

THE MOTHER'S ROLE IN LIFELONG EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: *In every language the word for "mother" is the finest. Mothers harbor such qualities as: "Unconditional love, compassion and nurture," and they play a key role in lifelong education teaching the language plus how to walk, eat, fend for oneself, communicate etc. Mothers play a key instructional role in all aspects of life both inside and outside school.*

Therefore, attention must be given to how mothers shape society through their children, and programs formulated accordingly. The curriculum should be enriched with respect to society-building women, men's roles and the continuation of culture. Those traditional cultural doors that are closed to mothers must be identified while both the media and education should take steps to make up for this.

Keywords: *Motherhood, national cultural mold, cultural genetic code, cultural fabric, nation-building.*

ÖZ: Bütün dillerde en güzel kelime "anne"dir. "Karşılıksız sevgi, merhamet, koruma, besleme" gibi pek çok özelliği şahsında barındıran anne, hayat boyu eğitimde de en önemli vazifeyi üstlenmiştir. Dili öğretene odur. Yürümeyi, yemek yemeyi, bireysel ihtiyaçları karşılamayı, kendini savunmayı, iletişim kurmayı vs. öğreten odur. Gerek okul çağlarında gerekse sonrasında, hayatın çeşitli safhaları ile ilgili uygulamalarda annenin eğitimcilik rolünde artış görülür.

Bütün bu sebeplerden dolayı annenin evladı üzerinden toplumu eğitime rolünün önemi dikkate alınarak eğitim programları yapılmalıdır. Toplumu oluşturan kadın, erkek rolleri ve kültür aktarma bilinci açısından müfredat zenginleştirilmelidir. Annenin yetişemediği geleneksel kültür kalıpları tespit edilmeli; eğitimde ve medyada eksikliklerle ilgili telafi çalışmaları yapılmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Annelik, milli kültür kalıbı, kültürel genetik kod, kültürel kumaş, millet inşası

The last years of the 20th century were a time in which importance was given to "lifelong learning" and in which work in this area gained impetus. After 1996 was accepted by UNESCO as "European Lifelong Learning Year" attention turned to "lifelong education and learning." This project, which covered the skills and gains that individuals of all ages could obtain during their lives, received much feedback throughout the world.

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One of the most important legs of lifelong learning is its cultural aspect. Publishing the "World Culture Report" Frederico Mayor pointed out the importance of culture in a person's life, and stated that the process by which a person's culture evolves begins in the womb (URL-1). Mayor saw the lifelong learning environment as three zones: the first of these is the "micro" comprising the family and the family's immediate environment; the second is "meso" comprising school and its environment; the third is "macro" comprising national, societal and global environments. Mayor's ideas on cultural learning differed from society to society. For example, for countries like Turkey he advises placing emphasis on intercultural learning. It does not seem very logical to offer such advice to a nation that is one of the oldest nations in the world, that is very respectful towards different cultures and that lives homogenously.

The part of lifelong learning relating to women and education clearly saw more interest than the other parts. The peoples of the world have undergone a painful process with respect to women's rights and the place of women in society, and they have been shamed into doing away with this victimization. This is why both in Turkey and the rest of the world women's studies are concentrating on feminism in general, the labor force, women's education, their status in society, women's rights etc.¹ Henry Cloud and John Townsend carried out a study on the psychological effects of the mother on a person's life and saw that the mother was the source of all happiness and all woes in life (Cloud and Townsend 2002). The nature of a person's interaction both with the family they form in the future and with society is embedded in the subconscious by the mother. From this study it is understood that women, accredited with extraordinary qualities in pagan times, are worthy of study in areas far exceeding the topic areas mentioned above.

As the world grows more and more crowded and ever wealthier a rise has been observed in the number of single mothers. There has been a similar rise in work to discuss the problems related to single mothers and their children in parallel with this. Intellectuals and academicians have become aware of this situation, which has a direct bearing on the future of societies (Duncan and Edwards 1999). In Turkey, where the divorce rate is low, official figures for 2009 show that the divorce rate exceeded the marriage rate for the first time, and this gave cause for concern. Just as noted in the Turkish proverb, "A child without a father is a dependent, a

¹ Toksöz 2007; *New Production Processes and Women's Labor* (1999). Ankara: Turkish Prime Ministry General Directorate for Women's Status and Problems; *Factors That Can Influence Women's Employment in Popular Cultural Products* (2000). Ankara: Turkish Prime Ministry General Directorate for Women's Status and Problems; *Urban Women as a Readily Employable Labor Force and Change* (1999). Ankara: Turkish Prime Ministry General Directorate for Women's Status and Problems; Arat 1991; *Women in Development* (1991). ISIS International Women's Information and Communication Service; etc.

child without a mother is an orphan and a dependent" it is natural for individuals growing up without a father to experience a lifelong void both in the psychological makeup and in their cultural development. The part of the proverb referring to children without mothers means that with no fathers either to care for them this situation could lead to lifelong identity crises that are impossible to fix. Therefore, attempts are being made to support single mothers in their increased burden of providing lifelong education for their children.

When the overall course of Turkish society is looked at, it can be seen that women are treated with more compassion than in other nations - regardless of the problematic periods they have gone through just like these days - and that this is a result of their cultural genetic coding and their philosophy of creation. Both in terms of representing and governing the state and in terms of being "the home owner" Turkish women's place in society is one that has been envied throughout history. Therefore, taking inspiration in our declaration from the actual role played in this historic process, we are going to focus on the importance of the cultural education given to society by Turkish women and the women of the world via their offspring.

As Mayor pointed out, the importance of culture in human society is huge. This is because culture is the sum of all the material and emotional values created by a society. It is a society's unique style of belief, impression, living and production. A person born into any society is at the same time born into a culture. The culture into which a person is born has been forged over many centuries. Everything that societies produce in response to the disasters, shared times of excitement, joys and woes that they encounter in the lands where they live all make the cultural fabric. The leading elements of that cultural fabric are language, religion, literature, morality, history, tradition, manners, custom, the law, art, urban life, sport, recreation, education, cuisine, clothing, motherland, folklore and the economy. All of these elements transform into the material and emotional values specific to nations. Nations survive as long as they continue to stand up for all those values.

It is their culture that makes nations out of societies. Being of the same biological roots is not enough to turn a society into a nation. When we look at the topic from that perspective we can talk about a "national identity." In short, the traditions, manners and experiences forged by a society over thousands of years all become that society's identity and turn it into a nation. If a nation's culture is somehow destroyed, if they are stripped of their identity, then they cease being a nation. Instead, they become a dry crowd with no identity, no system of values, and with not social hierarchy or moral imperatives. In other words, a mob. A mob has no identity, no values, no hierarchy, no respect or affection, no bounds or

rights, no limits in individual and societal relationships, and no moral values.

A nation whose culture has been destroyed does not just lose its identity; along with all its values it loses consciousness and is swept from history's stage. The pages of history are replete with many nations that have disappeared because they lost their culture.

Cultural elements are passed down to everybody as individual values through the family, school and working life. Thus a common way of life, way of thinking and way of production takes place in society. The personalities and the language of the individuals who make up society are shaped accordingly.

Throughout the world the most important duty for a woman is motherhood. She nourishes her offspring both materially and emotionally. She adds her culture to the child's bread and milk. As she nourishes the child's spirit with the characteristic peculiarities of the nation such as heroism, bravery, honor and hospitality by weaving love into folk tales, lullabies and rhymes, when the child grows up it is full of affection for its homeland, its nation and its flag.

In every language the word for "mother" is the finest. Mothers harbor such qualities as: "Unconditional love, compassion and nurture," and they play a key role in lifelong education teaching the language plus how to walk, eat, fend for oneself, communicate etc. The norms we can call "national cultural molds" such as language, family, morality, patriotism, national consciousness, historical awareness, the fundamental rules of religion, orders and prohibitions are the building blocks that prepare the ground for lifelong education.

For millennia women have taken on the most important role when it comes to societies passing their culture down to the new generations. Within human communities this has been the most important and most vital role for women, sometimes as sister, sometimes as grandmother, sometimes as child, but mainly as mother. The ability of women to give birth does not simply enable a society to keep on going; at the same time it enables the woman to pass on the national culture's molds starting while the child is still in the womb. In other words, this ability ensures that nation-building continues. In this respect, women are in effect the guarantee of a nation's survival.

The first element of this guarantee is language. Language is the chief element making up a culture. A person born into a society is born into a language at the same time. Language is the most robust of bonds between people. If commonality of language does not exist or cannot be provided then communication between individuals weakens and this leads to social collapse. This is why language is the most determinant vehicle for national

culture and thus nation building. If there is no language or if it is corrupted then culture cannot survive and neither can a nation continue to exist. For instance: In Hungary, which had lost its old language, a new mold for culture and belonging developed as the awareness and culture of being Turkish, left over from Attila and the Huns, began to fade. A similar alienation in terms of language, culture and belonging has taken place in today's Bulgaria since the time of the Bulgar Huns.

Language is not only an element of culture, it is also the means by which culture is carried and passed on. Everything that belongs to a culture has been encoded in words. Words date back millennia and constitute a mythological and cultural memory. This richness bonds nations to their roots and their blood brothers.

Mothers are the greatest producer, teacher and transmitter of any language, and they keep alive that language, which is their nation's safeguard, through their children. And this is why mankind without realizing it called the language a person first learns while in their mother's arms "the mother tongue." A person can only think in their mother tongue because words in this language are encoded into the mind not simply as sounds but also with emotions and thoughts for any given situation. Despite the fact that the most beautiful word in every language is "mother" every society only loves the mother in its own language. This is because she has been encoded in a person's mind as a perpetually warm embrace full of unconditional love, compassion and longing, even in the grave.

Everything she teaches with patience and affection in her tender arms remains "as wholesome and clean as mother's milk." Words and phrases are engraved into the memory with the image and scent of the mother. A baby's language skills advance in direct proportion to the amount of care given by the mother. Furthermore, this language is going to be used for generations to come.

The codes of the national language are imparted and taught to the baby while it is still in the womb. The mother speaks to her baby while it is still in the womb. She sings lullabies and folksongs to it and talks to it. Researchers have proven that this, the mother singing lullabies and talking to the unborn baby, is more than just a show of affection. They have demonstrated that after six months in the womb the baby begins to learn the codes of the mother tongue through these actions on the part of its mother. These actions, carried out instinctually by the mother, are the guarantee that the linguistic and cultural formulas in the nation's cultural genetic makeup will live on.

One of the cultural formulas taught by the mother as she keeps the home together is the concept of "family." A child's personality is shaped within the family. It is the mother who takes on the most important role in

this shaping. Just as in the Turkish proverb "it is the female bird that makes the nest" so it is the mother who assigns roles to the members of the family. The mother turns the house and the family into a home. Through the mother's presence a house, made of soulless and cold stones, bricks, concrete and wood, is transformed into a "warm home." The phrase "demolition of the home" as applied by both the children and the husband should the mother die is thus more easily understood. It is the mother who gives warmth to the family and the house, who turns cold stone buildings into warm homes.

The mother tells stories and tales to the child even as a baby. Through these tales the child learns not only the formulas of the language but also the norms of the national culture, and perceives what is generally accepted as right and wrong in society. However, these days because the deep significance of story-telling is not fully understood children learn tales not from their mothers but from means of mass communication, what we call secondary verbal culture.

One other institution that helps out with motherhood is the crèche. The experts in these homes, which function as second families and homes for children, should be aware that they have to fill the gaps left in the instruction of culture because the mother is working, and that they are contributing to lifelong education.

One of the mother's roles in the lifelong instruction of culture is the imparting of moral norms to the child. The national moral norms, or customs, ensure a lawful social order. They determine the rights and duties of the individual.

Moral norms set out an individual's responsibilities and bounds with respect to their parents, the entire family and all of society; points taught not through written texts but only verbally. Social order is provided not just by written laws but much earlier than this and more effectively through these unwritten national moral norms. Cultural elements such as parents' rights, neighbors' rights, and the treatment of guests plus people older and younger than oneself all constitute the national moral norms. These norms are the main factors in societies becoming nations. If national-moral norms are destroyed then social order and hierarchy fall apart and the society descends into chaos. The rights of parents and of neighbors disappear.

Practices that we have simplified today as tradition, manners and custom, and that we in fact portray as old fashioned or outmoded, are the result of millennia of experience and are part of the national moral norms. Again, it is through the mother that they are passed down. Tradition, manners and custom are indispensable elements of national culture and they ensure social order. Mothers pass down to their children society's

perceptions of what is "right" and "wrong" through experience, tradition, manners and custom. This is a kind of verbal instruction of cultural codes.

Another element passed down by mothers to their children is "affection for the motherland and nation, and national consciousness." Without an awareness of motherland, patriotism and nation any responsibilities given to an individual are nothing but a dead weight for them to carry. A dead burden that is not used and has no value. It is national consciousness that gives meaning to the elements of national culture. A child primarily begins to gain national consciousness through the mother. This is then taken up by formal and widespread educational establishments. This is a case of inculcating national sensibilities.

Words and phrases like "Do not do that", "That is wrong" and "Not like that" should be perceived not so much as prohibitive but more as words and phrases that inculcate an affection for the motherland and the nation as well as sensibilities toward cultural elements. In order for these words to be correctly perceived and in order to discourage young people from rebelling the language must be used well. In Turkish culture there is a saying, "There are two ways to saying anything." Therefore, it is best to know which one to choose.

There is a story about Tamerlane that explains this point well: "He had a dream. He went to get his dream interpreted by a spiritualist. The spiritualist said: 'You are going to live a long time. Everyone in your family will die before you do.' At this bad news the khan had the spiritualist's head cut off. They then summoned the famous Nasreddin Hodja to interpret the dream. He said, Sire, you are going to outlive everyone in your family.' The khan liked this and had Nasreddin Hodja rewarded with a bag of gold. These days when fights within the family and between the generations are so rife, it is even more important to know the finer points of the language of education that we are going to use.

The mother also gives her child an awareness of history. Verbal history and verbal cultural history are imparted to the child by the mother even before the child begins school.

Similarly, the "fundamental principles, commandments and prohibitions of the religion" are imparted to the child by the mother. These fundamental commandments and prohibitions are vital to the religion.

Apart from teaching these elements that make up the foundation of a nation's culture the mother also gives cultural instruction at various stages of life. Mothers always have something to say or teach with respect to the various stages in life such as graduation, marriage, holidays, death and its rituals. Both during the child's school years and afterwards an increase is observed in the mother's role of teaching culture in the practices associated with the various stages of life. In the Christian and Jewish worlds the role

of women in keeping the rituals alive down through the generations for such holidays and traditional ceremonies as Christmas, Easter, Passover and Halloween, especially in the home and in the community, cannot be underestimated.

In the Muslim world, too, the woman's role in ceremonies such as birth, circumcision, weddings, Ramadan, the Feast of Sacrifice, Spring Solstice and National Liberation Day is very important. In particular, the practice of these cultural treasures, which have deep mythological roots, during these ceremonies and then passing them on to the younger generations are very important tasks fulfilled by the mother.

Regardless of one's cultural circle, even among adults who lose their mothers the mother's continue to live on transformed into behavior. Phrases such as: "If mother were alive she would say this", "If mother were alive she would do this" and "She would never have allowed that" are ways by which the mother's advice and direction continues to live on. Warnings such as: "That is not how we do things in our family" and "If I do that I would be dishonoring my mother's memory" are again related to the roles presented to individuals by the family in general and the mother in particular.

Thanks to all the points related above, the education given by a mother is more than just instruction to an individual, it is a gift to society that enables the national culture to grow and live on. This continuity strengthens the bonds between the past, present and future generations. It instills the awareness of being a nation.

According to one study carried out in Turkey, it has been proven that the mother is the factor that determines a child's level of education.² According to this study, if a mother's level of education is high then the child's level is also high; if it is low then the child's level will be low too. This finding is a correct observation from the perspective of standard school education. However, what is not taken into account here is the instruction of culture. When the same study is scrutinized in terms of the instruction of culture it is highly likely that an inverse ratio will emerge due to such reasons as alienation within the Turkish education system and the failure to modernize or make fashionable what is traditional. The topic we are actually focusing on is the need to provide cultural instruction as part of a conscious and qualified education. In order to do this there is a real need for societies to produce qualified and knowledgeable folklorists and for them in turn to instill this awareness in families.

In the world of today it is generally accepted that nations are experiencing cultural corruption. Being developed is a sign of civilization,

² Turkish Statistics Agency, Hürriyet newspaper 30 Dec 2009.

yet the developed countries are even more greatly affected by this corruption. The factors that underpin many issues such as insensitivity, failure to care for what is sacred, regression in the emotions and behavior that make humans human, and the lack of tolerance and respect between communities are hidden in the understanding of family manners, which in turn translate into a society's cultural education. In order to have a world that is more habitable the substance of the concept of family manners should be equipped with every society's own values of civilization and culture.

For all these reasons education programs should be made taking into account the importance of the role played by mothers in educating society through their offspring. The curriculum should be enriched in terms of an awareness of the roles of men and women and the inculcation of culture, all of which go to make up society. The traditional cultural formulas that mothers cannot teach should be identified and measures taken to rectify this in formal and widespread education. Furthermore, the instruction of national culture in the organs of the press, which are otherwise known as secondary verbal culture and which turn generations into lifelong addicts despite being soulless, should be consolidated.

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