focus on the examinable content areas which are largely cognitive and psychomotor in nature.
- **Many teachers do not know how to integrate the affective learning in their lessons** even when they have stated affective learning outcomes as part of their lessons objectives.
- **The present timetable which provides 40 minutes as a lesson period does not allow enough time for a variety of teaching strategies** that stimulates the inculcation of values to be used. As a result many teachers adopt the lecture method which is not very suitable for the teaching of cultural values.
- **Many teachers do not normally demonstrate sound moral values worthy of being emulated** as examples to learners.
- **Many teachers do not reward good affective behaviour** especially when material incentives are concerned. We therefore encourage the use of non-material incentives such as praise, starts, distinctions and honours.

THE WAY FORWARD FOR SCHOOLS:

- The recruitment process for teachers in Nigeria should be overhauled to also provide for direct and comprehensive interviews to select the best and most competent ones.
- Training and retraining of teachers should be a continuous feature and should include the strategies for building in “teaching for values”. Values should not be taught as an academic subject but as a “behavioural change content”
- Workshops and seminars should deliberately and specifically target training/teaching strategies for inculcating of values”
- Teachers must learn that their actions speak louder than words and so should be encouraged to lead exemplary lives in and outside the classroom because they are constantly being watched by learners.
- A reward system should be an in-built feature in the life of the school. End-of-year convocations may announce the names of teachers and learners who were outstanding in the display of certain type of values, and presented with plaques/medals the supply of which the Parents-Teacher-Association or philanthropists may sponsor.
- Teachers should be encouraged to have mentors who guide them in teaching for values

- Self-study by teachers will assist them learn, understand and practice how best to educate for the attainment of cultural value
- Collaboration between the school and families of learners will reinforce the schools' efforts in inculcating right conduct and values.

THE WIDER SOCIETY AND THE TEACHING OF VALUES

In the African context since, a child is a product of the society; the child is also the responsibility of the society. The wider society normally accepts full responsibility for the upbringing of the child. The instruction on cultural values is a collective responsibility of all and sundry because the behaviour of a child when he/she grows up as an adult has implications for the welfare of the society. The wider society would include such persons, groups and institutions as: political leaders, peer groups, age grades, the mosques, churches and other religious groups, etc.

It is expected that the lifestyles or exemplary conduct of each adult member of the traditional society should be lessons to guide the value orientation of every young person. Unfortunately the expected results regarding decent character and disciplined society are far from being realized in Nigeria. On the contrary, Nigeria remains at the lowest rung of the ladder of decency and corrupt free society in the world. Nigeria by the January 2022 ranking/assessment by Transparency International was the 159th most corrupt nation in the world out of 180 countries.

Corruption simply implies poor value orientation. It means that there is the near absence of positive values. It implies failure of the leadership and all other social structures and institutions to guide the nation's youth along the paths desirable of conduct.

Obstacles to the Success of the Wider Society in Inculcating Cultural Values

- Corruption appears to have its district-headquarters in Nigeria. It therefore becomes difficult to implant cultural values. When corruption appears to have been tacitly and brazenly adopted as a way of life, it becomes difficult to uproot it.
- Corrupt people receive national awards and local titles, thus creating the impression that cultural values do not really matter much.
- Corrupt people go unpunished so there is no deterrent to evil. People who strive to uphold cultural values appear naive and unwise.
- There are obvious contradictions between precepts and practices among adults in society.
- Even religious organizations and their leaders have become even so materialistic that such values as **contentment** and **honesty in business** sound outlandish and untenable
- Leaders and others in positions of responsibility visibly enrich themselves to the neglect of the populace without any dire consequences.
- Hardship in the nation compels even the "potential saints" to lose moral focus and value compass in an attempt to survive.
- The influence of the Western culture orchestrated in the mass-media, films and social media, contradict several teachings in churches and mosques. Thus the youths are confused.
- Busy parents are unable to create time to monitor and redirect the value focus of their children.
- Human right principles and regulations prohibit firm disciplinary measures which could be more efficacious in many homes.
- The inappropriate use or abuse of smart phones often leads children astray as they "Self-educate" in corrupt practices and immoral behaviour.

GENDER AND THE EDUCATIVE PROCESS

Does Gender play any role in the process of education for cultural value orientation? I believe that gender does play a major role in the task of educating for the cultivation of right types of values.

Since the training for the cultivation of right values is expected to be undertaken both at home and in school and in fact in the religious institutions, we need to note the following facts.

- While parents are the first teachers of the child at home, the mothers appear to be closer to the child in the typical/African family setting. She is therefore expected to feature very prominently in the educative process of shaping the value orientation of the child as early as possible.
- There are certain lessons that mothers are better suited to teach the girl-child than the fathers by virtue of their proximity to the child and the nature of subject – e.g personal hygiene of the girl – child; chastity, etc
- Some lessons of character, training e.g in discipline, efficiency, diligence etc are more productively taught by the fathers than mothers.

- The near absence of male teachers in our primary and junior secondary (basic education) school system may account, even if only in part, for the high level of indiscipline in our schools today.
- In many religious organizations where values are taught at the non-formal settings, many of the clerics are males. If females were to feature as prominently as males, we may achieve more from that sector in terms of behaviour modification.
- Males – be they politicians, civil servants, clerics and even parents or business men tend to portray more negative behaviour that contradict and contaminate the value orientation of youths.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Our formal and non-formal education institutions must take cultural values more seriously than they do at the moment, and therefore do more to inculcate sound moral values in our youths and children.
2. The national orientation agency should synergize with educational institutions to publicize the cultural values that Nigerians are expected to cultivate
3. Prizes should on an annual basis be awarded to persons in society who are identified as upholding certain desirable cultural values at the national, state and local government.
4. Teachers should constantly receive orientation on how to teach for the cultivation of values. They should research into, and adopt strategies that promote success in this regard.
5. Teaching for cultural values must be perceived by all as a business of all.
6. All mass media radio, television and print media should mandatorily include the dissemination of right values as part of their mandate/social responsibility.
7. Communities should from time to time revisit their cultural values to modify those obsolete ones that do not accord with modern trends in human rights and responsible living.
8. The home and school should work more closely in supporting one another in the task of effective teaching for the cultivation of sound moral values.

CONCLUSION

The inculcation of sound cultural values in the Nigerian children is a key role of all educational institutions. All hands must be on deck in the pursuit of the agenda. The National Orientation Agency needs to synergize with the formal educational institutions, the religious institutions and the other social/traditional institutions in our local communities to achieve the desired goal.

The need for a strong partnership between the home and the school has been stressed and needs no further overemphasis. Parents and guardians must accept their bounden duty as the first teachers of the children to start early in the life of the child to introduce the desirable values in line with the developmental status of the child. The school teachers need to consciously train to achieve the goal by a variety of strategies, self-study, workshops and seminars. Mothers should consciously identify the values that they can teach their female children better than men, and proceed to teach them, while men should do the same.

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