

Book 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.