

ANALYSIS OF DANIEL WEBSTARS' AFFECTIVE DOMAIN AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR RE-FOCUSING UPPER BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Joseph Alphonsus Shinga
shingajoseph3@gmail.com
08038727283

Prof. Daku N. Jimba
jimba@unijos.ed.ng
08064664325

&

Prof. Joseph M. Musa
mainac2014@gmail.com
08069691046

Department Of Educational Foundations
Faculty Of Education

Abstract

This study examined Daniel Westar's' affective domain and its implication for re-focusing Upper Basic Education in Nigeria. It argued that educational system should not only develop cognitive, psychomotor and metacognitive domains, but also the affective domain. The affective domain is concerned with learner's emotions, attitudes and values which lead to positive dispositions for responsible citizenship. The problem identified was that the affective domain is poorly understood, weakly taught and inadequately assessed leading to 'bookish' type of learning, moral decline, religious and ethnic distrust, and social instability. The study therefore aimed to analyze Webster's concept of affective domain and explaining the four pillars, justify its place in Nigerian basic education, and propose the basis for re-focusing the upper basic schools. Methodologically, the work used analytical and prescriptive methods. Social-emotional learning was identified as one of strategies for affective development of affective elements through a synodalitic process involving parents, teachers and learners. The study concluded that affective domain is not an optional addition to education but a necessary foundation for producing emotionally balanced and socially responsible citizens. The work recommended re-focusing the school system through stronger curriculum emphasis, teacher training, family involvement and policy support to make Nigerian Basic Education an instrument for peace, unity, social integration and sustainable national development.

Introduction

Education serves quite a number of aims derived from the society it supports. One of the aims is development of four educational domains namely: cognitive, affective, psychomotor and metacognitive. Each of these require and possess specific instructions that ought to lead to mental, emotional and physical development. This development ought to foster growth of an individual in a multi-dimensional way. The development of affective domain is concerned with positive attitudinal responses of individual, which impact the society in terms of harmony and stability. It will normally put learners in a sprint towards the pursuit of eternal values such as "obedience, loyalty, dedication, honesty, justice and contentment."¹ Development of affective domain for Daniel Webster, who is an American

revolutionist of the 19th century, is the process found in the four educational pillars. The four educational pillars represent the affective domain and they are: “disciplining of feelings, restraining of passion, inspiring worthy motive and inculcating pure morality.”² It can be implied that disciplining of feelings and restraining of passion are the development of an individual to think and link what is in the mind, in terms of positive responses of experiences with other individuals in an existing reality.

The development of affective domain is a process that goes on within an individual in terms of affection, obedience and loyalty and which extends to the society in one’s dedication to civic duties. The development of affective domain for Webster is the attitudinal aspect of the process and function of learning, and it could be developed from traditional and western educational systems. The growth of affective domain for Webster is also concerned with enthronement of eternal values, like honesty and respect for others. Nigeria, as a nation, promotes development of affective domain, through religious education, family structures as well as school institutions. Ezinwa³ describes these institutions as places that take care of the “process of caring for one’s child for mutual understanding in the home.” While the school system is: “For the purpose of education...the process of teaching, training and learning... with principles, rules, structures, regulations and orderliness charged with the task and responsibility of improving, preserving, extending, imparting and transmitting knowledge and culture and adhering to positive norms and values.”⁴ From the foregoing, the educational process through its system possesses the mechanism to pre-dispose learners in right direction. Peters⁵ perceives that development of affective domain occurs as “an observable occurrence.”

However, the society is currently challenged by a number of attitudinal and character issues, and there is a daily public outcry that judicial character and responsibility have been eroded. This research is attracted to analysing the relational essence of Webster’s understanding of affective domain, as contained in the educational pillars, to human emotions and other facets which educational aim facilitates. It is in the light of this, that development of Webster’s affective domain in basic education presents an assertion that personal autonomy and stability of an individual should lead to peaceful co-existence towards stable nature of society.

Conceptual Analysis

Domains of Learning

The domains of learning are the cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and metacognitive domains, and they belong to the category of educational fields. Each domain has a specific targeted outcome that should be exhibited and observed in the learning process. These domains were developed by David Krathwohl and Benjamin Bloom in 1956 and later revised in 2001 to include the fourth domain. Their purpose was to achieve observable behavioural outcomes in learners and provide a stable framework for teaching and learning. Bloom’s taxonomy became widely known in education because Bloom chaired the committee, even though the cognitive and affective domains were developed collaboratively. Bloom’s involvement in both domains helped the taxonomy become popularly referred to as Bloom’s taxonomy.⁶

The cognitive domain is the first classification and deals with knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. It focuses on the intellect and

subject mastery, and it enables learners to apply what they have understood. It is to be noted that analysis involves studying the value of acquired knowledge in relation to society, synthesis concerns continuity, and evaluation gives value to what has been learned. The psychomotor domain concerns manipulative and creative skills. It is the aspect of learning that deals with the ability to use the hands and body to perform tasks. It involves perception, guided responses, response mechanisms, complex overt response, adaptation, and organization. The metacognitive domain, which was later included as the fourth domain, deals with awareness of one's own cognition and self-regulation. It is about understanding how learning works in relation to oneself.

Affective Domain

The affective domain refers to the stable and consistent emotional reactions that learners display in different life situations. It is concerned with human feelings, emotions, attitudes, values, appreciation, motivation, enthusiasm, and the way individuals respond to persons and issues. Affective traits are "stable patterns of emotional response that shape how an individual perceives, processes, and expresses emotions over time."⁷ This means that emotional stability in a person is closely connected to the ability to respond positively and consistently to life experiences. The affective domain is something that may be influenced by biological and genetic tendencies. It suggests that a learner's emotional disposition is not random, but part of the person's natural make-up. Pitcher⁷ supports this view by describing emotion as a unique inner experience made up of sensations that are directly felt and have a definite duration. From this perspective, emotional responses and personal disposition are part of an individual's original nature, although they may differ depending on temporal emotional states and immediate situations.

In education, the affective domain is important because it gives value and meaning to the other domains within the educational taxonomy. It shapes how learners perceive reality, process it, and translate it into emotional expression. In this sense, the affective domain influences whether a learner displays positive or negative enthusiasm, passion, and disposition. It therefore plays a central role in the development of the whole person because it is connected to the biological, emotional, and attitudinal dimensions of human life. It is to be noted that the affective domain is made up of both temporal emotional states and attitudinal inclinations toward worthy motives. These inclinations may be demonstrated in positive or negative elements. Positive affective traits are characterized by joy, enthusiasm, moral development, and constructive dispositions, while negative traits are marked by fear and distress. In the context of this study, the concern is with the development of positive affective traits, which should be encouraged through education. These traits include values, attitudes, motivation, interest, opinions, positive dispositions, and moral growth.

Positive affective traits are also linked to the emotional state of the learner and are influenced by both internal and external circumstances. It emphasizes that such traits dispose the individual to develop in different ways in line with prevailing situations, including social and intellectual challenges. They also help in managing emotions and building acceptable character and personal integrity. According to Ezinwa⁸ personal integrity is the process of building rightness of character, honesty, and soundness of mind from childhood to adulthood,

and the behaviour of parents and teachers has a strong influence on a child's personality, social functioning, and integrity. It is also to be noted that positive affective domain, when demonstrated through affective traits, produces positive emotional behaviour in learners. These traits are teachable and are expected to be developed within the school system. Nnachi⁹ refers to this as "positive affective skill," which enables emotional control and effective management of relational activities." In this way, learners are guided to become more disciplined, balanced, and emotionally stable over time. A regularly displayed positive character becomes evidence of a developed affective domain.

However, it is important to contrast this view with the philosophy associated with Thomas Hobbes, who argued that human beings naturally seek personal benefit in whatever they do. According to this view, a person acts because of "self-interest rather than genuine concern for others, which seems to make positive affective development difficult."¹⁰ The text, however, challenges this position by stressing the human capacity for altruism, selflessness, and moral growth. It argues that human beings are not only self-centred by nature, but possess the potential for both selfishness and selflessness. For this reason, education should focus on developing the positive possibilities in human beings so that they can achieve a healthy affective domain.

In the process of developing and measuring the affective domain, the primary tools used are the teachers' observation, the student self-report and the peer-evaluation report. These tools are used as complimentary and to mutually establish the reality of any trait that is developed within the context. For their function is "that the teachers' observation captures outward behaviour indicative of internal values, self-reports offer insight into students' internal state and perspectives, while peer feedback provides a social mirror of how students are perceived by classmates."¹¹ By this description, the teacher is placed 'on the toes' to be vigilant on the learner to see and discover an outward and visible sign of an inward disposition and inclinations. The teacher is expected here to repeatedly observe within a couple of contexts, in the same learning situation which is essential for valid assessment. While the teacher contemplates and observes, the learners themselves serve as sources of discovery of the internal image of each learner. This is through their assessment as they relate with each other. The relational activities indicate the inner traits imbedded in each person within the context of teaching and learning.

However, whatever is measured, is only measured within the context of its activities using various means and tools. The affective domain has other tools to be used. These tools are both quantitative and qualitative. They are utilized to assess in a focused manner the specific traits within learning objectives, the tools are in a format and could be complex in its operational procedures. The contribute to understand traits like empathy, honesty, responsibility and cooperation within the learners in their learning situation. These tools have been captured by McMillan in Oladele and Adebayo¹² to include- "behavioural checklists and rating scales, observation rubrics, self-report instruments, reflective journal and personal takeaway tools and portfolio and artefacts collection." These instruments are used both teachers as well as learners within the principles of validity, reliability, triangulation, cultural sensitivity, clarity and transparency within ethical considerations.

The development of affective domain is synodalitic in nature. 'Synodalitic' as a concept is an advert of synodality. Etymologically "is a combination of two Greek words

‘syn’ which means ‘with’ and ‘hodos’ meaning ‘way’ or ‘path’ Thus implies walking – together, taking a common path towards achieving a goal.”¹³ This will infer that developing affective domain in the context of education suggests a join-effort by both parents and teachers on one hand and the learners on the other. A joint effort will also infer a collaborative journey towards mutual development of learners. It involves openness and participation on the part of the learners and requires listening ability on the part of parents and teachers. It suggests a connected effort and ability to be with learners to assist in the improvement of competence and value orientation, to possess a disposition and behaviours that positively affect attitude and affective skills.

Developing affective domain within school system is not a one-way traffic. The process involves the parents, the teachers and as well as the learners. The parents’ role, and by extension, the role of teachers along-side the learners’ in developing affective domain, which is in terms of emotional maturity and social development, has been considered the main stream of psychological theories in the perspective of ideological phase. Parents are involved because the family is regarded as the nursery bed of socialization and parenting has been identified as a major vehicle in socializing the child. That is why it is imperative on the parents to adopt and use the authoritative parenting style because “it is viewed to be well-balanced style, characterized by warmth, support, acceptance and indirect positive control of the acceptance of children.”¹⁴ This will put the learner on a foundation appropriate of a family, as the first teacher of the learners. This is to be distinguished from a harsh and perfectionist parenting and that of negligent type of parenting where everything goes.

The teachers’ part on the synodalitic approach in developing affective domain within the context of education takes its name from the “the good teacher” mentality or the “educator mentality” Both mentalities see “ teachers with the ability to help others to learn, they see them as educators, to be people who help other learners to acquire knowledge, competences and values to have a positive change in behaviour which affect attitude and skills.”¹⁵ What this will signify is that teachers’ role in the synodalitic approach will entail possessing and manipulating the key that locks and unlocks the door towards disposing learners to positive learning outcome.

[Daniel Webster’s Affective Domain: Through its Four Educational Pillars](#)

The essence of Webster’s educational pillars lies in the idea that education should develop the whole person by promoting intellectual growth, moral integrity and emotional balance. The four pillars—**disciplining of feelings, restraining passion, inspiring worthy motives, and inculcating pure morality**—reflect the belief that education must be holistic in both principle and practice. The emphasize is on the idea that this approach is meant to produce positive character formation in individuals, which in turn benefits the wider society. It also to be noted that good quality education is “essential for sustainable development because it promotes positive changes in behaviour at the levels of ethics, values, morals, and lifestyle.”¹⁶ The pillars are presented as a blueprint for shaping learners into responsible individuals who are accountable to themselves and to society. This explains that the development of the individual should extend to the wider community, since the individual is the focal point of education and also a builder of society. In this sense, Webster’s pillars

combine intellectual, emotional, and ethical formation in order to produce personal excellence, social responsibility, and spiritual balance.

i. Disciplining of Feelings

Disciplining of feelings refers to the training of emotions so that they support reason and ethical behaviour rather than uncontrolled reactions. Discipline comes from the Latin word '*disciplina*' meaning instruction, and it involves training learners to live by rules, order, obedience, and control. Webstar's use of the concept suggests that discipline is not merely punishment, but the formation of habits that support orderliness, harmony, and responsible conduct in the school system. It further presents the human person as a rational being with passions and desires that must be guided by reason. Drawing on Aristotle, it explains that man is a "rational animal," meaning that human nature includes both reason and desire. Discipline therefore helps the learner to develop self-control, regulate passion, and behave in a cultured and civilized manner. It is through this discipline that the learner becomes capable of making thoughtful decisions, maintaining emotional balance, and contributing to a stable society.

Webstar's¹⁷ view of disciplining feelings is not about suppressing emotions but about "training them to align with rational thought and moral judgement." It expounds that learners should be helped to recognize their emotional states, reflect on them, and regulate their responses. This process develops emotional awareness, self-reflection, and rational decision-making. It also helps learners avoid impulsive reactions and build resilience in the face of adversity. Webstar's position is that a disciplined person is one who can conquer the 'self' and live with clarity, responsibility, and stability.

ii. Restraining of Passions

Restraining of passions is closely related to disciplining feelings, but it focuses more directly on controlling strong emotional impulses such as anger, envy, bitterness, and unchecked ambition. This pillar arose from the need to help learners respond to social challenges with prudence, restraint, and ethical balance. Its aim is to prevent destructive outcomes and promote personal integrity, peaceful relationships, and responsible civic behaviour. It emphasizes that "unrestrained passions can lead to irrational judgement, conflict, and social disorder. Anger, in particular, is described as a powerful disruptive emotion capable of damaging relationships and weakening communal trust. Envy is also presented as harmful because it undermines cooperation and encourages selfish competition."¹⁸ Through restraining passions, learners are taught to transform reactive emotions into constructive energy and to act in ways that support the common good. Webstar's framework sees this pillar as a way of "securing integrity, preventing conflict, and promoting ethical decision-making."¹⁹ It prepares learners to perform civic duties, avoid harmful behaviour, and contribute positively to society. It also links this idea to Aristotle's moral philosophy, which values moderation and temperance as foundations of wisdom and virtue. In this way, restraining passion becomes central to emotional regulation, moral maturity, and socially responsible living.

iii. Inspiring Worthy Motives

Inspiring worthy motives is presented as the outcome of disciplined feelings and restrained passions. It explains that once the self is brought under control, the learner

becomes capable of acting with purpose, enthusiasm, and moral direction. Inspiration in this sense means being moved toward creative and beneficial action by a positive inner drive. Worthy motives therefore refer to “goals and purposes that are not self-centred but are aligned with values, beliefs, and the welfare of society.”²⁰ Webstar’s idea of inspiring worthy motives goes beyond the transmission of knowledge, but education as a force that awakens noble aspirations, inner resolve, and a desire for meaningful contribution. It is put forward that education should engage the heart and soul of learners by helping them develop commitment, integrity, and concern for the common good. Rather than encouraging rote learning alone, this pillar seeks to cultivate deep values that guide life purpose and social responsibility. Worthy motives are strengthened by internal compass, virtue, service, and the example of role models. Learners are expected to see education as a process of refinement and transformation, where they are encouraged to contribute positively to themselves and to society. Webstar’s model also stresses the importance of purpose, self-awareness, extracurricular activities, and moral education in helping learners develop a lasting sense of direction and responsibility.

iv. Inculcating Pure Morality

Inculcating pure morality refers to “the formation of ethical judgement and the development of moral character.”²¹ Morality involves the distinction between right and wrong, good and evil, and it must be understood in both subjective and objective terms. It also notes that morality is rooted in human nature and linked to reason, which makes human beings capable of ethical reflection and moral conduct. Webstar’s concern is not only with teaching moral rules, but with developing the habits and character needed to live by them consistently. That pure morality fosters trust, fairness, honesty, obedience, and harmony in society. It also helps learners place the common good above personal benefit and act in ways that strengthen social stability. In this sense, moral education is a foundation for both individual growth and collective development. The essence of inculcating pure morality is that it creates a broader social purpose, strengthens personal identity, cultivates civic virtues, and reduces social conflict. It helps build a society where trust, cooperation, justice, and harmony prevail. Moral education is not limited to the school environment alone; rather, it should be reinforced by schools, families, and communities so that values such as honesty, fairness, and compassion become part of everyday life.

Implication for Re-focusing Basic Education in Nigeria

The school system is to develop the four educational taxonomy. This educational taxonomy which the affective domain is one, are the learning outcomes to be taught, monitored, assessed and eventually expected from an individual. It is in the process of developing of this taxonomy, that these issues, constraints and challenges set in. Addressing these challenges identified at the problem of the study is the main concern of the work. This is to see how a robust and renewed process could effectively be developed to refocus the Upper Basic Education. To develop not only the cognitive and the psychomotor, which are mostly over-emphasized, but a holistic consideration and development of learners. For the development of learners is by extension the development of the society. By this, it would refer to disciplining of feelings and restraining of passion which is described by Webstar as the formation of habits that support orderliness, harmony, and responsible conduct in the

school as well as respond to social challenges with prudence, restraint, and ethical balance. These are the conditions that could develop the affective domain in an educational system, especially the Upper Basic Education.

The implication of this position entails that the school system, especially Upper Basic Education, is mandated to develop more than cognitive skill. It is as well explicitly charged with the duty of fostering values, attitude and dispositions that could support learners to become responsible citizens. The National document on Educational Policy makes it clear that Basic Education should advance a national face within the national aims, that should include moral and civic formation alongside intellectual development. In a more definite and practical reality, this means inspiring worthy motives which implies goals and purposes that are not self-centred but are aligned with values, beliefs, and the welfare of society. That the set-up of the planned curriculum, assessment system and the general schools' routines are supposed to be deliberately made to produce learners who are not merely literate and numerate, but also individuals who could demonstrate civic-minded behaviour, respect for other persons, honesty and other acceptable values. This is as against the reality that is obtainable in Upper Basic Education.

To arrive at a more robust and renewed strategy, the idea of social-emotional learning could be introduced, suggested and implemented, within the terms of reference of the Webstar's educational pillar of inculcating pure morality which means developing the habits and character needed to live by them consistently. Social-Emotional learning would mean "the framework across subjects that treats social and emotional competencies as integral learning goals that works alongside literacy and numeracy, not as occasional add-on lessons or one-off assemblies."²² What this could imply is that every subject teacher would be equipped with the technical knowledge and skills of recognizing and assigning affective elements within the context of learning process. This will amount to the reality that the process of making learners adjust to the subject matter, would also involve affective elements which are the basis of emotional learning, to be taught, practiced and evaluated with the same seriousness as cognitive and psychomotor skills are.

It suffices to refer to the principles of measuring affective elements alongside the inter-rater process which measures consistency in a rating system. To suggest a renewed and robust strategy in which Webstar's principles can be practically implemented within the Upper Basic Education. This is as an implication that could re-focus the upper basic education. It could be done by replacing 'tick and go' syndrome of the affective column with an analytic and observation style with Webstar's inspiring worthy motive which focuses on developing commitment, integrity, and concern for the common good of the individual and the society. This syndrome possibly will also be referring to a situation where teachers are readily prepared to give off 'short answers' for administrative purposes. This is to be replaced by what might be referred to as a process in which teachers could be consistent in observing traits like cooperation, responsibility, perseverance, honesty and selflessness and which can be recorded. This is to be devoid of so much protocols thus with the intention of providing basis for records keeping and empowering the teachers with the technical know-how on how to be mindful of affective elements and even consider it as a major domain within the process of education.

Appropriate usage of measuring tools within the outlined principles will also serve as a more standard and concrete methods. It will serve as more practical and robust with renewed vigour, low-cost to start and workable, and in which the researcher has adopted and re-molded to suit the Upper Basic Education system in Nigeria: replace Binary checklist with short analytic rubrics and observation protocols, embed learner reflection and peer assessment for triangulation, focus on Concrete Professional Development Skills (CPD), and institutional rules that require evidence and local moderation. These principles are not only consistent with an objective and effective formative assessment recipe, but they form the basis by which an inner disposition of learners are not only probed into, but laid bare through its manifestation.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the development of affective domain is not only possible in Nigerian Basic Education, but necessary if education is to serve the larger purpose of human and societal development. From the analysis of Daniel Webster's educational pillars, the work showed that the school system is expected to develop the whole learner and not only cognitive and psychomotor skills. It argued that the present over-emphasis on academic performance and examination success has weakened values such as honesty, loyalty, selflessness, responsibility, tolerance, and respect for others. While the affective domain remains the stronger basis for moral formation and social harmony, the study arrived at the position that achieving this goal requires a deliberate change in method, measurement, and school culture. It shows that affective development cannot be left to chance or reduced to a "tick and go" routine, rather it must be approached through careful observation, analytic assessment, The study therefore established that Upper Basic Education can and should be used as a major setting for developing positive affective traits, because the development of the learner is, by extension, the development of the society and a direct support for sustainable national development.

Recommendations

Based on the whole study, the first recommendation is that **government and education policy makers should give the affective domain a clearer place in Basic Education curriculum and assessment.** The study repeatedly showed that the problem is not only what is taught, but what is deliberately developed in learners. Basic Education should therefore be planned in a way that gives equal attention to cognitive, psychomotor, and affective outcomes, so that learners are not only intelligent but also honest, cooperative, tolerant, disciplined, and socially responsible. This means the national and state education authorities should strengthen policy guidance, supervision, and curriculum implementation so that affective formation is treated as a real educational aim and not as a side issue.

The second recommendation is that **teachers should abandon the "tick and go" style of affective assessment and replace it with a more serious, observable, and evidence-based method.** The work recommends short analytic rubrics, observation protocols, evidence notes, and regular classroom observation windows so that traits such as cooperation, responsibility, perseverance, honesty, and selflessness can be properly tracked and recorded. Teachers should also be trained to translate affective outcomes into behavioural

descriptors, because the study makes it clear that affective growth is best measured through visible behaviour over time rather than through quick administrative scoring.

Another important recommendation is that **schools should make learner reflection and peer assessment part of everyday learning**. The study proposes weekly reflection logs, guided peer feedback, and artifacts such as projects or community logs so that affective development is not left to the teacher alone. This kind of triangulation helps to show whether values are truly being internalized, and it also encourages learners to think about their own conduct, their contribution to group work, and the effect of their actions on others. School administrators should therefore build time for these activities into the timetable and treat them as part of learning, not as extra burdens.

The study also recommends that **teacher professional development should be practical, short, and classroom-based**. Teachers need focused training on how to observe affective behaviour, write one-line evidence notes, use analytic rubrics, and facilitate reflection and feedback. Such training should not be purely theoretical; it should model exactly what teachers are expected to do in real classrooms. In the same way, school-based moderation sessions should be introduced so that teachers can compare evidence bundles, calibrate ratings, and improve reliability in assessment. This would make assessment more transparent, more accountable, and more useful for supporting learner growth.

Finally, **parents, communities, and other stakeholders should work with schools in developing positive affective traits**. The work presents affective development as synodalitic, meaning that it is a shared responsibility involving teachers, parents, and learners. Parents should reinforce honesty, respect, self-discipline, and responsibility at home, while schools should strengthen community-based activities, restorative practices, and value-based learning that support civic responsibility and peaceful coexistence. The study also suggests low-cost tools, simple templates, and phased pilots so that the recommendations can be realistically implemented in Nigerian schools without placing excessive pressure on teachers or administrators.

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