

The Pedagogy of Nkuzi: Exploring African Philosophy for Functional Education and Human Well-Being

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Abstract

This chapter develops the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* as an African educational paradigm that reimagines schooling as a process of holistic human formation directed towards functional education and human well-being. It argues that contemporary education has become excessively certificate-oriented, often neglecting the moral, emotional, social, and psychological dimensions of learning. In response, the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi*¹ reclaims the original purpose of schooling by emphasizing the formation of responsible, compassionate, competent, and ethically grounded persons. Drawing from African educational philosophy, particularly the understanding of *nkuzi* as teaching, guidance, and formation, the chapter presents education as an act of responsible parenting and self-giving love. It maintains that teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge but mentors, caregivers, and moral exemplars who nurture learners for meaningful participation in society. The chapter further argues that functional education should integrate intellectual competence with character formation, emotional resilience, and communal responsibility, while human well-being remains the ultimate aim of schooling. Finally, it introduces the *Nkuzi* Pedagogical Paradigm, which advocates corrective and restorative discipline rather than purely punitive measures, viewing discipline as a process of moral formation and personal transformation. The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* thus offers a distinctly African contribution to contemporary educational thought by placing human flourishing at the centre of educational philosophy and practice.

Keywords: Pedagogy, *nkuzi*, school, education, human well-being, teaching, parenting

Introduction

Education stands at a critical crossroads. Across the world, schools are increasingly assessed by examination results, graduation rates, professional qualifications, and employability statistics. While these indicators remain valuable, they have inadvertently narrowed the purpose of education to academic achievement and economic productivity. As a consequence, many educational systems produce graduates who possess impressive credentials but struggle with ethical decision-making, emotional resilience, responsible citizenship, healthy relationships, and meaningful engagement with

¹ The significant and symbolic use of cane as an instrument of formation has been in practice in African *trado*-cultural exercises. In the African worldview, the cane (*nkuzi* or *utali*) was never intended as an instrument of vengeance but as a symbol of strength (during some cultural masquerade display of *iku-agba*), a show of love, correction, and responsible upbringing. The elder who disciplined a child did so not to inflict pain but to prevent future shame through the pain of *utali*. Hence, the Igbo say, "*a na-azu nwa ka e mesja nwee onye ga-eli mmadu*", a child is properly trained so that he or she may become a responsible member of society. Character, not merely knowledge, is the goal of education. The wisdom of the ancestors further teaches that "*osisi e ji akụ nwata bu nke e ji zuo ya, o bughi nke e ji gbuo ya*", the stick used on a child is meant for training, not for destruction. Likewise, "*A na-agbazi osisi mgbe o ka di oheru*"; wood is straightened while it is still tender. The implication is that correction is most effective during the formative years before bad habits become deeply rooted. Another Igbo proverb reminds us that "*nwa a na-adighi anu ihe, na-anu uda mgbirigba ndu n'azu*", the child who refuses instruction eventually learns through the harsh lessons of life. African wisdom recognizes that if a child is not corrected by loving parents and teachers, society itself will eventually discipline that individual with far greater severity. The image of the *onye nkuzi*, therefore, transcends mere classroom instruction. The teacher is not simply an *onye na-egosi* (one who shows), but an *onye na-akpu agwa*, a moulder of character. To teach is to shape the whole person intellectually, morally, socially, and spiritually. As the Igbo proverb says, "*akwukwo na-enweghi agwa bu ibu onye na-apughu ibu*", learning without character is a burden that benefits no one. Modern education has largely abandoned the symbolism of the cane in favour of demonstration and facilitation. While excessive corporal punishment has no place in authentic education, the disappearance of firm discipline has often weakened the teacher's moral authority. The challenge today is, therefore, not the restoration of indiscriminate flogging but the recovery of the philosophy behind the cane: correction with love, discipline with wisdom, and authority exercised for the good of the learner. Indeed, an African teacher worthy of the name *onye nkuzi* must combine instruction with formation, for a child who learns only facts may become intelligent, but a child who learns discipline, responsibility, and virtue becomes truly educated.

their communities. The growing prevalence of school violence, mental health challenges, family instability, youth unemployment, substance abuse, and declining moral values raises an important philosophical question: What is the true purpose of schooling?

The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* responds to this question by proposing a renewed vision of education rooted in African philosophical thought and contemporary educational realities. The Igbo concept of *nkuzi* transcends the narrow idea of classroom instruction. It denotes teaching, guidance, formation, correction, mentoring, and the nurturing of persons for responsible living. Education, therefore, is not merely the transmission of information but the intentional formation of the whole person within a caring community. One of the contemporary realities informing this pedagogical vision is the growing erosion of the formative role traditionally played by the family. Many children now enter schools without adequate moral guidance, emotional stability, or consistent parental care. Consequently, teachers increasingly perform responsibilities that extend far beyond classroom instruction. They counsel, mentor, protect, encourage, discipline, and inspire learners. In this context, the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* advances the proposition that teaching is parenting and teaching is loving. The teacher (*Onye Nkuzi*) becomes a co-former of the learner's character, helping to cultivate intellectual excellence alongside moral integrity, emotional maturity, and social responsibility.

This chapter therefore argues that schooling must be reimagined as a process of human formation directed towards functional education and human well-being. Functional education extends beyond vocational preparation or employability. It equips learners with practical wisdom, ethical judgment, critical thinking, creativity, resilience, and the capacity to address the concrete challenges of life. Such education empowers individuals not merely to make a living but to live responsibly and contribute meaningfully to the flourishing of their communities. Equally important, the chapter maintains that human well-being constitutes the highest goal of education. Schools should be communities where learners experience respect, belonging, justice, care, discipline, and opportunities for holistic development. Academic excellence cannot be separated from psychological health, moral character, healthy relationships, and social responsibility. Education succeeds only when it forms persons capable of living meaningful, peaceful, and productive lives.

Finally, the paper introduces the *Nkuzi* Pedagogical Paradigm, which proposes a shift from predominantly punitive approaches to discipline towards corrective and restorative formation. Rather than viewing punishment as an end in itself, the paradigm understands discipline as an educational process that restores learners, strengthens character, and promotes responsible behaviour while safeguarding their dignity. In this sense, discipline becomes an expression of care rather than hostility. The chapter is organized into five interrelated sections. It first reclaims the purpose of schooling beyond certification, then examines functional education as learning for life and society, explores teaching as parenting and loving, discusses human well-being as the ultimate end of schooling, and concludes by presenting the *Nkuzi* Pedagogical Paradigm of corrective formation. Together, these discussions articulate a holistic African philosophy of education in which schools become communities of formation, teachers become agents of transformation, and education becomes a lifelong journey towards human flourishing. These drafts are designed to serve as a strong introduction to the chapter while maintaining continuity with the themes you have developed throughout the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi*.

Literature Review

Literature on African pedagogy has increasingly challenged the dominance of Western educational paradigms by advocating educational models rooted in indigenous knowledge systems, communal values, and culturally responsive teaching. African scholars contend that education should not merely transmit information but should cultivate responsible, morally upright, and socially useful individuals who contribute meaningfully to their communities. This perspective aligns with the African understanding of education as a lifelong process of character formation, communal participation, and practical engagement with life (Fafunwa, 1974; Ocitti, 1973). The concept of *Nkuzi*, understood in the Igbo context as holistic instruction, guidance, and formation, fits squarely within this intellectual tradition by emphasizing the integration of knowledge, values, and practical competence. Several African philosophers of education have argued that indigenous educational philosophies possess

immense relevance for addressing contemporary educational challenges. Fafunwa (1974) observes that traditional African education was functional because it prepared learners for the realities of their environment through apprenticeship, observation, participation, storytelling, and moral instruction. Similarly, Ocitti (1973) emphasizes that African education aimed at producing disciplined, skilled, and socially responsible individuals rather than merely literate persons. These foundational studies suggest that effective pedagogy extends beyond classroom instruction to encompass the formation of the whole person, a principle central to the pedagogy of *Nkuzi*.

Within the broader discourse of African philosophy of education, scholars such as Wiredu (2004), Higgs (2012), and Letseka (2012) advocate educational systems grounded in African values of communalism, dialogue, respect, and human dignity. Their works argue that meaningful learning occurs when education reflects learners' cultural identities and promotes social responsibility. The *Nkuzi* pedagogical framework builds upon these insights by viewing teaching as an interactive, value-laden, and transformative process in which both teacher and learner actively participate in the pursuit of wisdom, competence, and human flourishing. Contemporary educational literature equally emphasizes learner-centred and transformative pedagogies. Freire (1970) criticizes the "banking model" of education and proposes dialogical learning that empowers learners to become critical thinkers and agents of social transformation. Likewise, Dewey (1938) maintains that meaningful education emerges through experience, reflection, and problem-solving. While these perspectives originate outside Africa, they converge with *Nkuzi*'s emphasis on participatory learning, practical engagement, and contextual relevance. However, *Nkuzi* differs by grounding these pedagogical principles within African cultural realities, indigenous epistemologies, and communal ethics.

Despite the growing scholarship on African educational philosophies, relatively few studies have specifically explored *Nkuzi* as a comprehensive pedagogical framework for promoting functional education and human well-being. Existing literature largely focuses on indigenous education, Ubuntu, communal learning, and culturally responsive pedagogy without systematically conceptualizing *Nkuzi* as an educational philosophy capable of addressing present-day concerns such as unemployability, moral decline, social fragmentation, and psychological well-being. This gap provides the justification for the present study, which advances the pedagogy of *Nkuzi* as an African educational model that integrates cognitive development, moral formation, practical competence, and holistic well-being within formal schooling. The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* envisions schooling as a transformative process directed towards functional education and human well-being. It challenges the prevailing tendency to reduce education to the acquisition of certificates, examination success, and employability. While these outcomes remain important, they do not exhaust the purpose of education. True education must prepare learners not only to earn a living but also to live meaningful, responsible, and fulfilling lives.

Functional education, from the perspective of the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi*, is education that equips learners with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and practical wisdom required to solve real-life problems and contribute positively to society. It integrates intellectual competence with moral character, emotional maturity, creativity, critical thinking, and social responsibility. Such education forms individuals who are productive in their vocations, resilient in the face of life's challenges, and committed to the common good. Human well-being constitutes the ultimate goal of this educational vision. In an era marked by mental health crises, family instability, violence, social isolation, and ethical decline, schools must become communities of care where learners experience love, belonging, discipline, and personal growth. The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* therefore understands teaching as an act of responsible parenting and compassionate service. The teacher nurtures the learner's mind, character, emotions, and relationships, recognizing that academic excellence without psychological, moral, and social well-being is incomplete.

Consequently, the school is reimagined as more than an institution of instruction; it becomes a community of formation where learners are prepared for life, not merely for examinations. Functional education and human well-being are therefore inseparable. Education succeeds only when it develops competent professionals, responsible citizens, caring family members, and morally grounded human beings capable of promoting the flourishing of their communities and humanity. In this sense, the

Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* presents schooling as a lifelong enterprise of forming persons whose knowledge serves life and whose lives enrich society.

Schooling Beyond Certification: Reclaiming the Purpose of Education

Contemporary education has increasingly become synonymous with the pursuit of certificates, grades, and qualifications. Across many societies, schooling is often evaluated by the number of certificates obtained rather than by the quality of the persons it forms. This certificate-driven orientation has produced graduates who may possess academic credentials yet lack the practical competence, moral character, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility necessary for meaningful living. The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* challenges this reductionist understanding by reclaiming the original purpose of schooling as the holistic formation of the human person.

Education, in its fullest sense, is a lifelong process of developing intellectual, moral, emotional, physical, spiritual, and social capacities. Rather than merely transmitting information, authentic schooling cultivates wisdom, critical thinking, creativity, ethical judgment, and the disposition to serve others. This understanding resonates with the position that education should prepare learners not only for employment but also for responsible citizenship and human flourishing (Biesta, 2020). Within the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi*, schooling is understood as an intentional process of human formation. The school becomes a community where learners acquire knowledge while simultaneously developing virtues such as honesty, diligence, compassion, resilience, self-discipline, and communal responsibility. The teacher (*Onye Nkuzi*) therefore serves not merely as an instructor but as a mentor and moral exemplar whose influence extends beyond the classroom into the learner's character and way of life.

The African worldview provides strong support for this holistic conception of education. Traditional African education integrated intellectual development with moral formation, vocational competence, communal responsibility, and respect for human dignity. Learning was inseparable from living, and knowledge was judged by its contribution to individual and communal well-being (Fafunwa, 1974). The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* revitalizes this heritage by insisting that schooling should prepare learners to solve real-life problems, build healthy relationships, and contribute positively to society. Reclaiming the purpose of schooling therefore requires educational systems to move beyond an obsession with examinations and certificates toward the formation of competent, compassionate, and ethically responsible persons. Certificates remain valuable as evidence of learning, but they should never become the ultimate goal of education. Schooling fulfils its true purpose only when it forms individuals whose knowledge is functional, whose character is upright, and whose lives promote the flourishing of both self and community. In sum, this section, *Schooling Beyond Certification: Reclaiming the Purpose of Education* critiques the overemphasis on examinations and certificates and argues that the purpose of schooling is the holistic formation of the human person. Education should prepare learners not merely for employment but for responsible living, ethical leadership, and meaningful participation in society.

Functional Education: Learning for Life and Society

Functional education is a philosophy of schooling that equips learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to live productive, meaningful, and socially responsible lives. Unlike an educational system that emphasizes memorization and examination success alone, functional education seeks to connect learning with the practical realities of everyday life. Within the framework of the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi*, functional education is understood as education that transforms both the learner and society by integrating intellectual competence with moral formation, emotional well-being, and communal responsibility. The need for functional education has become increasingly urgent in the twenty-first century. Rapid technological advancement, economic uncertainty, unemployment, social inequality, environmental challenges, and mental health concerns demand graduates who are innovative, adaptable, ethically grounded, and capable of solving complex problems. Consequently, schools must move beyond the mere transmission of theoretical knowledge to cultivating critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and practical skills that enable learners to respond effectively to changing realities (UNESCO, 2021).

The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* broadens the understanding of functionality beyond employability. Although vocational competence and economic productivity are essential, education must also prepare learners to become responsible family members, ethical leaders, peace builders, and active contributors to community development. Functional education therefore embraces the cognitive, affective, moral, and social dimensions of learning. A learner who excels academically but lacks integrity, empathy, resilience, or respect for others cannot be regarded as fully educated. This perspective reflects the enduring insights of African educational philosophy, where learning has traditionally been inseparable from life itself. In many African societies, education prepared individuals to contribute meaningfully to the welfare of their families and communities through productive work, moral discipline, cultural identity, and communal service (Fafunwa, 1974). Knowledge was valued not simply because it was possessed but because it promoted harmonious living and the common good. The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* reclaims this heritage by insisting that education should produce persons whose learning is both personally transformative and socially beneficial.

Functional education also requires a transformation in pedagogical practice. Teaching should encourage inquiry, dialogue, collaboration, reflection, experiential learning, and community engagement rather than passive memorization. Learners should be challenged to apply classroom knowledge to real-life situations, develop entrepreneurial initiatives, resolve conflicts peacefully, and cultivate habits of lifelong learning. In this process, the *Onye Nkuzi* becomes a facilitator of growth, guiding learners to discover their abilities while nurturing responsibility, discipline, and compassion. Ultimately, functional education is measured not by certificates alone but by the learner's ability to use knowledge wisely in the service of self, family, community, and humanity. The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* therefore envisions schooling as a transformative enterprise that forms intellectually competent, morally responsible, emotionally resilient, and socially engaged individuals. Such education enables human beings not merely to succeed in the labour market but to flourish in every dimension of life, thereby contributing to sustainable societal development and authentic human well-being.

In sum, this section, *Functional Education: Learning for Life and Society* explains functional education as learning that equips individuals with practical knowledge, critical thinking, creativity, moral values, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving abilities. Functional education empowers learners to respond effectively to personal, societal, and global challenges while contributing to sustainable human development.

Teaching as Parenting² and Loving: The Heart of the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi*

The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* is founded on the conviction that teaching is fundamentally an act of parenting expressed through love. This conviction emerges from the contemporary reality that many children enter schools without adequate moral guidance, emotional support, and social formation from their homes. Family instability, economic pressures, changing social values, and the erosion of communal child-rearing have shifted many formative responsibilities to schools. Consequently, the teacher is increasingly called upon to perform roles that transcend the transmission of academic knowledge. The *Onye Nkuzi* becomes a mentor, caregiver, counsellor, moral guide, disciplinarian, and role model whose influence extends to the whole person. Teaching as parenting does not imply replacing biological

² Teaching is parenting. Parenting is teaching. You cannot teach well today without basically be a parent or playing the real role of *locus parentis*, place of the parent. Today, teaching is fundamentally an act of parenting because it extends beyond the transmission of academic knowledge to the holistic formation of the learner. A true teacher embodies a nurturing, caring, and morally formative presence that guides students toward intellectual, emotional, and ethical maturity. In contemporary society, where a good number of untrained children are becoming parents; where many children are deprived of sound parental guidance due to dysfunctional homes or the reality that some parents themselves lack adequate preparation for responsible parenting, the teacher assumes an even more significant role. Through patience, discipline, empathy, and exemplary character, teachers help cultivate values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, compassion, and self-control. In this sense, the classroom becomes an extension of the home, and the teacher serves as a mentor who complements parental responsibilities. Teaching, therefore, is not merely an occupation but a vocation of character formation, restoring the foundational ideals and ethics necessary for producing responsible individuals and fostering the well-being of society.

parents. Rather, it recognizes that education is a shared responsibility between the home and the school. Just as responsible parents nurture the intellectual, emotional, moral, and social growth of their children, teachers are expected to create learning environments where learners experience guidance, encouragement, discipline, acceptance, and hope. The classroom thus becomes a community of formation where learners are prepared not merely for examinations but for life itself. Central to this pedagogical vision is love. Love is not understood as sentimentality or excessive permissiveness but as a deliberate commitment to seek the learner's good. A loving teacher believes in the learner's potential, exercises patience in moments of failure, corrects with fairness, encourages perseverance, and celebrates genuine progress. Such love creates trust, strengthens teacher–learner relationships, and provides the emotional security necessary for effective learning. Educational research consistently demonstrates that learners achieve better academic, emotional, and behavioural outcomes when they experience supportive and caring relationships with their teachers (, 2013).

The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* therefore rejects two extremes in educational practice. On one hand, it rejects authoritarian teaching characterized by fear, humiliation, and excessive punishment, which often suppress creativity and diminish learners' self-worth. On the other hand, it rejects permissive approaches that abandon discipline and moral responsibility. Instead, it advocates a balanced pedagogy where love and discipline complement one another. Genuine love requires accountability, while authentic discipline is exercised for correction, restoration, and character formation rather than revenge or intimidation. This understanding reflects the African conception of education as communal formation. Traditional African societies viewed every responsible adult as a teacher and every child as belonging to the community. Learning involved not only acquiring knowledge but also cultivating virtues such as honesty, respect, courage, compassion, hard work, and communal solidarity (Fafunwa, 1974). The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* revitalizes this heritage by affirming that teaching is a vocation of service directed toward the flourishing of both the individual learner and the wider community.

Teaching as parenting also demands professional competence. Love alone cannot substitute for sound pedagogical knowledge, effective classroom management, or mastery of subject content. Rather, professional excellence becomes an expression of love because a caring teacher continually improves instructional practice to meet the diverse needs of learners. The teacher demonstrates love by preparing thoroughly, teaching creatively, listening attentively, assessing fairly, and supporting learners according to their individual abilities and circumstances. Ultimately, the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* proposes that the greatest legacy of a teacher is not merely the information imparted but the lives transformed. Learners often forget lessons, but they remember teachers who believed in them, inspired them, and helped them become responsible human beings. Teaching is therefore more than an occupation; it is a vocation of responsible parenting and self-giving love. By integrating intellectual instruction with compassionate care, moral guidance, and restorative discipline, the *Onye Nkuzi* forms persons capable of contributing meaningfully to their families, communities, and society. In this way, teaching becomes one of humanity's highest expressions of love in action. In sum, this section, *Teaching as Parenting and Loving: The Heart of the Pedagogy of Nkuzi* develops the central claim that teaching is an extension of responsible parenting and an expression of love. The *Onye Nkuzi* nurtures learners intellectually, emotionally, morally, and socially, creating a classroom culture founded on care, respect, responsibility, and human dignity.

Human Well-being as the End of Schooling

The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* maintains that the ultimate purpose of schooling is human well-being. While academic achievement, vocational competence, and economic productivity are important outcomes of education, they are not its highest ends. Education fulfils its true purpose only when it promotes the holistic flourishing of the human person. These understanding challenge educational systems that measure success solely by examination results, certificates, or employment rates while neglecting learners' emotional, moral, psychological, and social development.

Human well-being refers to a state in which individuals are able to realize their potential, maintain healthy relationships, cope constructively with life's challenges, contribute meaningfully to society, and experience a sense of purpose and fulfilment. Schools therefore have responsibilities that extend beyond

cognitive instruction. They are communities of human formation where learners should develop intellectual competence alongside emotional resilience, ethical responsibility, social connectedness, and mental wellness. Education that ignores these dimensions risks producing academically successful but emotionally fragile, morally deficient, or socially disconnected individuals (UNESCO, 2021). Within the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi*, human well-being is cultivated through relationships characterized by love, respect, justice, responsibility, and mutual care. The classroom becomes a community where every learner is recognized as a person with inherent dignity rather than merely a recipient of information. The *Onye Nkuzi* nurtures learners by fostering self-confidence, encouraging perseverance, promoting empathy, and creating opportunities for meaningful participation. Such an environment supports not only academic success but also psychological safety and emotional growth, both of which are indispensable for effective learning (, 2013).

An important dimension of human well-being is mental health. Increasing rates of anxiety, depression, bullying, substance abuse, academic pressure, and social isolation among young people demonstrate that schools can no longer limit their concern to intellectual performance. Learners flourish when they experience supportive teacher-student relationships, inclusive school cultures, opportunities for self-expression, and constructive guidance during personal difficulties. The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* therefore calls for schools that intentionally integrate emotional support, moral education, counselling, character formation, and community-building into everyday educational practice. The African educational tradition provides further support for this holistic vision. Traditional African education regarded the individual as inseparable from the community, emphasizing harmonious relationships, moral responsibility, respect for elders, cooperation, and service to the common good (Fafunwa, 1974). Human flourishing was understood not as individual achievement alone but as the ability to live responsibly within the family and society. The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* revitalizes this heritage by affirming that education should produce persons whose knowledge, character, and actions promote communal well-being.

Furthermore, the pursuit of human well-being requires schools to cultivate values that sustain peaceful and meaningful living. Integrity, compassion, resilience, justice, honesty, forgiveness, responsibility, and respect for human dignity are not peripheral to education but essential learning outcomes. These virtues enable learners to navigate personal and professional challenges, build healthy families, exercise ethical leadership, and contribute positively to society. Functional knowledge without moral wisdom may produce technical competence but not responsible citizenship. Ultimately, the success of schooling should be measured by the quality of the human beings it forms. A truly educated person is not merely one who possesses knowledge but one who lives wisely, relates compassionately, serves faithfully, and contributes constructively to the flourishing of others. The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* therefore places human well-being at the centre of educational philosophy and practice. It argues that schools achieve their highest purpose when they nurture intellectually competent, emotionally healthy, morally upright, and socially responsible persons whose education becomes a source of hope, justice, peace, and sustainable human development. In sum, this section, *Human Well-being as the End of Schooling* argues that the ultimate aim of education is human well-being and flourishing. It explores how schooling should promote mental health, resilience, ethical conduct, healthy relationships, communal responsibility, and purposeful living. Educational success is measured not only by academic achievement but also by the quality of the persons schools help to form.

The *Nkuzi* Pedagogical Paradigm: From Punitive Measures to Corrective Formation

One of the defining contributions of the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* is its reconceptualization of school discipline. It argues that the primary purpose of discipline is not to inflict punishment but to facilitate correction, restoration, and character formation. While many educational systems continue to rely on punitive measures as the principal means of maintaining order, the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* contends that punishment, when detached from genuine concern for the learner's growth, often breeds fear, resentment, deception, and emotional harm rather than lasting behavioural change. Consequently, discipline should be understood as an educational process aimed at transforming the learner rather than merely sanctioning misconduct.

The word *nkuzi* implies formation, guidance, instruction, and responsible accompaniment. Accordingly, the *Onye Nkuzi* is not simply an enforcer of rules but a formative educator who helps learners understand the moral implications of their actions and supports them in becoming responsible members of the school community. This perspective shifts the focus of discipline from retribution to education. Misconduct becomes an opportunity for reflection, moral learning, reconciliation, and personal growth rather than merely an occasion for punishment. The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* does not reject punishment altogether. Rather, it distinguishes between punishment as vengeance and correction as education. Certain forms of sanction may sometimes be necessary to protect the school community, maintain order, and reinforce accountability. However, such sanctions should always be proportionate, humane, educationally justified, and directed toward the learner's rehabilitation rather than humiliation. Every disciplinary measure should communicate both justice and care, ensuring that the learner understands that the misconduct is rejected without rejecting the person.

Corrective formation therefore occupies the centre of the *Nkuzi* Pedagogical Paradigm. When learners violate school rules, teachers should first seek to understand the circumstances contributing to the behaviour. Many disciplinary problems arise from emotional distress, family instability, peer pressure, unmet psychological needs, trauma, or inadequate moral guidance. Responding solely with harsh punishment may suppress outward behaviour temporarily while leaving the underlying causes unresolved. A corrective approach encourages dialogue, counselling, mentorship, guided reflection, restitution, apology, community service, and behavioural support where appropriate. These interventions enable learners to accept responsibility for their actions while developing the moral capacity to make better decisions in the future (, 2013). This approach resonates strongly with African educational traditions, where discipline was fundamentally formative. Elders corrected children not to disgrace them but to restore them to responsible participation in the community. Wrongdoing was viewed as a disruption of communal harmony requiring education, reconciliation, and moral renewal rather than mere punishment. Character formation remained the principal objective of discipline, while the dignity of the child was carefully preserved (Fafunwa, 1974). The Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* revives this tradition by emphasizing that discipline should build persons rather than break their spirits.

Contemporary educational research similarly supports restorative and relationship-based approaches to school discipline. Schools that prioritize respectful relationships, restorative conversations, emotional support, and positive behavioural interventions generally experience improved learner engagement, reduced behavioural problems, stronger school belonging, and healthier school climates (UNESCO, 2021). Learners are more likely to internalize moral values when they experience fairness, consistency, and genuine care from teachers than when they are governed primarily through fear. Within this paradigm, the teacher exercises authority with compassion. Love does not eliminate discipline; rather, it gives discipline its proper purpose. A loving teacher corrects because he or she desires the learner's growth and flourishing. Justice and mercy are therefore complementary rather than contradictory. Learners are held accountable for their actions while simultaneously receiving opportunities for reflection, reconciliation, and positive transformation. Such discipline strengthens trust between teachers and learners and fosters an atmosphere of mutual respect.

The *Nkuzi* Pedagogical Paradigm further insists that disciplinary practices should promote human well-being. Physical abuse, public humiliation, degrading punishment, and emotionally destructive practices undermine the educational mission because they violate the learner's dignity and may produce fear instead of genuine moral development. Corrective discipline, by contrast, develops self-discipline, responsibility, empathy, resilience, and ethical judgment. Its success is measured not by the severity of the punishment imposed but by the quality of the character formed. Ultimately, the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi* presents discipline as an integral dimension of education itself. Every act of correction should teach, every sanction should restore where possible, and every disciplinary encounter should contribute to the learner's holistic formation. The goal is not merely compliant students but morally responsible persons capable of governing themselves with integrity. By replacing a predominantly punitive orientation with a corrective and restorative philosophy, the *Nkuzi* Pedagogical Paradigm redefines school discipline as an instrument of human formation, social responsibility, and authentic human flourishing. In doing so, it offers a humane and distinctly African contribution to contemporary educational thought.

In sum, this concluding section, *The Nkuzi Pedagogical Paradigm: From Punitive Measures to Corrective Formation*, presents one of the defining principles of the Pedagogy of *Nkuzi*: discipline exists to reform rather than to punish. While discipline remains indispensable in education, its purpose is correction, restoration, character formation, and responsible growth—not humiliation, vengeance, or fear. The *Onye Nkuzi* administers discipline with justice, compassion, consistency, and love, always seeking the learner's moral and personal development. Corrective measures such as counselling, guided reflection, restitution, mentorship, and restorative dialogue are preferred whenever appropriate because they help learners understand their mistakes, accept responsibility, and embrace positive change. Within this paradigm, punishment is not an end in itself but a means of restoring the learner to responsible membership in the school community. The *Nkuzi* Pedagogical Paradigm therefore advocates corrective rather than merely punitive discipline, affirming that the highest purpose of school discipline is the formation of character and the promotion of human well-being. This fifth section is particularly original and could become one of the hallmark contributions of your Pedagogy of *Nkuzi*, distinguishing it as a philosophy that views discipline as formative, restorative, and humanizing, rather than simply punitive.

The Effects of the Uncomplementarity of *Nku* and *Zi* in *Nkuzi*

One of the greatest tragedies of contemporary education is the separation of *Nku* from *Zi*. Under the influence of an uncritical understanding of modernism, permissive parenting, and poorly informed educational administration, many schools have embraced *Zi* (instruction, knowledge transmission, and intellectual development) while abandoning *Nku* (correction, discipline, moral formation, and responsible guidance). Consequently, education has increasingly become an exercise in filling the mind while neglecting the formation of character. Such an educational philosophy is incomplete and ultimately self-defeating. In the Igbo worldview, *Nku na Zi* are complementary realities. One does not authentically educate by merely imparting knowledge; one educates by directing, correcting, and forming the whole person. Thus, the popular Igbo wisdom, "*A na-azu nwa n'aka, a na-azukwa ya n'okwu*" (a child is trained both by appropriate corrective measures and by instruction), captures the harmony between discipline and teaching. Likewise, "*E jiri aka ekpe kuziere nwa, e jiri aka nri kpọọ ya nso*" reminds us that correction should always be accompanied by love, acceptance, and restoration.

Unfortunately, many modern educational systems have mistaken discipline for cruelty and correction for abuse. In an attempt to protect children, they have often produced environments where wrongdoing is ignored, authority is weakened, and accountability disappears. The result is *Zi* without *Nku*, students who may possess certificates but lack integrity, competence but no conscience, intelligence but no self-control. Such education produces individuals who can manipulate technology yet fail to manage their emotions, achieve academic success yet become social liabilities. The Igbo rightly observe that "*Osisi a na-agbaji mgbe ọ ka di ọhuru*" (wood is bent while it is still young). Character is most effectively formed during the years of growth. Again, "*Nwa a na-adughị ọdu, nne ya adighị ada n'azu ya*" reminds parents and teachers that persistent correction prevents future shame. Genuine love therefore includes responsible discipline. To divorce *Nku* from *Zi* is to mutilate the philosophy of education itself. True education is not merely the cultivation of the intellect but the harmonious formation of knowledge, virtue, discipline, and wisdom. Where *Zi* flourishes without *Nku*, society eventually harvests educated but undisciplined citizens, a dangerous contradiction that undermines both the individual and the common good.

***Nkugo* as the Opposite of *Nkuzi*: When *Nku* and *Zi* Fail to Work Together**

If *Nkuzi* is the harmonious integration of *Nku* (discipline, correction, moral formation, and responsible guidance) and *Zi* (instruction, teaching, and intellectual enlightenment), then *Nkugo* represents the tragic distortion that results when these complementary realities are separated. Etymologically, *go* in Igbo denotes destruction, scattering, ruin, or spoilage. Thus, *Nkugo* may be understood as knocking wrongly, mis-formation or mal-formation, educational ruin, or the destruction of authentic education. It is not simply the absence of teaching but the corruption of the very purpose of education. *Nkugo* emerges wherever *Zi* is pursued without *Nku*, or where *Nku* is exercised without *Zi*. The first produces intellectually informed but morally deformed individuals. Such persons possess knowledge and technical competence but lack integrity, discipline, empathy, self-control, and responsibility. They

become educated minds with untrained characters. The second produces fearful and submissive individuals who obey out of intimidation rather than understanding. Such persons may appear disciplined externally but are deprived of critical thinking, creativity, and genuine freedom.

The consequences of *Nkugo* are evident in many contemporary societies. Schools increasingly produce graduates with impressive certificates but questionable character. Families struggle with children who reject authority because they were never properly corrected, while others suffer emotional wounds because correction lacked love and instruction. Educational institutions become centres of credential acquisition rather than communities of character formation. Consequently, corruption, indiscipline, violence, examination malpractice, cybercrime, substance abuse, and moral decadence become symptoms of an educational process that has lost its soul. The Igbo wisely affirm, "*Nwa a na-azughị, ga-ere ụlọ e ji ya mụọ*" (A child who is not properly trained will eventually destroy the house that raised him). Likewise, "*Asambodo anaghị eme mmadụ; agwa oma na-eme mmadụ*" (Certificates do not make a person; good character does). These proverbs underscore that education devoid of moral formation is ultimately self-destructive. Authentic *Nkuzi* therefore demands the inseparable union of *Nkụ* and *Zi*. Correction must enlighten, and enlightenment must shape conduct. Where this complementarity is preserved, education produces knowledgeable, disciplined, compassionate, and responsible persons. Where it is broken, *Nkugo* prevails, and society inherits not educated citizens but individuals whose knowledge lacks wisdom and whose freedom lacks responsibility. In this sense, *Nkugo* is the educational pathology that arises whenever the formative unity of *Nkụ* and *Zi* is destroyed. In sum, this concept of *Nkugo* provides a useful philosophical counterpart to *Nkuzi* and can serve as a critical category in your emerging pedagogical and epistemological philosophy of *Nkuzi*. It distinguishes authentic education (formation) from pseudo-education (deformation), making it a valuable contribution to African philosophy of education.

- **Untrained Children Are Becoming Parents: Teaching Is Parenting**

The contemporary educational landscape is confronted with an unprecedented challenge: many children today are being raised by parents who themselves have not been adequately formed in the values, discipline, and responsibilities of parenthood. In many instances, biological maturity has not been accompanied by emotional, moral, or educational maturity. Consequently, some parents struggle to provide the guidance, discipline, encouragement, and value orientation necessary for the holistic development of their children. As a result, schools increasingly receive learners who lack basic social etiquette, emotional stability, respect for authority, and the foundational virtues traditionally cultivated within the family. The burden of formation, therefore, has gradually shifted from the home to the classroom. This reality significantly expands the vocation of the teacher. The teacher is no longer merely a transmitter of academic knowledge but has become, in many respects, a surrogate parent. Teaching today extends beyond explaining concepts, marking assignments, or preparing students for examinations. It entails nurturing character, correcting behaviour, modelling virtues, instilling discipline, and providing emotional support where the family has become deficient. In this regard, teaching is fundamentally an act of parenting.

The pedagogy of parenting recognizes that every child enters the classroom with unique experiences, emotional wounds, aspirations, and deficiencies. A competent teacher understands that education must address the whole person—the intellect, emotions, conscience, and social relationships. Consequently, the classroom becomes not only a place of instruction but also a community of formation where values such as honesty, responsibility, perseverance, compassion, respect, and self-control are intentionally cultivated. This understanding does not diminish the indispensable role of biological parents; rather, it highlights the complementary responsibility of teachers in contemporary society. As families increasingly face economic pressures, social fragmentation, technological distractions, and moral uncertainties, teachers are called upon to bridge many developmental gaps left unattended in the home. Their influence often extends far beyond graduation, shaping the moral imagination and future decisions of their students. To teach, therefore, is to parent intellectually, morally, emotionally, and socially. Every lesson becomes an opportunity not only to educate the mind but also to form the person. The great teacher does not merely produce successful students; the great teacher raises responsible human

beings. In this sense, authentic teaching is an extension of responsible parenthood, and every classroom becomes a family where learning and character formation coexist harmoniously

- **Teaching Is Loving: A Teacher Is Fundamentally a Lover of Pupils**

At the heart of every meaningful educational encounter lies love. Teaching is fundamentally an expression of love because genuine education seeks the good, growth, and flourishing of the learner. Without love, teaching easily degenerates into the mechanical delivery of information, devoid of empathy, patience, inspiration, and personal commitment. Love transforms instruction into formation and converts classrooms into communities where learners experience acceptance, encouragement, and hope. The authentic teacher is, therefore, first and foremost, a lover of pupils and students. This love is neither sentimental nor based on personal preference; rather, it is a professional, ethical, and selfless commitment to the intellectual, moral, emotional, and social development of every learner. Such love sees beyond academic performance to recognize the inherent dignity and unique potential of each child. It believes that every student can improve, every weakness can be strengthened, and every life can be positively transformed through patient guidance.

Teaching founded on love is characterized by sacrifice. A loving teacher willingly invests time in preparing lessons, patiently explains difficult concepts repeatedly, listens attentively to students' concerns, encourages the discouraged, corrects with compassion, and celebrates every genuine achievement. Even discipline, within this framework, becomes an expression of care rather than punishment. Correction is administered not to humiliate but to redirect, restore, and build character. Love also demands fairness and impartiality. The teacher who truly loves students does not discriminate on the basis of intelligence, family background, ethnicity, religion, economic status, or behaviour. Rather, such a teacher recognizes that those who are most difficult to teach are often those who need love most profoundly. The classroom thus becomes a place where every learner feels valued, respected, and inspired to become a better version of himself or herself.

Moreover, love generates trust, and trust creates the atmosphere necessary for meaningful learning. Students naturally learn more effectively from teachers whom they know genuinely care about their success and well-being. When learners experience authentic care, they become more receptive to correction, more motivated to excel, and more willing to embrace the values transmitted by their teachers. Ultimately, teaching is an act of love because education is concerned with human transformation. Knowledge informs the mind, but love shapes the person. The teacher who truly loves does not simply produce educated individuals; such a teacher forms responsible citizens, compassionate leaders, and morally upright human beings. Thus, the greatest qualification of a teacher is not merely academic competence but a generous heart committed to the flourishing of every child entrusted to his or her care.

Pedagogical and Epistemological Appreciation of the Conceptual Idea of *Nkuzi*

The Igbo concept of *Nkuzi* transcends the ordinary English notion of "teaching." It embodies a holistic educational process that integrates instruction, moral formation, discipline, demonstration, and the transmission of knowledge and values. Within the African worldview, education is not merely the acquisition of cognitive skills but the cultivation of character, communal responsibility, and wisdom necessary for authentic human flourishing. Consequently, the meaningful appreciation of *Nkuzi* is both pedagogical and epistemological: pedagogical because it concerns the methods and processes of forming persons, and epistemological because it concerns the nature, acquisition, validation, and transmission of knowledge.

From the etymological composition of the Igbo word, *Nkuzi* may be appreciated through its symbolic constituents: *Nku* and *Zi*. Although linguistically the word is not necessarily derived from these independent lexical units, their symbolic interpretation provides a profound philosophical insight. Pedagogically, *Nku* symbolizes correction, discipline, guidance, and the formative process through which learners are redirected toward truth and virtue. Epistemologically, *Zi* signifies showing, revealing, illuminating, and demonstrating knowledge, thereby emphasizing that authentic teaching requires making truth intelligible through example and explanation. Thus, *Nkuzi* represents the

inseparable union of formation and illumination. The educator not only communicates knowledge but also moulds the learner's character through correction where necessary. This dual function reflects the traditional African educational philosophy in which discipline and instruction complement each other in producing morally responsible and intellectually competent persons (Ocitti, 1993; Wiredu, 1996). Consequently, *Nkuzi* emerges as a comprehensive philosophy of education rooted in African communal values and indigenous epistemology.

Pedagogical Appreciation of Nkuzi: *Nku* as Corrective Formation

Pedagogically, *Nkuzi* can be appreciated through the symbolic significance of *Nku*, understood as "knocking aright," correcting, directing properly, and shaping the learner toward moral and intellectual maturity. Here, *Nku* does not connote violence, cruelty or punishment for its own sake; rather, it symbolizes corrective intervention aimed at restoring the learner to the right path. Traditional Igbo education recognizes that authentic learning is inseparable from discipline, responsibility, response-ability and character formation. Consequently, the teacher functions not merely as an instructor but also as a moral guide, mentor, disciplinarian and custodian of communal values. African educational philosophy has consistently emphasized that education is fundamentally the formation of the whole person. Knowledge without virtue is considered incomplete because the educated individual must embody the values of justice, respect, honesty, hard work, and communal responsibility (Ocitti, 1993). Within this framework, *Nku* represents the pedagogical responsibility of the educator to identify errors, correct deviations, reinforce positive behaviour, and cultivate excellence. *Nku* is psychologically appreciated within the ambience of *carrot and stick ideology*. Correction therefore becomes an indispensable dimension of authentic teaching.

The symbolism of *Nku* further illustrates that every educational encounter possesses a formative character. A teacher "knocks" the learner intellectually by challenging false assumptions, morally by correcting misconduct, socially by cultivating acceptable behaviour, and spiritually by directing the learner toward higher ideals. Such pedagogical correction is fundamentally restorative rather than destructive. It seeks not to humiliate but to transform the learner into a responsible member of society. This understanding resonates with modern educational theories that emphasize formative assessment, constructive feedback, mentoring, and guided learning. Contemporary pedagogy recognizes that learners develop through continuous evaluation, correction and encouragement rather than through the passive reception of information alone (John Dewey, 1938). Similarly, African indigenous education integrates observation, correction, apprenticeship, storytelling, imitation, and communal participation as complementary methods of teaching.

Furthermore, *Nku* symbolizes authority exercised in love and responsibility. The educator's corrective role is justified not by power but by concern for the learner's holistic development. The objective is the emergence of a person capable of sound judgment, ethical conduct, critical thinking, and communal living. Thus, pedagogy within the philosophy of *Nkuzi* is inherently transformational rather than merely informational. In the contemporary African educational landscape, this symbolic understanding remains highly relevant. Increasing concerns regarding moral decadence, indiscipline, corruption, and social irresponsibility demonstrate that education cannot be reduced to examination performance or technical competence alone. Authentic pedagogy must recover its formative responsibility by integrating intellectual instruction with ethical guidance and character education. *Nku*, therefore, becomes a powerful metaphor for educational correction that seeks to redirect learners toward truth, excellence, and responsible citizenship.

Ultimately, pedagogically understood, *Nkuzi* affirms that genuine teaching involves "knocking aright": guiding, correcting, disciplining, mentoring and forming learners into intellectually competent, morally upright, and socially responsible persons. The educator becomes both an instructor of knowledge and a craftsman of character, reflecting the holistic educational vision embedded within African indigenous pedagogy.

Epistemological Appreciation of Nkuzi: *Zi* as Showing and Illuminating Knowledge

Epistemologically, *Nkuzi* finds profound meaning in the symbolic interpretation of *Zi*, which denotes showing, revealing, pointing out, demonstrating, or making knowledge visible to another. In this sense, education is fundamentally an act of illumination whereby the teacher guides the learner from ignorance toward understanding. Knowledge is not merely transmitted through verbal explanation but is revealed through demonstration, participation, experience, and practical engagement. African epistemology generally conceives knowledge as relational, experiential, and communal rather than exclusively abstract or individualistic (Wiredu, 1996; Hountondji, 2002). Learning occurs through observation, apprenticeship, dialogue, storytelling, practical demonstration, and participation in community life. Consequently, the educator's primary epistemological responsibility is not simply to tell but to show. This symbolic significance of *Zi* captures the essence of indigenous African teaching methodologies, where learners acquire understanding by seeing, doing, reflecting, and participating.

The epistemological symbolism of *Zi* further suggests that authentic knowledge becomes meaningful only when it is made intelligible. The teacher serves as a mediator between reality and the learner by rendering complex ideas accessible through examples, illustrations, analogies, demonstrations, and lived experience. Thus, teaching is fundamentally an act of unveiling truth rather than merely transferring information. This perspective aligns with constructivist educational theories, which maintain that learners actively construct knowledge through guided interaction with their environment and with more knowledgeable others (Lev Vygotsky, 1978). Within African indigenous education, such guidance frequently occurs through practical participation in farming, craftsmanship, family life, rituals, storytelling, and communal responsibilities. The teacher continuously "shows" how knowledge is embodied in everyday living.

Moreover, *Zi* underscores that knowledge possesses ethical and practical dimensions. To know is not merely to possess information but to understand how to apply wisdom for the benefit of oneself and the community. This practical orientation distinguishes African epistemology from purely theoretical conceptions of knowledge. Knowledge becomes authentic only when it contributes to human flourishing, social harmony, and communal development. The epistemological appreciation of *Nkuzi* therefore emphasizes visibility, clarity, intelligibility, and demonstration. An effective teacher does not conceal knowledge but progressively illuminates it according to the learner's capacity. This process requires patience, competence, creativity, and contextual sensitivity. Through showing, explaining, demonstrating, and exemplifying, the teacher enables learners to internalize knowledge and eventually become teachers themselves.

Consequently, *Zi* complements *Nku* within the philosophy of *Nkuzi*. Equally, *Nku* complements *Zi* in the pedagogy of *Nkuzi*. While *Nku* forms the learner through correction and discipline, *Zi* enlightens the learner through demonstration and understanding. Together they constitute a holistic philosophy of education in which character formation and knowledge acquisition remain inseparable. Authentic education therefore consists of correcting what is wrong while simultaneously illuminating what is true. Such a conception of *Nkuzi* provides an enduring African pedagogical and epistemological model capable of enriching contemporary educational philosophy.

Training Our Children, the Way We Were Trained

The training of children has remained one of the greatest responsibilities entrusted to parents, guardians, teachers, and society. Another great decision some parents make as their children grow in life is where and how to train with common sense and fear of God as well as discipline. Every culture develops methods of transmitting its values, beliefs, traditions, discipline and worldview from one generation to another. In many African societies, child training was traditionally communal, intentional and value-oriented. Children learned through observation, correction, participation, storytelling, imitation and disciplined guidance. The expression "training our children the way we were trained" does not imply reproducing every traditional practice without reflection. Rather, it means preserving those enduring virtues that formed responsible, hardworking, respectful, morally upright and community-oriented individuals while rejecting harmful or abusive practices in the light of contemporary knowledge and children's rights. The African child was raised to understand that character outweighs wealth, respect precedes privilege and responsibility accompanies freedom. Parents, grandparents, elders, and the

community collectively participated in moral formation. Respect for elders, honesty, diligence, hospitality, humility, courage, and communal solidarity were deliberately taught from childhood (Mbiti, 1990). Such training cultivated a sense of belonging and responsibility toward both family and society.

Modern parenting has introduced valuable insights from developmental psychology, emphasizing emotional intelligence, empathy, secure attachment, positive reinforcement, and healthy communication (Baumrind, 1967; Berk, 2018). These contributions have enriched child development by recognizing children's emotional needs and developmental stages. However, excessive permissiveness, overindulgence, and fear of correcting children have also emerged in some contemporary homes. When discipline is misunderstood as oppression, many children grow up without clear boundaries, self-control, or respect for authority. The challenge today is therefore not whether children should be trained traditionally or modernly, but how both approaches can be integrated wisely. The virtues of traditional African upbringing: discipline, respect, resilience, communal responsibility, and moral accountability, should be combined with modern insights into child psychology, emotional well-being, and positive parenting. This balanced approach reflects what developmental psychologists describe as authoritative parenting, where parents combine warmth with firm expectations and consistent discipline (Baumrind, 1967; Santrock, 2022).

Parents remain the primary educators of their children. Their responsibility extends beyond providing food, clothing, and education to shaping character, conscience, and moral judgment. Proverbs 22:6 encourages parents to "train up a child in the way he should go," emphasizing intentional formation rather than passive upbringing. Such formation requires consistency, patience, correction, instruction, and exemplary living. Furthermore, children learn more from what parents do than from what they merely say. Parents who model honesty, responsibility, self-discipline, forgiveness, hard work, and integrity naturally transmit these virtues to their children through social learning (Bandura, 1977). Thus, effective child training is rooted not only in instruction but also in lived example. Nevertheless, training must never become synonymous with abuse. Corporal punishment, where legally permitted, should never be excessive, humiliating, or physically harmful. Contemporary research consistently shows that positive discipline, clear boundaries, consistent consequences, and emotional support produce healthier developmental outcomes than harsh or abusive discipline (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2018). Ultimately, training children the way we were properly trained means recovering those enduring values that produced responsible adults while adapting them to contemporary knowledge, human dignity, and children's developmental needs. It calls parents to combine love with discipline, freedom with responsibility, authority with compassion, and tradition with wisdom. Such balanced parenting prepares children not merely to succeed academically but to become morally responsible, emotionally healthy, socially competent, and productive members of society.

In Training a Child There Is No Democracy

The statement that "in training a child there is no democracy" should not be understood to mean dictatorship, oppression, or denial of children's dignity. Rather, it emphasizes that parents possess the primary responsibility and authority to guide children's development because children have not yet attained the cognitive, emotional, and moral maturity required for independent decision-making. While children's opinions deserve respectful hearing, final responsibility for their welfare rests with parents or guardians. Developmental psychology demonstrates that children's reasoning, impulse control, and judgment mature gradually throughout childhood and adolescence (Piaget, 1972; Berk, 2018). Consequently, parents must establish boundaries, rules, routines, and expectations that promote healthy development. Excessive negotiation over every parental decision may confuse children about authority and weaken discipline. The authoritative parenting model offers the healthiest balance between parental authority and responsiveness. Parents explain rules, listen to children's concerns, and show affection while maintaining firm expectations and consistent discipline (Baumrind, 1967). This differs both from authoritarian parenting, which is harsh and rigid, and permissive parenting, which lacks adequate boundaries. African communal philosophy similarly recognizes parental authority as a moral responsibility rather than an instrument of domination. Elders guide younger members because wisdom is acquired through experience and communal responsibility (Mbiti, 1990). Obedience during childhood prepares individuals for responsible citizenship and social harmony.

Nevertheless, the absence of democracy in child training does not justify abuse, intimidation, humiliation, or violence. Modern child development emphasizes that children flourish where discipline is accompanied by love, consistency, emotional security, and respectful communication (American Academy of Paediatrics, 2018). Parents should explain reasons behind rules whenever appropriate and encourage age-appropriate participation without surrendering their responsibility for final decisions. Therefore, child training is better understood as responsible leadership rather than democratic equality. Parents carry legal, moral, educational, and spiritual obligations for the child's well-being. Their authority exists to protect, nurture, educate, and gradually prepare children for responsible adulthood. As children mature, they should be given increasing opportunities to make decisions under parental guidance until they become capable of independent and responsible judgment.

In Homes, Children Should Not Make Decisions meant for Parents

Parents are entrusted with the responsibility of making decisions that safeguard their children's health, development, finances, and moral formation. Consequently, important family decisions, such as providing nutritious meals, selecting appropriate clothing, determining school attendance, healthcare, and household rules, should primarily remain parental responsibilities. Allowing children unrestricted control over such matters may expose them to unhealthy habits, poor judgment, and unrealistic expectations because children naturally prefer immediate gratification over long-term well-being (Santrock, 2022). Nutritional studies show that children often choose foods based on taste rather than health, frequently preferring sugary, salty, or highly processed foods. Parents therefore serve as nutritional gatekeepers by providing balanced diets that promote healthy growth and development (Berk, 2018). Similarly, clothing choices should reflect weather conditions, modesty, safety, school regulations, family resources, and cultural values, considerations that children may not fully appreciate. However, parental responsibility should not eliminate children's participation altogether. Developmentally appropriate choices can encourage autonomy and confidence. For example, parents may allow a young child to choose between two healthy meals or select one of two appropriate outfits already approved by the parents. Such limited choices foster independence while preserving parental guidance (Baumrind, 1967). African child-rearing traditions similarly emphasize guided freedom rather than unrestricted independence. Children gradually receive greater responsibilities according to their age, maturity, and demonstrated reliability (Mbiti, 1990). This gradual transfer of responsibility enables children to develop sound judgment under adult supervision.

Moreover, involving children in discussions about family matters appropriate to their age teaches responsibility, communication, and problem-solving. Yet the final decision on matters affecting health, finances, education, safety, and moral welfare should ordinarily belong to parents because they possess broader experience, legal responsibility, and accountability for the child's overall development. Therefore, effective parenting combines guidance with gradual empowerment. Parents should neither dominate unnecessarily nor abdicate their responsibilities. Instead, they should make decisions that children are not yet prepared to make while progressively teaching children how to make wise choices independently. In this way, children grow into responsible adults who value both freedom and accountability.

Parenting Has Gone Wrong

The Challenge of raising children when the parents were never properly formed remains a great challenge as well as a cardinal issue in the formation of children. Unfortunately, today, unlike before, parenting has gone wrong. The growing concern that "parenting has gone wrong" reflects widespread anxieties about declining parental authority, weakened family structures, moral confusion, and the transmission of values from one generation to another. While this statement should not be applied universally, there is substantial evidence that many societies are witnessing increasing behavioural problems among children and adolescents, including disrespect for authority, indiscipline, aggression, entitlement, poor emotional regulation, and diminished responsibility (Santrock, 2022; Berk, 2018). One important explanation is that many adults entering parenthood were themselves inadequately formed during childhood. Consequently, they struggle to provide the moral, emotional, and disciplinary formation that effective parenting requires.

The African proverb, "One cannot give what one does not have" (*nemo dat quod non habet*), aptly captures this challenge. Parenting is not merely a biological function but a lifelong educational and moral vocation. Parents are expected to transmit values, virtues, discipline, wisdom, and emotional stability. However, when individuals who grew up without proper discipline, moral guidance, or healthy parental models become parents themselves, they often reproduce the same deficiencies in the next generation. As Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory explains, people largely learn parenting behaviours through observing and imitating those who raised them. Dysfunctional parenting patterns therefore tend to perpetuate themselves across generations unless consciously interrupted. Many of today's parents belong to a generation that experienced inconsistent discipline, excessive permissiveness, emotional neglect, or inadequate moral formation. Some were never taught respect for authority, delayed gratification, personal responsibility, or self-control. Others were raised in environments where technology, peer influence, and popular culture increasingly replaced parental guidance. Consequently, when these individuals become fathers, mothers, or teachers, they frequently lack the internal resources required to provide consistent leadership for children.

This challenge is also visible in schools. Students who consistently rejected correction, discipline, responsibility, and respect for teachers eventually become adults and parents. If they never accepted formation themselves, it becomes difficult for them to appreciate the necessity of forming their own children. The result is often permissive parenting, weak boundaries, inconsistent discipline, or attempts to be children's "best friends" rather than responsible guides. Baumrind (1967) consistently found that children thrive where parents combine warmth with firm expectations, whereas permissive parenting often contributes to poor self-regulation and behavioural problems. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to conclude that every formerly undisciplined child inevitably becomes a poor parent. Human beings possess the capacity for reflection, learning, repentance, and personal transformation. Adults can acquire parenting skills through education, counselling, mentorship, religious formation, and deliberate self-improvement. Parenting is therefore not determined solely by one's childhood experiences but can be strengthened through intentional growth (Berk, 2018).

From an African perspective, parenting has always been a communal responsibility. Families, elders, teachers, religious leaders, and the wider community participated in the moral formation of children (Mbiti, 1990). The gradual erosion of these communal structures has left many parents isolated, inexperienced, and unsupported. Recovering responsible parenting therefore requires rebuilding families, strengthening moral education, supporting parents, and restoring respect for teachers, elders, and legitimate authority. Ultimately, the future of every society depends on the quality of its parents. Indeed, one cannot ordinarily transmit virtues that one has never cultivated. Parents who desire disciplined, respectful, compassionate, and responsible children must first embody these qualities themselves. Children imitate far more than they obey. Thus, the renewal of parenting begins not with changing children alone but with the continuous formation of parents themselves. As the saying goes, "The hand that rocks the cradle shapes the future." If parents are well formed, they are better equipped to form the next generation.

Conclusion

The pedagogy of *Nkuzi* presents a culturally grounded and philosophically robust framework for rethinking contemporary schooling in Africa. By integrating intellectual development, moral formation, practical competence, and communal responsibility, *Nkuzi* transcends the narrow emphasis on examination success and credentialism that characterizes much of modern education. It promotes functional learning that equips learners not only with knowledge and skills but also with the values and dispositions necessary for personal well-being and societal transformation. Rooted in African indigenous educational traditions, this pedagogical approach demonstrates that meaningful education is one that nurtures the whole person and prepares individuals to live purposeful, productive, and socially responsible lives. As African societies continue to confront educational, social, and psychological challenges, the pedagogy of *Nkuzi* offers a viable paradigm for educational renewal. Its adoption in policy, curriculum, teacher education, and classroom practice would contribute significantly to building

schools that foster human flourishing, sustainable development, and the holistic well-being of learners and communities.

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