

Transformative Learning through Historical and Cultural Values in Nigeria

Introduction

Defining Transformative Learning

Transformative learning is more than just a classroom idea; it is a hands-on way to get students to rethink things based on what they see in the real world. This makes a lot of sense in Nigeria, where students look at history and culture to get a better handle on what it means to be Nigerian and how society has changed. Like, when they talk about colonial history, it usually kicks off some arguments about how it still affects our government and schools (Mezirow, 1991, p. 22). In Nigerian classrooms, students who think hard about colonial history tend to get a better sense of national identity and what it means to be a good citizen (Mezirow, 1991, p. 22). (Mezirow, 1991, p. 22). It gets people to think about the past and cultural contexts to help them figure out the world.

The Role of History and Cultural Values

History and cultural values influence how people see things, decide what to do, and get along with each other (Ajala & Ogundele, 2023, p. 15). Understanding these elements helps students and teachers develop a deeper appreciation of Nigeria's heritage and identity.

Section 1: Understanding Transformative Learning

Definition and Key Principles

Transformative learning happens when people think hard about things, talk them over, and start seeing things in a fresh way. This helps them think for themselves and be more flexible. (Brookfield, 2012, p. 35).

Learning and Personal Growth

When students get into history and culture, they get better at understanding others, thinking critically, and solving problems (Onyima, 2016, p. 274). These skills are essential for academic success and civic participation.

Section 2: The Role of History in Shaping Identity

Recent Educational Initiatives (2023–2025)

- **OCI Foundation's ArOY Initiative:** In July 2023, the OCI Foundation, an organization focused on promoting health awareness, particularly in cancer education and prevention teamed up with the Nigerian National Assembly to pass a bill mandating the inclusion of teachings on breast, cervical, and prostate cancers in all senior secondary schools and colleges of education. This initiative exemplifies transformative learning by integrating critical health education into the curriculum, fostering awareness, and promoting proactive health behaviours among students.
- **Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND):** NELFUND started in April 2024 to give Nigerians money for school. It helps students pay for tuition and other costs so they can learn and grow.

Historical Events and Their Impact

Nigeria's historical events, like the transatlantic slave trade to colonial rule and independence, has really shaped the country we see today. These events are not just historical facts; they continue to influence contemporary policies, societal attitudes, and even classroom discussions. For instance, many schools now incorporate oral history projects where students interview elders about their lived experiences of these historical transitions (Enwerem, 2013, p. 9). These events have also significantly influenced the education system, leading to curriculum reforms that aim to incorporate indigenous knowledge and perspectives (Enwerem, 2013, p. 9). (Enwerem, 2013, p. 9).

Case Studies of Transformative Learning

Case studies from Nigerian history, such as the impact of nationalism on post-independence governance, highlight how historical reflection fosters personal and societal transformation (Ajala & Ogundele, 2023, p. 103).

Lessons from History

Understanding conflicts like the Biafran War provides lessons in conflict resolution and national unity (Bankale, 2023, p. 161).

Section 3: Cultural Values as a Lens for Transformation

Defining Cultural Values

Cultural values are the beliefs, norms, and traditions that shape societies. In Yoruba culture, the concept of Omoluwabi represents a person of good character, integrity, and responsibility. It emphasizes respect, honesty, hard work, and communal values. An Omoluwabi is someone who embodies moral excellence and contributes positively to society (Ukpe, 2012, p. 31).

Similarly, the principle of Ubuntu, though widely associated with Southern Africa, is reflected in Nigerian cultures, particularly among the Igbo and Hausa. In Igbo culture, the saying “Igwe bu ike” (meaning “strength in unity”) highlights the importance of collective support, cooperation, and shared responsibility. Likewise, in Hausa tradition, mutual aid and kinship play a central role in fostering communal harmony and interdependence (Ukpe, 2012, p. 31).

These values influence how individuals make choices and form their identities, reinforcing the role of cultural heritage in shaping societal interactions and personal development (Ukpe, 2012, p. 31).

Impact on Worldviews

Bringing cultural values into education gives students a wider perspective on the world. It helps them appreciate different cultures and feel more connected as a country (Mboho, 2024, p. 2). For instance, some schools in Nigeria have cultural exchange programs where students

learn traditional dances, languages, and customs from various ethnic groups. When a Yoruba student learns about the Igbo New Yam Festival or a Hausa student takes part in a Yoruba Eyo masquerade, it encourages understanding and national unity. These experiences can help challenge stereotypes, boost tolerance, and strengthen relationships among different ethnic communities.

Stories of Transformation

Stories from people using cultural values to handle disagreements show how traditions can lead to positive changes in society (Onyima, 2016, p. 275). For example, many Yoruba communities settle disputes through a council of elders. These respected figures use proverbs, storytelling, and history to mediate conflicts. This approach focuses on conversation, making amends, and showing respect, which helps to avoid legal issues and promotes harmony within the community.

In the same way, Igbo culture has what's called the “Ikwu aka” (family intervention) system, where extended family members step in to help resolve disputes before they get out of hand. This method encourages everyone to take responsibility and work together to solve problems, keeping relationships strong and preventing lasting rifts.

These traditional practices show how cultural values can lead to peaceful conflict resolution and a stable society.

Section 4: Bridging Past and Present for Meaningful Learning

Historical Consciousness

Understanding history helps students see how the past shapes the present, making them more informed citizens (Ajayi, 2023, p. 66). When they learn about historical events, they can spot patterns and apply those lessons to the issues we face today.

Take Nigeria's colonial history as an example. It shows how old government structures still impact today's politics, like the concentration of power and reliance on former colonial countries. Looking at the Biafran War (1967–1970) helps students understand ethnic conflicts, the need for national unity, and the fallout from unresolved political issues.

Some Nigerian schools have students interview elders about their experiences during key moments, like independence in 1960 or the military rule in the 1980s and 1990s. These personal stories connect students with the struggles and successes of earlier generations, making history feel real and relevant.

By encouraging historical understanding, education helps students think critically about societal issues, participate in informed discussions, and contribute to the growth of the nation.

Cultural Heritage and Identity Formation

Cultural heritage sites and oral traditions contribute to the preservation of identity. When schools include these things in what they teach, it can really build love for the country (Adewumi, 2023, p. 252).

Examples of Societal Preservation

Japan and Germany show us how keeping history and culture alive can really work. They remind us that history is an important part of what kids should learn in school.

In Japan, students study their cultural roots through subjects like Kokugo (the national language) and Rekishigaku (history). These subjects focus on traditional values, significant events, and national identity. For example, schools teach about the Edo period (1603–1868) to explain governance, societal structure, and cultural milestones. Places like Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park serve as important teaching tools, helping students understand the impact of war and the need for peace.

In Germany, learning about history is key to making sure past mistakes aren't repeated. The curriculum includes a lot about World War II and the Holocaust, so students grasp the dangers of totalitarianism and discrimination. Projects like Stolpersteine (stumbling stones), which place small memorials for Holocaust victims outside their last known homes, make history feel personal for students. Visiting sites like the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial reinforces the importance of remembering the past and our responsibility to society.

These examples show how Japan and Germany weave history into education, helping younger generations value their heritage while learning crucial lessons from the past.

Section 5: The Intersection of History, Culture, and Education

The Role of Education

Education systems should include local history and culture so students get a well-rounded sense of their background (Baruwa, 2023, p. 237). If they do not know their own background, they might find it hard to feel a strong sense of who they are and what it means to be part of their country.

For example, studying things like the Benin Empire or the Oyo Kingdom in Nigeria lets students see how advanced their ancestors were in terms of governance, trade, and art. This helps push back against the old idea that African societies were not sophisticated before Europeans showed up.

Bringing in local languages, stories, and traditions in lessons not only keeps culture alive but also teaches kids to respect different backgrounds. Countries like Finland and China have done a good job of blending local culture into their education systems, which has helped people feel more connected and aware of their national identity.

When students know about their history and culture, they tend to get more involved in their communities and think critically about the world. Without this background, future generations might lose touch with their identity and repeat past errors.

Transformative Teaching Methods

Teachers can make history and culture feel real for students by telling stories, acting out scenes, and looking at real-life examples in class (Handbook for Educators, 2023, p. 14).

Critical Thinking Through Historical Analysis

Getting students to look at past events from different angles really helps them think critically and get involved in their community (Onuobia, 1994, p. 3). When students look at historical events from different points of view, they learn to question what they have always thought, notice bias, and make informed decisions. Take Nigeria's independence movement in 1960, for example. By examining it from both the nationalist side and the colonial angle, students can grasp what drove key figures like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Ahmadu

Bello, along with the British government's tactics to stay in control. This way of learning helps them see the complexities of government, diplomacy, and resistance.

Looking at the Biafran War from various perspectives, political, ethnic, and humanitarian, also gives students insight into its causes and effects, along with lessons that are relevant today. Activities like debates, research projects, and interviews with people who experienced the war add depth to their understanding.

These kinds of exercises not only boost students' analysis skills but also get them more involved in discussions, informed voting, and community efforts. A solid historical education helps shape citizens who can spot misinformation, fight for justice, and really contribute to progress in the country.

Section 6: Personal Growth Through Cultural Immersion

The Role of Creative Arts in Education

- **David Oyelowo's Creative Arts Summit (2025):** This initiative in Enugu, Nigeria, focused on empowering young women affected by terrorism and gender inequality. The summit covered acting, music, photography, AI, and digital art, equipping participants with diverse skills and fostering personal development. This aligns with transformative learning by promoting self-expression and career opportunities through the arts.

The Role of Travel and Cross-Cultural Experiences

When students get to see different cultures up close, it really helps them become more understanding, flexible, and thoughtful. A study showed that Nigerian students who did cultural exchanges felt like they got better at relating to all sorts of people. Some schools in Lagos and Enugu now have programs where students hang out in different communities so they can learn about the local customs and languages (Enwerem, 2013, p. 12). for example, one study found that 80% of Nigerian students who went on these exchanges said they became more tolerant and understanding of other cultures (Enwerem, 2013, p. 12).(Enwerem, 2013, p. 12).

Learning from Indigenous Traditions

Indigenous knowledge systems, such as traditional medicine and governance structures, offer valuable lessons for contemporary society (Onyima, 2016, p. 276). These systems give us valuable lessons about sustainability, resolving conflicts, and community health that are still important today.

Take Nigeria's traditional medicine, for instance. People use herbs like Dogonyaro (Neem) for treating malaria and Uziza for digestive issues. Many modern drug studies have backed up these natural remedies, leading to a blend of herbal treatments with regular healthcare. It shows just how important it is to keep traditional knowledge alive and consider other options alongside modern medicine.

In terms of governance, systems like the Yoruba Obaship, Igbo council of elders, and the Hausa Emirate focus on making decisions together as a community. They stress the need for conversation, respect for elders, and communal fairness, teaching us valuable lessons that can improve democracy and local governance today.

By looking into these traditional ways, we can pick up sustainable farming methods, ethical leadership styles, and a well-rounded approach to health, making sure we don't lose this important cultural wisdom.

Case Studies

Examples of individuals who have embraced cultural exploration, such as Nigerian authors who integrate folklore into their works, highlight the transformative power of culture (Ukpe, 2012, p. 33). Writers, artists, and scholars use cultural stories to keep heritage alive, teach people, and tackle current social issues. Take Chinua Achebe's **Things Fall Apart**, for example. It beautifully mixes Igbo folklore, proverbs, and customs into its plot. Through the main character Okonkwo, it looks at pre-colonial Igbo life, the impacts of colonialism, and the tension between old traditions and new ways. Achebe's book has helped Nigerians learn about their history while also giving a glimpse of African perspectives to readers around the world.

On a similar note, Buchi Emecheta's **The Joys of Motherhood** weaves in traditional Igbo views on womanhood, family, and strength while also critiquing the changes brought by

colonialism. Her stories connect the past with the present, showing how culture continues to influence personal identities.

Beyond books, Nollywood films often tap into folklore and traditional tales to discuss modern issues. Films like **Aníkúlápó** (2022) and **October 1** (2014) use historical and mythological themes to tackle topics like justice, morality, and national identity.

These examples show how storytelling and media rooted in culture can keep history alive, inspire national pride, and spark important discussions about the future.

Section 7: Applying Transformative Learning in Everyday Life

Community Heritage Projects

Get students working on projects where they check out and write about local history and traditions. One idea is to have them team up with older folks in the area to record stories they tell. This can help keep those cultural stories alive and give students a better idea of how things have changed in their community.

Cultural Exchange Programs

Set up exchange programs so students from different ethnic groups in Nigeria can live and learn together. This could really help them understand each other better, build empathy, and get along in society.

Developing a Reflective Mindset

Basically, students and teachers can get into the habit of thinking things over, which can help them get a better sense of history and culture. (Mboho, 2024, p. 3). For example, after looking into Nigeria's independence movement from 1960, students can chat about what the leaders hoped for and the challenges they faced compared to what is happening in Nigeria now. By asking questions like, what can we learn from the past to help with today's government issues? Students can sharpen their thinking and problem-solving skills. Also, when teachers add oral history projects, like having students talk to their grandparents about life before and after colonial rule, students get a personal feel for these historical events. This

makes them think more deeply about how culture changes and how traditions might fade away or stick around.

Another way is through reflective journaling, where students write about their own experiences with cultural traditions, like joining in festivals such as Osun-Osogbo or the Argungu Fishing Festival. This lets them grasp how cultural identity comes from both history and what's going on today. By making reflection a regular thing, students not only grasp history and culture better but also build a habit of critical thinking that helps them in their everyday lives and future jobs.

Practical Exercises

Activities such as community heritage projects and historical re-enactments can make learning engaging and meaningful (Handbook for Educators, 2023, p. 14).

Storytelling and Lived Experiences

Incorporating personal narratives into the curriculum helps bridge the gap between theory and real-life applications (Bankale, 2023, p. 161).

Conclusion

Transformative learning through historical and cultural values empowers students and teachers to develop a deeper appreciation of Nigeria's heritage. For teachers, this means moving beyond textbooks and incorporating real-life storytelling, community engagement, and project-based learning. Schools that have adopted these methods have reported increased student engagement and a stronger sense of cultural pride among learners. Key strategies include integrating oral histories into lessons, organizing field trips to historical sites, and encouraging student-led research on cultural preservation. By integrating these elements into formal education, we can foster critical thinking, national pride, and a well-rounded perspective on societal development.

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