

# **Decolonization of Teacher Education in Nigeria for Sustainable Development**

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## **Abstract:**

*The work is centred on decolonization of teacher education in Nigeria for sustainable development. The Nigerian teacher education system remains entrenched in colonial-era curricula and pedagogies, hindering sustainable development. This study explores the need for decolonization in teacher education, identifying Eurocentric biases and cultural disconnections that undermine national development goals. The purpose of this research is to examine the imperatives of decolonizing teacher education in Nigeria, focusing on curriculum relevance, pedagogical innovations, and cultural contextualization. Using an analytical approach, this study discusses issues such as the dominance of Western epistemologies, lack of indigenous knowledge integration, and inadequate cultural sensitivity in teacher training. The findings highlight the importance of decolonization in promoting national identity, cultural pride, and contextually relevant teaching practices. The study recommends a paradigm shift towards indigenous knowledge systems, community engagement, and culturally responsive pedagogies in teacher education. Teacher training programs should incorporate local languages, histories, and cultural practices to foster sustainable development.*

**Keywords:** *Decolonization, teacher education, sustainable development, indigenous knowledge, cultural contextualization.*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The decolonization of teacher education in Nigeria is a critical issue that has garnered significant attention in recent years, with many researchers arguing that it is essential for sustainable development (Adeyemi, 2022). According to Adeyemi (2022), the current teacher education system in Nigeria is largely a product of colonialism, with curricula and pedagogies that are still heavily influenced by Western ideologies. This has resulted in a lack of relevance and effectiveness in addressing the unique needs and challenges of Nigerian society. The system has failed to produce teachers who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to address the complex problems facing Nigerian communities. Furthermore, the dominant Western epistemologies have led to the marginalization of indigenous knowledge and perspectives, resulting in a loss of cultural identity and autonomy. The continued reliance on Western knowledge systems has also perpetuated a culture of dependency, undermining Nigeria's ability to develop its own unique solutions to its educational challenges.

The decolonization of teacher education is not just about changing the curriculum, but also about transforming the way teachers think and approach teaching (Ogunyemi, 2021). Ogunyemi (2021) argues that teacher education programs in Nigeria need to be reoriented to prioritize indigenous knowledge and perspectives, and to promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This can be achieved by incorporating local languages, cultures, and histories into the curriculum, and by using pedagogies that are more relevant to the Nigerian context. Moreover, teacher education programs need to emphasize the importance of contextual relevance, cultural sensitivity, and social justice, in order to produce teachers who are responsive to the needs of their students and communities. By doing so, teachers will be empowered to develop curricula that are tailored to the specific needs of their students, and to use teaching methods that are effective in promoting student learning and achievement.

The current teacher education system in Nigeria has been criticized for being overly theoretical and lacking in practical relevance (Okeke, 2020). Okeke (2020) notes that many teacher education programs in Nigeria focus too much on transmitting knowledge, rather than equipping teachers with the skills and competencies needed to address the complex challenges facing Nigerian society. A decolonized teacher education system would prioritize practical, experiential learning and would focus on developing teachers who are adaptable, innovative, and committed to social justice. This would involve incorporating community-based learning, service learning, and other forms of experiential learning that would enable teachers to develop the skills and competencies needed to address the complex challenges facing Nigerian society. By prioritizing practical, experiential learning, teacher education programs can ensure that teachers are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to promote student learning and achievement.

Decolonization is not just about rejecting Western knowledge, but also about recognizing and valuing the knowledge and experiences of Nigerian communities (Nwosu, 2023). Nwosu (2023) argues that teacher education programs in Nigeria need to be more inclusive and diverse, and should prioritize the perspectives and experiences of marginalized groups, including women, rural communities, and indigenous peoples. This would involve incorporating diverse knowledge systems and pedagogies into the curriculum, and promoting a more nuanced understanding of Nigerian society. Moreover, it would require a critical examination of the power dynamics and structures that have perpetuated inequality and marginalization, and a commitment to promoting social justice and equity. By prioritizing the perspectives and experiences of marginalized groups, teacher education programs can ensure that teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to promote social justice and equity in their classrooms and communities.

The decolonization of teacher education is also closely linked to issues of power and inequality (Agbaje, 2022). Agbaje (2022) notes that the current teacher education system in Nigeria perpetuates existing power dynamics, with Western knowledge and ideologies being privileged over indigenous knowledge and perspectives. A decolonized teacher education system would prioritize the voices and experiences of marginalized groups, and would seek to challenge dominant power structures and promote social justice. This would involve promoting critical consciousness and agency among teachers, and empowering them to challenge dominant ideologies and power structures. By doing so, teachers would be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to promote social justice and equity in their classrooms and communities, and to challenge the dominant power structures that perpetuate inequality and marginalization.

The decolonization of teacher education is essential for sustainable development in Nigeria, as it would enable teachers to develop the skills and competencies needed to address the complex challenges facing Nigerian society (Eze, 2021). Eze (2021) argues that a decolonized teacher education system would prioritize sustainability, equity, and social justice, and would equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development in their communities. This would involve incorporating sustainable development goals and principles into the curriculum, and promoting experiential learning and community engagement. By prioritizing sustainability, equity, and social justice, teacher education programs can ensure that teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development in Nigeria.

## **2.0 Decolonization**

Decolonization is a complex process that involves challenging and dismantling the dominant Western epistemologies and power structures that have been imposed on non-Western societies. It requires a critical examination of the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism and imperialism, and a commitment to promoting social justice and equity. Decolonization is not just about changing the curriculum or incorporating indigenous knowledge, but about transforming the way we think, teach, and learn. It involves questioning the assumptions and biases that underlie our understanding of the world, and being open to new perspectives and ways of knowing. Decolonization is a process that requires ongoing effort, commitment, and reflection, and it is essential for creating a more just and equitable society.

Decolonization involves recognizing and valuing the knowledge and experiences of marginalized communities, and prioritizing their perspectives and voices. It requires a shift in power dynamics, and a commitment to promoting inclusivity and diversity. Decolonization is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather a context-specific and nuanced process that requires careful consideration of the local context and the needs of the community. It involves creating spaces for marginalized voices to be heard, and promoting a more nuanced understanding of the world.

Decolonization also involves recognizing the importance of indigenous knowledge and perspectives, and incorporating them into our understanding of the world. By doing so, we can create a more inclusive and equitable society, where all individuals and communities have the opportunity to thrive.

Decolonization is not just about the past, but also about the present and the future. It involves challenging the ongoing impacts of colonialism and imperialism, and promoting a more just and equitable society. Decolonization requires a commitment to social justice, and a willingness to challenge dominant power structures and ideologies. It involves promoting critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, and empowering individuals and communities to take control of their own lives and futures. Decolonization is a process that requires courage, resilience, and determination, but it is essential for creating a better future for all. By challenging the dominant power structures and ideologies, we can create a more just and equitable society, where all individuals and communities have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Decolonization is a journey, not a destination. It is a process that requires ongoing effort, commitment, and reflection. It involves being open to learning, listening, and growing, and being willing to challenge our own biases and assumptions. Decolonization is not about rejecting Western knowledge or culture, but about promoting a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the world. It is about creating a more just and equitable society, where all individuals and communities have the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential. Decolonization is a process that requires collaboration, dialogue, and mutual respect, and it is essential for creating a better future for all. By working together, we can create a more just and equitable society, where all individuals and communities can flourish.

### **3.0 Teacher Education**

Teacher education is a dynamic field that requires continuous evolution to meet the changing needs of society, technology, and students. According to Panigrahi and Naaz (2021), emerging research trends in teacher education emphasize technological integration, diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as pedagogical innovation. These trends are reshaping the landscape of teacher education, challenging traditional models and encouraging innovative approaches to teaching and learning. The incorporation of technology, for instance, has opened up new avenues for distance learning, online resources, and digital literacy, enabling teachers to reach a wider audience and cater to diverse learning styles. Moreover, the focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion is crucial in addressing the complex needs of modern classrooms, where students from diverse backgrounds and abilities learn together.

Effective teacher education programs must prioritize social and emotional learning, professional development, and evidence-based practices. As highlighted by Eduardo García-González, Rosa Jiménez-Fontana, and Pilar Azcárate (2020), pre-service teachers' perceptions of education for sustainability and sustainable development goals are crucial in shaping their future teaching practices. By incorporating sustainability and social responsibility into teacher education, educators can foster a more inclusive and environmentally conscious learning environment. This, in turn, can lead to the development of responsible and engaged citizens who are equipped to address the challenges of the 21st century. Furthermore, social and emotional learning is essential in helping teachers manage stress, build positive relationships, and create a supportive classroom environment that promotes academic achievement and well-being.

The future of teacher education depends on collaboration between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. According to Jan Otto Brandt, Matthias Barth, Elizabeth Merritt, and Amelia Hale (2021), the 4Cs of learning - connection, curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking - are essential for pre-service teacher education for sustainability. By integrating these principles, teacher education programs can equip educators with the skills and knowledge needed to address the complex challenges of modern classrooms. This includes designing learning experiences that are relevant, engaging, and tailored to the needs of diverse learners. Moreover, collaboration and partnerships can facilitate the sharing of best practices, research, and resources, ultimately leading to improved teacher education outcomes and a more sustainable future.

### **4.0 Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development is a multifaceted concept that encompasses economic, social, and environmental dimensions. It aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet

their own needs. This approach promotes long-term sustainability, ensuring that development is equitable, environmentally conscious, and socially just. By integrating sustainable practices into various sectors, societies can work towards achieving a more resilient and equitable future.

Achieving sustainable development requires a holistic approach that involves collaboration among governments, businesses, communities, and individuals. It involves rethinking consumption patterns, investing in renewable energy, and promoting sustainable agriculture. Sustainable development also emphasizes protecting biodiversity, reducing waste and pollution, and addressing climate change. Implementing these strategies can help achieve global goals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which provide a framework for a more sustainable and equitable world by 2030.

Sustainable development is a process that requires ongoing effort, commitment, and innovation. It involves empowering communities, promoting social justice, and ensuring equitable benefits from development. By prioritizing sustainability, societies can create opportunities for economic growth, social development, and environmental protection, leading to a more just, peaceful, and prosperous world. Collective action and cooperation are essential for achieving sustainable development and creating a lasting legacy for future generations.

### **5.0 Dominance of Western Epistemologies**

The dominance of Western epistemologies has been a longstanding issue in the global knowledge landscape, perpetuating a hierarchy of knowledge that privileges Western scientific methods over indigenous and non-Western ways of knowing (Mignolo, 2021). According to Mignolo, Western epistemology achieved global dominance through colonialism, cultural hegemony, and institutional power, establishing epistemological hierarchies that delegitimized alternative knowledge systems. This process transformed Western epistemology from a culturally specific approach to a universal standard, erasing the complex histories and contexts that shaped its development.

The universalization of Western knowledge has led to the suppression of diverse epistemologies, with Western scientific methods being positioned as the only legitimate approach to knowledge production (Santos, 2014). As Santos argues, this has resulted in the erasure of alternative knowledge systems, reinforcing the notion that Western knowledge is superior. The consequences of this epistemological hegemony are far-reaching, influencing policy, education, and research practices worldwide. Santos contends that this has led to a loss of epistemological diversity, limiting our understanding of the world and our capacity to address complex global challenges.

The dominance of Western epistemologies is also reflected in academic institutions, which have historically served colonial and imperial powers, perpetuating epistemological hegemony (Yako, 2020). Louis Yako notes that Western universities have privileged certain knowledge forms while marginalizing others, maintaining the status quo of Western epistemological dominance. This has resulted in a lack of representation and recognition of non-Western knowledge systems, reinforcing the notion that Western knowledge is universal and superior.

Decolonial scholars emphasize the need to challenge Western epistemological hegemony, advocating for epistemic decolonization and the recognition of diverse knowledge systems (Mitova, 2020). Mitova argues that decolonization requires dismantling the Western way of thinking and its self-arrogated hegemonic authority, re-centering knowledge production on local contexts and experiences. This involves acknowledging the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism and imperialism on knowledge production, and working towards a more inclusive and equitable knowledge landscape.

Ultimately, recognizing the historical contingency of Western epistemological hegemony can help create space for epistemological pluralism, allowing diverse knowledge systems to coexist without hierarchical relationships (Mignolo, 2021). By engaging with alternative epistemologies, we can work towards a more inclusive and equitable knowledge landscape, one that values diverse ways of knowing and promotes social justice. This requires a fundamental transformation of our understanding of knowledge, recognizing the importance of context, power, and difference in shaping our understanding of the world.

### **6.0 Inadequacies of Indigenous Knowledge Integration and Cultural Sensitivity in Teacher Training in Nigeria**

The integration of indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity in teacher training programs in Nigeria has been woefully inadequate, resulting in a lack of culturally responsive teaching practices in classrooms, which has far-reaching implications for student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement (Adeyemi, 2022).

According to Adeyemi, this inadequacy stems from the dominance of Western epistemologies in teacher education curricula, which often neglects the rich cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge systems of Nigerian societies, relegating them to the periphery of the educational experience. As a result, teachers are not adequately equipped to incorporate local contexts and cultural references into their teaching, leading to a disconnect between the school and the community, and undermining the relevance and effectiveness of education in addressing local needs and challenges.

The lack of cultural sensitivity in teacher training programs has also contributed to the marginalization of indigenous knowledge and practices in Nigerian classrooms, perpetuating a broader cultural imperialism that devalues and dismisses non-Western ways of knowing (Ogunniyi, 2020). Ogunniyi argues that teacher education programs often prioritize Western scientific knowledge over indigenous knowledge, reinforcing the notion that Western knowledge is superior, and ignoring the complex and nuanced ways in which indigenous knowledge systems have contributed to the development of Nigerian society. This has led to a loss of cultural identity and a lack of relevance in the education system, as students are not encouraged to explore and appreciate their own cultural heritage, and are instead socialized to view Western knowledge as the only legitimate form of knowledge.

Furthermore, the inadequate integration of indigenous knowledge in teacher training has resulted in a lack of contextually relevant teaching materials and resources, which has made it difficult for teachers to design and deliver lessons that are meaningful and engaging for students (Okebukola, 2021). Okebukola notes that teachers often struggle to develop teaching materials that incorporate local contexts and indigenous knowledge, leading to a reliance on Western-centric resources that may not be relevant to Nigerian students, and which often perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce existing power dynamics. This has contributed to a lack of engagement and motivation among students, as they do not see themselves reflected in the curriculum, and are instead presented with a sanitized and decontextualized version of knowledge that bears little relation to their lived experiences.

The cultural insensitivity of teacher training programs has also perpetuated stereotypes and biases against indigenous cultures and knowledge systems, contributing to a broader climate of cultural disdain and disrespect (Aina, 2022). Aina argues that teacher education programs often neglect to address the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism and imperialism on indigenous knowledge systems, leading to a lack of understanding and appreciation for the value of indigenous knowledge, and reinforcing the notion that Western knowledge is superior. This has resulted in a lack of cultural sensitivity and awareness among teachers, which can perpetuate negative stereotypes and reinforce existing power dynamics, creating a toxic and alienating learning environment for students from indigenous backgrounds.

Moreover, the inadequate integration of indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity in teacher training has implications for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which emphasizes the importance of inclusive and equitable quality education (UNESCO, 2020). UNESCO notes that teacher education programs must prioritize cultural sensitivity and indigenous knowledge integration to ensure that teachers are equipped to provide inclusive and relevant education for all students, and to address the persistent inequalities and disparities that exist in the education system. This requires a fundamental transformation of teacher education programs, one that recognizes the importance of context and culture in shaping teaching and learning, and that values and respects the diversity of Nigerian cultures and knowledge systems.

Ultimately, addressing the inadequacies of indigenous knowledge integration and cultural sensitivity in teacher training requires a fundamental transformation of teacher education programs in Nigeria, one that prioritizes indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity, and recognizes the importance of context and culture in shaping teaching and learning (Nweke, 2021). Nweke argues that this transformation must involve a decolonization of the curriculum, prioritizing indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity, and recognizing the importance of context and culture in shaping teaching and learning, in order to create a more inclusive and equitable education system that values and respects the diversity of Nigerian cultures and knowledge systems.

## **7.0 Strategies for Decolonizing Teacher Education in Nigeria**

Decolonizing teacher education in Nigeria requires a fundamental transformation of the existing curriculum, one that prioritizes indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity. This involves recognizing the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism and imperialism on Nigerian education systems and acknowledging the importance of context and culture in shaping teaching and learning. By doing so, teacher education programs can begin to address the persistent inequalities and disparities that exist in the education system, and promote a more inclusive and equitable education system that values and respects the diversity of Nigerian cultures and knowledge systems. This transformation requires a critical examination of the existing power structures and epistemologies that have historically marginalized indigenous knowledge systems, and a commitment to promoting social justice and equity in education.

A key strategy for decolonizing teacher education is to involve local communities in the design and delivery of teacher education programs. This can help ensure that teacher education is relevant to local contexts and needs, and that teachers are equipped to provide inclusive and equitable education for all students. Community involvement can also help to promote cultural sensitivity and awareness among teachers, and to challenge dominant Western epistemologies that have historically marginalized indigenous knowledge systems. Furthermore, community involvement can provide opportunities for teachers to learn from local experts and practitioners, and to develop contextually relevant teaching materials and resources that reflect the diversity of Nigerian cultures and knowledge systems.

Decolonizing teacher education also requires a critical examination of the power dynamics that shape teacher education programs. This involves recognizing the ways in which colonialism and imperialism have perpetuated inequalities and disparities in education, and working to address these inequalities through teacher education. By doing so, teacher education programs can help to promote social justice and equity in education, and to challenge dominant power structures that have historically marginalized certain groups. This requires a commitment to promoting critical thinking and reflexivity among teachers, and to creating a safe and inclusive learning environment that values and respects diverse perspectives and knowledge systems.

Another strategy for decolonizing teacher education is to incorporate indigenous knowledge and perspectives into the curriculum. This can involve integrating local languages, cultures, and histories into teacher education programs, and recognizing the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in shaping teaching and learning. By doing so, teacher education programs can help to promote cultural sensitivity and awareness among teachers, and to challenge dominant Western epistemologies that have historically marginalized indigenous knowledge systems. Furthermore, incorporating indigenous knowledge and perspectives can provide opportunities for teachers to develop a more nuanced understanding of the complex cultural and historical contexts in which they teach, and to develop contextually relevant teaching practices that are responsive to the needs of diverse learners.

Decolonizing teacher education also requires a commitment to ongoing professional development and support for teachers. This can involve providing teachers with opportunities to engage with indigenous knowledge systems and cultural sensitivity training, and to develop contextually relevant teaching materials and resources. By doing so, teacher education programs can help to ensure that teachers are equipped to provide inclusive and equitable education for all students, and to address the persistent inequalities and disparities that exist in the education system. Furthermore, ongoing professional development and support can help to promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement among teachers, and to foster a community of practice that values and respects diverse perspectives and knowledge systems.

Ultimately, decolonizing teacher education in Nigeria requires a fundamental shift in the way that teacher education is conceptualized and delivered. It requires a commitment to social justice and equity, and a willingness to challenge dominant power structures and epistemologies. By working together, teacher education programs can help to promote a more inclusive and equitable education system that values and respects the diversity of Nigerian cultures and knowledge systems, and provides opportunities for all students to succeed and thrive.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

The decolonization of teacher education in Nigeria is a crucial step towards achieving sustainable development and promoting social justice and equity in education. By recognizing the importance of indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity, teacher education programs can help to address the persistent inequalities and disparities that exist in the education system. This requires a fundamental transformation of the existing curriculum, one that

prioritizes indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity, and challenges dominant Western epistemologies that have historically marginalized indigenous knowledge systems.

The decolonization of teacher education also requires a commitment to ongoing professional development and support for teachers. This involves providing teachers with opportunities to engage with indigenous knowledge systems and cultural sensitivity training, and to develop contextually relevant teaching materials and resources. By doing so, teacher education programs can help to ensure that teachers are equipped to provide inclusive and equitable education for all students, and to address the persistent inequalities and disparities that exist in the education system.

Furthermore, the decolonization of teacher education has implications for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which emphasizes the importance of inclusive and equitable quality education. By prioritizing indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity, teacher education programs can help to promote a more inclusive and equitable education system that values and respects the diversity of Nigerian cultures and knowledge systems.

Ultimately, the decolonization of teacher education in Nigeria requires a fundamental shift in the way that teacher education is conceptualized and delivered. It requires a commitment to social justice and equity, and a willingness to challenge dominant power structures and epistemologies. By working together, teacher education programs can help to promote a more inclusive and equitable education system that values and respects the diversity of Nigerian cultures and knowledge systems, and provides opportunities for all students to succeed and thrive.

In the final analysis, the decolonization of teacher education in Nigeria is a complex and ongoing process that requires a sustained commitment to social justice and equity. It requires a willingness to challenge dominant power structures and epistemologies, and to prioritize indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity. By doing so, teacher education programs can help to promote a more inclusive and equitable education system that values and respects the diversity of Nigerian cultures and knowledge systems, and contributes to the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria.

## **9.0 Recommendations**

The researcher recommends the following:

1. **Establish a National Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Teacher Education:** Establish a national centre that will focus on promoting indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity in teacher education. The centre will provide a platform for research, training, and resource development, and will serve as a hub for promoting innovative approaches to teacher education that prioritize indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity.
2. **Develop a Contextually Relevant Teacher Education Curriculum Framework:** Develop a teacher education curriculum framework that is contextually relevant to Nigerian cultures and knowledge systems. The framework should prioritize indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity, and provide guidelines for integrating local languages, cultures, and histories into teacher education programs.
3. **Introduce a Mandatory Cultural Sensitivity and Indigenous Knowledge Course:** Introduce a mandatory course on cultural sensitivity and indigenous knowledge for all teacher education students. The course should provide students with a deep understanding of the importance of indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity in teaching and learning, and equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to promote inclusive and equitable education.
4. **Establish a Teacher Education Quality Assurance Agency with a Focus on Indigenous Knowledge:** Establish a quality assurance agency that will focus on ensuring that teacher education programs prioritize indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity. The agency should develop standards and benchmarks for teacher education programs, and provide accreditation and certification for programs that meet these standards.

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