

A SYNOPSIS OF THE YORÙBÁ STUDIES CURRICULUM: HISTORICAL EVOLUTION, PEDAGOGICAL STRUCTURES, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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Abstract

This paper examines the historical evolution, structure, and educational significance of the Yorùbá language curriculum within the Nigerian educational system. The study aims to trace colonial antecedents of Nigeria's curriculum, examines emergence of the Yorùbá curriculum, and highlights its pedagogical relevance today. The study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical methodology grounded in historical and interpretive approaches. Data were sourced from secondary materials, including national education policy documents, approved Yorùbá curricula, syllabi, schemes of work, lesson plans, and relevant scholarly literature, particularly studies associated with mother-tongue education initiatives. The analysis combines historical review with content and interpretive analysis to examine the evolution, structure, and pedagogical components of the Yorùbá curriculum. Findings reveal the foundational role of Yorùbá orthography in strengthening the writing system and sustaining language development. The paper further demonstrates the structure of a typical Yorùbá curriculum, including schemes of work and lesson plans, through model illustrations. It concludes that the Yorùbá language has made significant contributions to human capital development through education and research, particularly in relation to mother-tongue instruction. The study therefore affirms the cultural, pedagogical, and intellectual value of Yorùbá as a viable medium for curriculum development and as a critical

resource for cultural continuity and educational advancement in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Curriculum; Lesson note; Scheme of work; Syllabus; Yorùbá.*

Introduction

Curriculum development in Nigeria reflects the country's complex history, rooted in colonial impositions and shaped by post-independence educational reform. Colonial curricula were Eurocentric, designed to serve the administrative and religious goals of British rule, rather than the sociocultural needs of African communities (Adeigbe, 2010, p.8). This alienation triggered agitation among Nigerian intellectuals, politicians, and cultural activists in the 1950s, culminating in independence in 1960 and the push for indigenous-centered education.

The first National Curriculum Conference in 1966 was a decisive turning point, articulating the need for curricula that reflect Nigerian realities. Within this broader educational reorientation, indigenous languages gained recognition as vital, not only as mediums of instruction but as repositories of cultural heritage, philosophy, science, and morality (Okonkwo, 2016). Adeigbe (2010) notes that Yorùbá, alongside Hausa and Igbo, was institutionalised as a core subject at the basic education level, mandated by the 1977 National Policy on Education, and revised in subsequent decades (NERDC, 2004).

The 1982 Approved National Curriculum for Yorùbá Language provided a standardised framework for Junior Secondary Schools. In 1999, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme expanded access to nine years of free, compulsory schooling, again embedding Yorùbá within the curriculum as a major Nigerian language. Furthermore, Babatunde Fafunwa's pioneering Yoruba-medium experiment of the 1970s demonstrated the cognitive, cultural, and developmental benefits of indigenous

language instruction.

Building on these developments, this paper explores the conceptual framework of the Yorùbá curriculum, its syllabus, schemes of work, and lesson plans, using available models and educational directives to dissect its structure and pedagogical implications. It also examines major scholarly influences, such as Babatunde Fafunwa's Yoruba-medium experiment, before concluding with challenges and future pathways for indigenous language education in Nigeria.

Yet, despite decades of effort, the Yorùbá Curriculum continues to face multiple tensions. On one hand, it embodies the aspirations of cultural revival and educational indigenisation; on the other hand, it is challenged by globalisation, language shift, and the persistent dominance of English in Nigeria's sociolinguistic hierarchy. This tension has produced inconsistencies in policy enforcement, a scarcity of qualified teachers, and limited instructional materials, thereby weakening the practical outcomes of well-crafted curricular frameworks. Addressing these tensions requires not only historical retrospection but also forward-looking strategies that balance cultural preservation with global educational standards.

Furthermore, scholarly attention to the Yorùbá Curriculum has often been fragmented, focusing either on the philosophical arguments for mother-tongue education or on specific classroom-level analyses, without offering a comprehensive account of its historical evolution, internal pedagogical structures, and long-term trajectories. This paper fills that gap by synthesizing historical, pedagogical, and cultural perspectives in one study. By presenting a holistic overview, it situates the Yorùbá curriculum within broader discourses on African curriculum development, postcolonial education, and indigenous knowledge systems.

Finally, the study is significant because it speaks directly to current debates on decolonising knowledge and democratising education in Africa. The Yorùbá curriculum is more than a subject

taught in schools; it is a lens through which questions of identity, language policy, cultural sustainability, and educational innovation are contested and negotiated. As such, this paper does not merely trace the past and present of the Yorùbá curriculum but also anticipates its future directions, considering digital tools, institutional reforms, and community participation as pathways toward revitalization and global relevance.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical research design grounded in historical and interpretive approaches. Data were sourced primarily from secondary materials, including national education policy documents, approved Yorùbá language curricula, syllabi, schemes of work, and lesson plans issued by relevant educational bodies such as the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). Scholarly works on indigenous language education, curriculum development, and Yorùbá Studies, particularly studies associated with Babs Fafunwa's mother-tongue experiment, were also consulted.

The analysis combines historical review with content analysis to trace the evolution of the Yorùbá curriculum within Nigeria's educational system and to examine its internal pedagogical structures. Curriculum components were systematically reviewed to identify objectives, content organisation, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. Interpretive analysis was employed to situate these findings within broader discourses on postcolonial education, cultural sustainability, and indigenous knowledge systems. This methodological approach enables a holistic understanding of the Yorùbá curriculum's development, implementation, and future directions.

Literature Review: Concept of Curriculum

The concept of curriculum has been debated across disciplines, reflecting its dynamic and multifaceted nature.

Daramola (2004) describes curriculum as “all the experiences that a pupil acquired under the auspices of the school,” emphasising that learning extends beyond formal instruction to include extracurricular and hidden dimensions of schooling. Chhetria, Pani, Digal, and Sangeeta (2024) define it more narrowly as a systematic process of designing and organising learning materials to achieve specific educational goals. Kranthi (2017) extends the definition by underscoring the social dimensions of curriculum, viewing it as encompassing both the planned academic activities of the classroom and the wider societal interactions that shape learners’ identities and knowledge. These varying perspectives reveal that curriculum is not a static entity but a flexible, evolving framework responsive to cultural, political, and educational needs.

In the Nigerian context, curriculum has historically functioned as both an educational blueprint and a cultural-political tool. Olatunji (2008), in his reflection on the National Curriculum Conference and the Nigerian National Policy on Education, argues that Nigeria requires a curriculum that is distinctively Nigerian in orientation rather than one transplanted from foreign models. This insistence stems from the colonial experience, where curricula were largely Eurocentric and alien to the realities of Nigerian societies. Thus, the curriculum debate in Nigeria is often tied to questions of decolonisation, identity formation, and the balancing of local knowledge systems with global academic standards. It is within this intersection that indigenous language curricula, including Yorùbá, become pivotal as instruments of both learning and cultural affirmation.

Scholars such as Adegbite (2004) and Bamgbose (1965) emphasise the centrality of language curricula in shaping national consciousness and preserving indigenous cultures. Adegbite (2004) argues that a well-structured language curriculum fosters a sense of belonging, national unity, and intellectual independence. Bamgbose (1965), on the other hand, sounded a warning about the potential erosion of indigenous languages under the weight of

Western dominance, advocating for mother-tongue education as a form of cultural resistance and survival. Together, these arguments demonstrate that curriculum is not merely an educational plan but also a battleground where cultural preservation, linguistic identity, and political legitimacy are negotiated. Within this broader framework, the Yorùbá curriculum emerges as a case study in the struggle to balance educational functionality with cultural sustainability.

Yorùbá Language as Curriculum Content

Bamgbose (2017) notes that a survey of the use of the Yorùbá language reveals an increasing expansion in the range of its applications, particularly in media, literature, and scholarship. However, this development is not proportionately reflected in the number of active users, especially among the younger generation. He concludes that the desired improvement in both usage and prestige can only be achieved through substantial investment in Yorùbá as a language of education, alongside the provision of adequate facilities for producing authentic texts, research, and teaching materials. Without these systemic supports, the curriculum risks remain a symbolic gesture rather than a functional instrument for language revitalisation and cultural transmission.

The richness of Yorùbá language and the importance of positioning it as a medium of instruction have long attracted scholarly attention. Awoniyi (1978) and Awobuluyi (2001) advocate for embedding Yorùbá in the formal school system to bridge the gap between home and school learning experiences, thereby reinforcing children's cultural identity while improving cognitive development. Adeigbe (2010) extends this argument by stressing the developmental role of indigenous languages in fostering creativity, self-expression, and critical thinking among learners. Collectively, these scholars argue that the development of a Yorùbá curriculum must go beyond grammar and orthography, encompassing literature, oral traditions, and modern

communicative needs to reflect the dynamic realities of society.

The Yorùbá language curriculum therefore represents both educational content and cultural inheritance. Dàda (2009) underscores how oral traditions, proverbs, and cosmology constitute the backbone of Yorùbá identity construction, and when integrated into curriculum design, they become a pedagogical resource for transmitting values, ethics, and worldview. In this sense, Yorùbá functions not only as a subject matter, teaching orthography, grammar, and literature, but also as a pedagogical medium that shapes thought, behavior, and cultural continuity. It operationalises Bamgbose's (2017) argument that indigenous languages must occupy central roles in Nigeria's intellectual and developmental framework, transforming the curriculum into a site where education, identity, and nation-building converge.

Historical Development of the Yorùbá Curriculum

Colonial Antecedents

According to Grififihs and Tiffin (1995), cited in Adeyemi (2025), over three quarters of the contemporary world has been directly and profoundly affected by colonialism. Missionary education in the 19th century laid the groundwork for formal schooling in Southern Nigeria. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, under the Church Missionary Society (CMS), developed the first Yorùbá orthography (1844), translated the Bible, and codified grammar (Ajiboye, 2024, p. 345). This was pivotal in preserving the language, though colonial education policy prioritised English literacy and Christian catechism, relegating indigenous languages to secondary roles (Hamzat àti Adeigbe, 2025, p. 334).

Post-Independence Reform

After 1960, the Nigerian state pursued indigenisation of education. The 1966 Curriculum Conference was pivotal, followed by the 1977 National Policy on Education, which mandated indigenous languages as compulsory in lower primary education.

Yorùbá, Igbo, and Hausa were given equal prominence as core languages, with English introduced later.

1982 Curriculum for Yorùbá.

NERDC's 1982 Approved National Curriculum for Yorùbá standardised teaching at the Junior Secondary level, emphasising language structure, oral traditions, literature, and cultural studies. It marked the institutionalisation of Yorùbá beyond missionary education and political rhetoric.

Universal Basic Education (UBE)

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria was launched in the year 1999, with goal of providing free universal and compulsory education for every Nigerian child aged 5 to 15 years (Adeigbe, 2010, p. 15). The 1999 UBE scheme (codified in the 2004 UBE Act) created nine years of free compulsory education, requiring one major Nigerian language in basic schools. Yorùbá was central in Southwest states, with objectives ranging from literacy to moral development.

Fafunwa's Experiment

Professor A. B. Fafunwa's Yoruba-medium experiment (1970-1977) at the University of Ife. demonstrated the effectiveness of mother-tongue instruction in primary education. Pupils taught in Yorùbá performed better in comprehension, cultural retention, and bilingualism when compared with English-medium peers (Fafunwa, 1974). The experiment remains one of the most significant contributions to indigenous curriculum development in Africa.

The Yorùbá Curriculum Framework (*Kòríkúlo. òmù*) Philosophical Foundations

The Yorùbá curriculum is shaped by the following three pillars:

Language acquisition and literacy constitute the first philosophical foundation of the Yorùbá curriculum. The curriculum is designed to enable learners to read, write, and communicate effectively in Yorùbá, thereby ensuring mastery of the orthography, grammar, and stylistic features of the language. This is consistent with Bamgbose's (2017) call for investment in authentic texts and research, which provide learners with a solid foundation in literacy. By prioritising language acquisition, the curriculum addresses one of the central challenges of modern Nigerian education, the disconnection between learners' home languages and school languages, thus bridging the gap between formal schooling and lived linguistic realities.

The second pillar, cultural preservation, highlights the curriculum's role in transmitting oral literature, customs, values, and proverbs. Scholars such as Johnson (1921) and Awoniyi (1978) underscore the centrality of oral traditions in shaping identity and fostering continuity across generations. Through the systematic teaching of folktales, proverbs, riddles, songs, and rituals, the Yorùbá curriculum ensures that learners inherit not only the linguistic competence but also the ethical frameworks and social values embedded in the culture. This approach positions the curriculum as more than a technical tool for language education, it becomes a cultural archive and a safeguard against the erosion of indigenous knowledge systems under the pressures of globalisation and Western dominance.

The third pillar, holistic development, situates the Yorùbá curriculum within broader educational and developmental goals. Beyond linguistic skills and cultural transmission, the curriculum supports cognitive, emotional, and social growth through indigenous pedagogies. Practices such as storytelling, call-and-response, and communal learning are integrated to develop creativity, empathy, and critical thinking. As Awobuluyi (2001) and Fadipe (2012) suggest, education in the mother tongue fosters self-confidence and intellectual independence, equipping learners

- Oral genres: folktales, riddles, oral poetry, Ifá verses.
 - Written texts: plays, novels, and poetry.
3. Culture and Values
- Naming, marriage, burial rites
 - Customs, festivals, moral education.

For example, JSS1 curriculum may assign *letter writing* in Term 1, *oral folktales* in Term 2 and *proverbs and cultural idioms* in Term 3.

Scheme of Work (*Àtẹ̀ Àkóónú Ìsẹ̀*)

The scheme of work (*Àtẹ̀ Àkóónú Ìsẹ̀*) breaks down the syllabus into smaller, manageable units, usually arranged into weekly or termly plans. This segmentation allows teachers to translate the broad goals of the syllabus into practical classroom activities, ensuring that learners progress systematically from one topic to another. In Yorùbá curriculum studies, the scheme of work ensures that areas such as proverbs, phonology, poetry, and cultural practices are distributed evenly across the term, avoiding content overload or neglect. It also enables continuous assessment and adjustment, making it a vital tool for monitoring both teaching effectiveness and learner comprehension.

The scheme operationalises the syllabus. A 12-week term for JS one could look like:

OSE` ORÍ-ORO`

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1, | Èdè : | <i>Àlífábe. 'e. 'tì Yorùbá</i> |
| | Às. à : | <i>Ìtàn Ìs. edále. ' Yorùbá</i> |
| | <i>Lítírés. o`</i> | <i>Oríkì Lítírésó`</i> |
| 2, | Èdè: | <i>Àkò. to. 'Èdè Yorùbá</i> |
| | Às.à: | <i>Ìtàn Ìs. edále. ' Yorùbá</i> |
| | <i>Lítírés. o`</i> | <i>Ìrífẹ. ' Lítírés. o` Yorùbá</i> |
| 3, | Èdè: | <i>Àmì ohùn lóri oro`</i> |
| | Às.à: | <i>Àwò. n ẹ̀ya. ' Yorùbá</i> |

- Lítírés. o‘: Àwo. n ohun tó ya Lítírés. o‘ so. ‘to. sí èdè
ojoojúmo. ‘
4. Èdè: Sílébù
Às. à: Às. à Ìkání nìlè. ‘ Yorùbá
Lítírés. o‘: Ipa tí Lítírés. o‘ ñ kó Láwùjò. Yorùbá
5. Èdè: Àmì ohùn lóri o. ‘onísílèbù kan
Às. à: Às. à Ìkání nìlè. ‘ YorùbáII
Lítírés. o‘: Lítírés. o‘ Alohùn tó je. mo. Àseye.
6. Èdè: Ìwúlò Èdè Yorùbá
Às. à: Bì às. à se ñ je. yo. nínú èdè Yorùbá
Lítírés. o‘: Lítírés. o‘ alohun tó je. mo. ‘èsìn ibíle. ‘
7. Ìdánrawò àárín sàà kìn-ní-ní, Àbe. ‘wò àwo. n òbí
8. Èdè: Ònkà nínú èdè Yorùbá ònkà (1-100)
Às. à: Às. à Ìso. mo. lóríko. nìlè. ‘ Yorùbá
Lítírés. o‘: Lítírés. o‘ àpile. ‘ko. - Ìtàn àròso.
9. Èdè: Ìsorí oro ‘
Às. à: Às. à isínkú nìlè. ‘ Yorùbá
Lítírés. o‘: Ìwé kíkà
10. Èdè: Àmì Po. ntuésàn nínú Àròko.
Às. à: Oyè jije. nìlè. ‘ Yorùbá
Lítírés. o‘: Ewí Àpile. ‘ko.
11. Èdè/Às. à/Lit: Àtúnye. ‘wò is. é
12. Ìdánwò

The sample scheme of work indicates that Yorùbá studies teachers are expected to teach one topic each on language, literature, and culture every week. This implies that a teacher must have a minimum of three periods per class each week of the term to adequately cover all the objectives outlined for these topics.

Lesson Plans (*Àkòsílẹ̀` Is. é*)

The lesson notes constitute the most detailed component of the Yorùbá curriculum, providing day-to-day instructional plans. Lesson notes typically specify learning objectives, teaching methods, instructional materials, class activities, and evaluation

techniques. For Yorùbá language instruction, lesson notes often integrate interactive pedagogies such as storytelling, call-and-response, or dramatization, which not only teach linguistic structures but also reinforce cultural values. By structuring the daily teaching process, lesson notes operationalise the goals of both the syllabus and the scheme of work, ensuring that the Yorùbá curriculum moves from abstract planning to concrete classroom practice. Lesson notes specify class activities. A JSS1 lesson on Yorùbá alphabets could include.

ÀKO. SÍLE `IS. E' FÚN O`SE, `KÌN-ÍN-NÍ

Is e

Yorùbá

Déetì

18-22 /09/2023.

Àkókò

Ìdánile. 'ko. ó' kìn-ín-ní

Ìsà yí Is e

Èdè

Orí-oro`

Álífábeetì Yorùbá

Èròngbà Ìdánilekoò`

Le. 'yìn idánile. 'ko. ó' yù, ake. 'ko. ó' yóò lè:

i. Dá ìró èdè ko. òkan

ii. Ka ìró èdè Yorùbá lápapo`

iii. Dá àwon ìró èdè Yorùbá kobkan mo`

iv. Lo ìró ko. 'ńsónàntì àti fáwe. 'lì nínú oro. :

Kókó Oòrò Inú Eko`

álífábeetì, ìró, àìránmúpè, aránmúpè.

Ohun èlò amús. e. 'yéni

kádìbo. òtù tí a ko. àwo. n ìró èdè Yorùbá sí.

àti iwé-ìto. 'kasí

Sáàti tó se àfihàn àwo. n ìró ko. 'ńsónàntì àti fáwe. 'lì ní oto. oto. . Ko. èdè àmúlò. E'ko. 'Èdè Yorùbá titun, Oyèbámijí et al.

Àkóónú

A B D E E F G GB H I J K L M N O O P R
S S T U W Y.

Ìsò. rí méjì pàt`kà ni a lè pín álífábe. 'e. 'tì Yorùbá sí:

(i) Fáwèlì

(ii) Ka 'ńsónàntì

Ìma. `àte. yìnwá

(i) Àkórí Is. e' Mèlòó ni ìró èdè Yorùbá?

Álífábe. 'e. 'tì èdè Yorùbá je. mèlòó?

(ii) *Ìriri ake. 'ko. 'o' Sé o lè sedá o. 'pe. 'hí àwo. n iró èdè Yorùbá?*

**Ogboh ikohi / àgbékale`ise`
Ní síse-n-telé**

Akekob`sí akekob`

Akekob`sí olùkob`

Olùko`sí akekob`

*Ríronúpo. ; jjíjíròròpo. ; píparapo. ' sis. e,
pín pín àwo. n ake. 'ko. 'o' sí owo. 'owo. '*

- *Olùko. ' yóò bèrè ibéèrè lóri idánile. 'ko. 'o' tí ó ko. já.*

- *Olùko. 'yóò se ifààrà sí idánile. 'ko. 'o'.*

- *Olùko' yóò pín àwon akekob` sí owa 'owa'.*

- *Olùko. 'yóò fún as. ojú owo. 'owo. 'ko. 'òkan láàyè láti so. èrò wo. n lóri orí-oro. '*

- *Olùko. 'yóò se àlàyè kikún lóri orí-oro. '*

- *Olùko. 'yóò fún àwo. n ake. 'ko. 'o' láàyè láti bèrè ibéèrè.*

Àsà kágbá - *Olùko. 'yóò ye. àko. silè àwo. n ake. 'ko. 'o' wò, yóò se àtíns. e tí ó ye. kí tó fò. wo. 'sí i.*

Ìgbéléwo. `n *To. 'ka sí àwo. n iró èdè Yorùbá.*

Ìró ko. 'ńsónánì àti fàwe. 'lì mélòò ló wà nínú èdè Yorùbá?

Is e` àmúélé *Jíròrò lóri itàn is. edále. 'ile. ' Yorùbá.*

The above sample of a lesson note for a single period specifies clear objectives for teaching Yorùbá alphabet sounds, such as enabling students to identify the alphabets and pronounce the sounds correctly. It also outlines the lesson content and instructional aids, which include charts, flashcards, and audio recordings, thereby providing a multimodal approach to learning. Furthermore, the note spells out the teaching procedure and methodology in a sequential manner: teacher explanation, followed by group activity, student presentation, and finally evaluation. This structure ensures that the lesson is interactive,

learner-centered, and systematically organised to achieve the stated objectives.

Pedagogical Implications

1. Language Development is one of the most significant implications of using Yorùbá as a medium of instruction. Mother-tongue education enhances literacy by enabling learners to first acquire reading and writing skills in the language they are most familiar with. Research shows that comprehension improves when learners begin their academic journey in their native language, as it bridges the gap between home and school learning. Furthermore, a strong foundation in the mother tongue facilitates the acquisition of second languages, including English, by transferring cognitive and linguistic skills across languages. In this way, the Yorùbá curriculum not only sustains indigenous literacy but also supports multilingual competence.

2. Cultural Preservation is another central pedagogical outcome of teaching through Yorùbá. The inclusion of oral traditions, such as folktales, proverbs, riddles, songs, and chants, allows learners to internalize cultural values and norms while acquiring linguistic competence. These traditions serve as vehicles for transmitting morality, ethics, and communal identity, ensuring that younger generations remain connected to their heritage despite the pressures of globalization. By embedding culture in the learning process, the Yorùbá curriculum becomes a tool for safeguarding indigenous knowledge systems while producing students who are grounded in their cultural roots.

3. National Integration also emerges as an important implication of the Yorùbá curriculum, particularly within Nigeria's multilingual and multicultural context. The deliberate use of indigenous languages in education promotes inclusivity by affirming the legitimacy of local identities within the national space. Yorùbá studies, alongside other Nigerian languages, foster appreciation for linguistic diversity while reducing the dominance

of any single language over others. This contributes to national unity by promoting the idea of “unity in diversity,” where learners develop pride in their own cultural background while respecting the traditions of others. Thus, the Yorùbá curriculum plays both an educational and socio-political role in nation-building.

Challenges

The development and promotion of the Yorùbá language in schools face several challenges, which include the following:

1. Resource gaps remain one of the most pressing challenges in the implementation of the Yorùbá curriculum. The availability of quality instructional materials such as textbooks, reference works, and graded readers is still inadequate in many schools (Bamgbose, 2017, p. 401). Where books exist, they often suffer from orthography inconsistencies, which create confusion for both teachers and learners. This lack of standardisation undermines the effectiveness of language instruction, as students are exposed to competing writing systems and teaching materials of uneven quality. Without a steady investment in the production and distribution of authentic, uniform resources, the Yorùbá curriculum risks being poorly implemented and inconsistently understood.

2. Teacher training is another significant barrier. There is a shortage of qualified Yorùbá language teachers at both primary and secondary levels, a problem compounded by limited opportunities for professional development. Many teachers lack the specialised training required to teach Yorùbá not only as a language but also as a vehicle for literature, culture, and values. The result is often a reliance on rote methods that do not fully engage students or reflect the richness of the language. Addressing this challenge requires dedicated teacher-training programs, continuous workshops, and incentives that attract more educators into the field of indigenous language instruction (Dàda, 2009, p. 68; Bamgbose, 2017, p. 26).

3. Policy inconsistency further weakens the implementation of the Yorùbá curriculum. While national policies on education, such as the National Policy on Language in Education, recognise the importance of mother-tongue instruction in the early years, enforcement is often weak or inconsistent across states. Political will fluctuates, with priorities shifting depending on government agendas, economic pressures, or societal preferences for English. As a result, the Yorùbá curriculum sometimes exists more on paper than in practice, with little accountability for whether schools follow through on implementation. Stronger monitoring and policy enforcement mechanisms are needed to sustain the role of indigenous languages in formal education.

4. Language erosion poses perhaps the greatest long-term threat to Yorùbá studies. The dominance of English as the language of prestige, coupled with rapid urban migration, has led to declining use of Yorùbá in homes and communities (Ìs. o 'lá, 2009, p. 102). Many urban families prefer to raise their children in English, believing it gives them economic and social advantages, often at the expense of the mother tongue. This gradual displacement of Yorùbá reduces the number of fluent speakers, making it harder for schools to sustain the curriculum with motivated learners. Unless deliberate efforts are made to reverse this trend, through advocacy, cultural campaigns, and mother-tongue-friendly policies, the Yorùbá curriculum may struggle to remain relevant in the face of linguistic shift.

Prospects and Future Directions

The future of the Yorùbá curriculum rests on how effectively it adapts to emerging realities in education, technology, and globalisation. As language use shifts in response to societal changes, innovations in digital learning, script development, institutional support and globalisation are critical to strengthening the presence of Yorùbá in schools and communities. By leveraging these tools and contexts, Yorùbá can remain not only a language of

cultural heritage but also a relevant vehicle for modern education and global identity.

1. Digitisation and AI present promising opportunities for enhancing Yorùbá language learning. Mobile applications, e-learning platforms, and AI-powered tools can be developed to provide interactive lessons, digital dictionaries, pronunciation guides, and storytelling modules in Yorùbá. These innovations allow learners to engage with the language beyond traditional classrooms, making learning flexible, accessible, and attractive to younger generations who are digitally inclined. Such platforms also encourage self-directed learning, bridging the resource gaps often found in conventional schools.

2. Script innovation is another pathway for revitalising Yorùbá. While the Latin alphabet remains the standard orthography, there are growing scholarly and cultural efforts to promote alternative scripts, such as the Odùduwà script. The development and introduction of indigenous scripts can deepen cultural pride, reinforce Yorùbá identity, and encourage learners to connect with the language on a symbolic and aesthetic level. Script innovation, when supported with proper teaching materials, also broadens the possibilities of multilingual literacy and helps assert the cultural sovereignty of Yorùbá in a globalized world.

3. Institutional support is essential for the sustainability of Yorùbá in education. Organisations such as the Yorùbá Studies Association, Association of Teachers of Yorùbá language and Culture of Nigeria, alongside cultural NGOs, have a key role in research, advocacy, and community mobilisation. Through partnerships with schools, governments, and international agencies, these institutions can push for policy consistency, resource development, and increased visibility of Yorùbá in the public domain. Beyond advocacy, institutional backing ensures continuity, as initiatives to strengthen Yorùbá are formalised, coordinated, and supported with adequate funding and expertise (Adeigbe, 2010, p. 54).

4. Globalisation further positions Yorùbá as more than a regional or national language. With large diaspora communities in Europe, the Americas, and beyond, Yorùbá has the potential to be framed as a world language. Initiatives to teach Yorùbá abroad, incorporate it into diaspora curricula, and connect global learners through digital communities can elevate its status and relevance. In this way, globalisation, often seen as a threat to indigenous languages, can be turned into an opportunity for expansion, helping to sustain and promote Yorùbá across generations and geographies.

Conclusion

The Yorùbá curriculum is not merely academic content; it is a cultural artifact that links the past to the present and projects into the future. Its evolution, from missionary codification in the 19th century to Fafunwa's Yorùbá-medium experiment and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) reforms, reflects the resilience of an indigenous language in the face of colonial and postcolonial pressures. The curriculum demonstrates how education can serve as both a tool of cultural preservation and an instrument of national development, embedding values, traditions, and intellectual heritage into structured learning experiences. By framing Yorùbá as both a subject and a medium of instruction, the curriculum affirms the importance of language in shaping identity and fostering cognitive growth.

Despite these achievements, persistent challenges continue to hinder their full realisation. Resource gaps, inconsistent policies, inadequate teacher preparation, and the social prestige of English all threaten the status and transmission of Yorùbá in schools. Yet, the future holds significant promise. The integration of technology, such as digitised learning tools and AI-powered platforms, coupled with innovations in script development and strong institutional advocacy, can reinvigorate Yorùbá education. More importantly, deliberate policy enforcement and support from cultural

institutions can ensure its sustainability. If these opportunities are fully harnessed, the Yorùbá curriculum will not only thrive within Nigeria but also assert itself globally, contributing to the preservation of linguistic diversity and the enrichment of world knowledge.

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