

Assessment on Integration of Indigenous Education in Nigeria Secondary School Curriculum and Student's Self-Reliance in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Education in Nigeria is expected to equip learners with relevant knowledge, practical skills and values that promote creativity, cultural identity and self-reliance. However, despite the recognition of indigenous education within the Nigerian National Curriculum, its practical integration in formal schooling is not encouraging. Hence, this study examined inclusion of indigenous education in national curriculum and its role in promoting students' self-reliance in Kwara State. Descriptive research of correlation type was adopted for the study. The population comprised all 12,512 public secondary school teachers in Kwara State. Proportionate sampling technique was used to select 180 teachers across 15 selected secondary schools in three Senatorial Districts, Kwara State. A researcher's designed questionnaire was employed to collect data. The instrument was validated by two experts and one in the field of Test and Measurement, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. To ascertain the reliability of instrument, test-retest method was used. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer research question 1 while research questions 2 and 3 which had corresponding hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product-moment Correlation Statistics at 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that the practical aspect of indigenous education were taught very low, there was significant relationship between indigenous educational components in the national curriculum and students' acquisition of practical and vocational skills and students' self-reliance. It was concluded that meaningful integration of indigenous education was not effective. The study recommended that government should pay proper attention to the practical dimensions of indigenous knowledge in formal schooling to promote students' economic self-reliance.

Keywords: Indigenous Education, National Curriculum and Students' Self-Reliance

Introduction

Education plays a critical role in the social, economic and cultural development of any society. In many African societies, indigenous education existed long before the introduction of Western formal education. Indigenous education refers to the traditional system through which knowledge, skills, values, norms and cultural practices are transmitted from one generation to another within a community. Adeyinka and Paulley (2016) asserted that indigenous education is an education of the people, by the people and for the people in a particular society which satisfies the needs of the people. In this educational system, all adult members of the society were involved in the process of transmitting the culture, values, religious and occupational activities of people to the younger generations. Thus, it is a process of learning which enables every individual in the African societies to teach her younger generations the life patterns of the society. Furthermore, indigenous education is a vehicle for the maintenance or preservation of cultural heritage, with the aim of producing a useful individual who is honest, respectable, skilled and cooperative in conformity with the social order of the society. It is believed that African indigenous education is the locally developed native form of education for bringing up young people by the older and more experienced members of the society. Adedokun (2024) explained that indigenous education emphasises practical learning, community participation, moral development and vocational competence that prepare individuals to become productive and self-reliant members of society. In Nigeria, indigenous education historically focused on skills such as farming, hunting, craftsmanship, trading, leadership and social responsibility. These forms of education enabled individuals to contribute meaningfully to their communities and sustain their livelihoods. According to Fafunwa (1974), traditional African education was functional, community-oriented and designed to equip individuals with the practical abilities necessary for survival and social responsibility. However, the introduction of colonial education systems

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shifted the focus of learning toward literacy, clerical work and theoretical knowledge, often neglecting indigenous knowledge systems that previously promoted practical skills and self-reliance. Recognising this gap, the Nigerian government introduced educational reforms aimed at integrating indigenous knowledge and vocational skills into the national curriculum. The Nigeria National Policy on Education emphasises that education should promote the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies necessary for self-reliance and national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). In addition, initiatives such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme and curriculum revisions carried out by the Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council introduced subjects such as Cultural and Creative Arts, Agricultural Science, Basic Technology and Entrepreneurship Education. These reforms are intended to equip students with practical knowledge, innovative capacity and entrepreneurial skills required for self-employment and sustainable development (NERDC, 2013; Olorundare & Kayode, 2014). Despite these policy efforts, several scholars argue that the practical implementation of indigenous education within the formal school system remains inadequate. Several studies indicate that many schools continue to prioritise theoretical instruction and examination performance rather than practical skill acquisition or experiential and skill-based learning. Consequently, graduates often leave school without the vocational and entrepreneurial competencies required for self-reliance (Okoye & Arimonu, 2016; Usman, Rong & Saine, 2025). This situation has contributed to increasing youth unemployment in Nigeria and has raised concerns about the effectiveness of the national curriculum in promoting functional and skill-based education. Kwara State, for instance, is culturally diverse and endowed with rich indigenous knowledge systems, including traditional crafts, agriculture, local entrepreneurship and cultural practices. Integrating these indigenous knowledge systems into the school curriculum could significantly contribute to equipping students with practical competencies and livelihood skills, otherwise known as self-reliance. Self-reliance is an important educational objective that involves the ability of individuals to depend on their knowledge, skills, creativity and initiative to solve problems, create opportunities and generate sustainable livelihoods. According to (Nyerere, 1968; and Adeyinka 2013), education should prepare individuals to become productive members of society who can rely on their own abilities rather than depend solely on external employment. When students acquire indigenous knowledge and practical skills through education, they are more likely to develop entrepreneurial abilities, self-confidence and independence. In the same vein, it plays a significant role in developing students' self-reliance by equipping them with practical skills, cultural knowledge and problem-solving abilities rooted in their local environment and community. In contemporary educational discourse, integrating indigenous knowledge systems into formal curricula is increasingly recognised as an effective approach for empowering learners to become independent, innovative and productive members of society (Blackle, 2024). Thus, when learners study local production systems, indigenous technologies and traditional occupations, they become more capable of creating employment opportunities for themselves rather than relying solely on formal jobs. Research on decolonising education in Africa shows that integrating indigenous knowledge and local values into curricula helps nurture entrepreneurial mindsets and economic self-reliance among students (Omodan, Manquma & Mafunda, 2024). Therefore, integrating indigenous educational practices into the national curriculum may provide an effective strategy for empowering students and reducing dependence on white-collar job. This study therefore seeks to examine the role of indigenous education in the Nigerian national curriculum and its influence on promoting students' self-reliance in Kwara State. By exploring the extent of integration, implementation strategies and outcomes of indigenous education in secondary schools, the study aims to provide insights that may guide policymakers, educators and curriculum developers in strengthening educational practices that foster self-reliant graduates.

Statement of the Problem

Indigenous education has historically played a significant role in preparing individuals to become productive and self-reliant members of the society. However, despite its recognition in Nigerian National Curriculum, the practical aspects of indigenous education in formal schooling are not encouraging. Many schools continue to rely heavily on Western-oriented content and theoretical teaching approaches that often overlook local knowledge systems and practical skills embedded in indigenous practices. This situation has raised concerns about the ability of the current curriculum to effectively promote self-reliance among students. In Kwara State, specifically, there is growing concern that students graduate from school with limited practical competencies and entrepreneurial abilities needed for self-sustenance and community development. The increasing rate of youth unemployment and dependence on white-collar job opportunities further highlights the gap between the objectives of the curriculum and the actual outcomes of schooling. Although indigenous education has the potential to foster practical skills, innovation and cultural identity that support self-reliance, its role within the formal

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curriculum and its actual impact on students have not been sufficiently examined. Therefore, the problem of this study is the apparent disconnect between the intended inclusion of indigenous education in the Nigerian national curriculum and the level to which it contributes to promoting students' self-reliance. Most especially, there is a need to investigate how indigenous education is integrated and implemented in secondary schools in Kwara State and to determine whether it effectively enhances students' capacity for self-reliance. Hence, this study seeks to address this gap by examining the role of indigenous education in the Nigerian national curriculum and its influence on promoting self-reliant skills among students in the State.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the inclusion of indigenous education in the national curriculum and its role in promoting students' self-reliance in Kwara State. Specifically, the study examines;

1. The extent to which indigenous education is integrated into the Nigerian national curriculum in secondary schools in Kwara State.
2. The relationship between indigenous educational components present in the national curriculum and students' acquisition of practical and vocational skills.
3. The relationship between students' exposure to indigenous educational practices and their level of self-reliance.

Research Questions

1. To what extent is indigenous education integrated into the Nigerian national curriculum in secondary schools in Kwara State?
2. Is there any significant relationship between indigenous educational components present in the national curriculum and students' acquisition of practical and vocational skills in Kwara State?
3. Is there any significant relationship between students' exposure to indigenous educational practices and students' level of self-reliance in Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between indigenous educational components in the national curriculum and students' acquisition of practical and vocational skills in Kwara State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between students' exposure to indigenous educational practices and their level of self-reliance in Kwara State.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research of correlational design. The population comprised all 12,512 public secondary school teachers in Kwara State. Stratified sampling technique was employed to select 5 schools from each of the Kwara State senatorial district (Kwara Central, North and South) which equal to 15 schools. Proportional sampling technique was used to select 13 teachers from each of the selected schools in Kwara-Central, 11 teachers each from Kwara-North and 12 teachers each from Kwara-South to make a total number of 180 teachers as sample for the study. This was adopted because of different number of teachers in the three districts. The questionnaire titled, "Inclusion of Indigenous Education in the Nigerian National Curriculum and Its Role in Promoting Students' Self-Reliance" was designed as instrument to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire comprised 20 items from section A to D. Section A contains demographic data of respondents on the number of teachers' in three districts. Section B contains 10 items on the extent to which indigenous education integrated into the secondary school Curriculum. Section C contains 5 items on the relationship between indigenous educational and students acquisition of practical and vocational skills while Section C contains 5 items on the relationship between students' exposure to indigenous educational practices and their level of self-reliance and all were used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. In order to validate the research instrument, the draft was presented to two lecturers in the Department of Arts Education and one expert in the field of Test and Measurement, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin for vetting. All corrections were effected, before the final questionnaire was drafted. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, test-retest method was used. Research question 1 was answer through Mean and Standard Deviation while research questions 2 to 3 which had corresponding hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product-moment Correlation Statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

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Presentation of Results

The percentage was used to describe demographic data of the respondents based on the three districts. Research question 1 had ten (10) items which were structured in a four response type and was answered using mean rating and any item with a mean greater than 2.50 was considered as agreement with stated research question and vice-versa. Research questions 2 and 3 which had corresponding hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product-moment Correlation Statistics at the 0.05 level of significance. Table 1 shows the demographic data of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents

Teacher	Number	Percentage
Kwara Central	65	34.5%
Kwara North	55	32.2%
Kwara South	60	33.3%
Total	180	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 1 showed the demographic data of the respondents on the basis of teachers' selected in the three senatorial district of Kwara State. Out of 180 (100%) teachers, 65 (34.5%) of the respondents were from Kwara-Central, 55 (32.2%) from Kwara-North, while 60 (33.3%) of the respondents were from the Kwara-South.

Research Question 1: *To what extent is indigenous education integrated into the Nigerian national curriculum in secondary schools in Kwara State?*

Table 2: Extent to which Indigenous Education Integrated into Secondary School Curriculum in Kwara State

S/N	Items	Mean	SD.	Decision
1.	Indigenous cultural values are incorporated into subjects taught in schools.	3.35	.821	High Extent
2.	Local languages are used as part of teaching and learning activities.	2.34	.760	Low Extent
3.	The curriculum includes lessons related to indigenous tradition and practices.	3.30	.999	Very High Extent
4.	Indigenous knowledge is integrated into subjects such as Agriculture, Social Studies, History and Cultural Studies.	3.48	.835	Very High Extent
5.	Teachers relate classroom lessons to local community experiences and practices.	2.28	.690	Low Extent
6.	Students are exposed to traditional skills such as crafts, farming and local trades through school activities.	2.15	.654	Low Extent
7.	Practical indigenous skills are taught alongside theoretical knowledge.	1.42	.570	Very Low Extent
8.	Indigenous history and heritage are included in classroom instruction.	3.13	.732	High Extent
9.	Teaching materials reflect local culture and indigenous knowledge systems.	3.23	.832	High Extent
10.	School collaborate with community members to support indigenous learning experiences.	2.42	.460	Low Extent

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

As shown in table 2, it is clear from the findings that the respondents agreed that indigenous cultural values are incorporated into subjects taught in schools in a high extent, but local languages are in low extent in used as part of teaching and learning activities. The curriculum includes lessons related to indigenous tradition and practices very high extent and indigenous knowledge is integrated into subjects such as Agriculture, Social Studies, History and Cultural Studies. A majority of the respondents were of the opinion that teachers relate classroom lessons to local community experiences and practices are low extent; students' exposure to traditional skills such as crafts, farming and local trades through school activities are low and most especially, practical indigenous skills taught alongside theoretical knowledge are very low in extent. Indigenous history and heritage are included high extent in the classroom instruction and teaching materials reflect local culture and indigenous knowledge systems, but school collaborate with community members to support indigenous learning

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experiences are low in extent. Therefore, it can be affirmed that Indigenous Education was integrated into the secondary school curriculum but practical indigenous skills taught alongside theoretical knowledge are very low.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between indigenous educational components in the national curriculum and students' acquisition of practical and vocational skills in Kwara State.

Table 3: Indigenous Educational Components in the National Curriculum and Students' Acquisition of Practical and Vocational Skills in Secondary Schools

Variable	N	X	SD	Df	Cal value	r-	P-value	Decision
Indigenous Educational Components in the National Curriculum	180	1.58	.49					
				178	.714		.000	H ₀₁ Rejected
Students' Acquisition of Practical and Vocational Skills	180	1.41	.42					

***Significant $p < .05$**

Table 3 showed the calculated r-value of .714 while p-value (0.000) is less than the significance level (0.05) for 178 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between indigenous educational components in the national curriculum and students' acquisition of practical and vocational skills in Kwara State was rejected. The finding revealed that, there was significant relationship between indigenous educational components in the national curriculum and students' acquisition of practical and vocational skills in Kwara State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between students' exposure to indigenous educational practices and their level of self-reliance in Kwara State.

Table 4: Exposure to Indigenous Educational Practices and Students Level of Self-Reliance in Kwara State

Variable	N	X	SD	Df	Cal value	r-	P-value	Decision
Students' exposure to Indigenous Educational Practices	180	1.58	.49					
				178	.527		.000	H ₀₂ Rejected
Students' Level of Self-reliance	180	1.31	.46					

***Significant $p < .05$**

Table 4 showed the calculated r-value of .527 while p-value (0.000) is less than the significance level (0.05) for 178 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between students' exposure to indigenous educational practices and their level of self-reliance in Kwara State was rejected. The finding indicated that there was significant relationship between students' exposure to indigenous educational practices and their level of self-reliance in Kwara State.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings showed that Indigenous Education was integrated into the secondary school curriculum in high extent but practical indigenous skills taught alongside theoretical knowledge are very low. Students are not exposed to practical traditional skills or knowledge such as crafts, farming and local trades through school activities that can ensure economic self-reliance. This leads to maximum numbers of unemployment in the society. This finding is in line with the findings of Usman, Rong and Saine (2025) which stated that many schools continue to prioritise theoretical instruction and examination performance rather than practical skill acquisition or experiential and skill-based learning. Consequently, graduates often leave school without the vocational and entrepreneurial competencies required for self-reliance and as such,



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the introduction of colonial education systems shifted the focus of learning toward literacy, clerical work and theoretical knowledge, often neglecting indigenous knowledge systems that previously promoted practical skills and self-reliance. Findings from research hypothesis one showed that there was significant relationship between indigenous educational components in the national curriculum and students' acquisition of practical and vocational skills in Kwara State. This is because indigenous knowledge is incorporated into school subjects in the curriculum. This finding corroborates the finding of Olorundare and Kayode (2014) which specified that indigenous education is integrated into school subjects such as Agriculture, Social Studies, History, Cultural and Creative Arts, Basic Technology and Entrepreneurship Education which are intended to equip students with practical knowledge, innovative capacity and entrepreneurial skills required for self-employment and sustainable development. In addition, the results from research hypothesis two indicated that there was significant relationship between students' exposure to indigenous educational practices and students' level of self-reliance in Kwara State. This implies that when students' are exposed and acquired indigenous knowledge with practical skills through education, they are more likely to develop entrepreneurial abilities, self-confidence and independence. This finding is similar to the assertion of Adeyinka (2013) which stated that when students' learn local production systems, indigenous technologies and traditional occupations, they become more capable of creating employment opportunities for themselves rather than relying solely on white-collar jobs.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that Indigenous Education has been incorporated into the national curriculum but its practical aspect of knowledge which are essential for fostering students' economic self-reliance are not adequately implemented in schools. As a result, the integration of indigenous education has remained largely theoretical, limiting its potential to cultivate entrepreneurial mindsets and promote self-sufficiency among students. Moreover, indigenous knowledge incorporated into subjects such as Agriculture, Social Studies, History, Cultural and Creative Arts, Basic Technology and Entrepreneurship Education are not effectively practicalised in formal school settings. Consequently, students do not acquire the hands-on skills necessary to apply this knowledge in real-life contexts. This gap contributes to the rising rate of youth unemployment in Kwara State and Nigeria at large and raises concerns about the effectiveness of the national curriculum in promoting functional and skill-based education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made;

1. Government should pay proper attention to the practical dimensions of indigenous knowledge in formal schooling to promote students' economic self-reliance. Also, there is a critical need for the government to strengthen these practical components by promoting the use of local languages in instruction and enhancing teachers' ability to connect lessons to community practices, thereby promoting indigenous education.
2. Schools should increase students' exposure to hands on traditional skills, collaborate with local artisans and foster stronger collaboration with community members to support a more holistic and experiential approach to indigenous learning in order to reduce youth unemployment in the society.
3. Parents and guardians should actively encourage their children and wards to engage in indigenous education to enhance their capacity for self-reliance after graduation.

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