Decolonisation of Early Years Education (EYE) in Nigeria: A Case for Social Justice.

By

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October 2025

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education and Social Justice.

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This thesis is entirely a product of my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

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ABSTRACT

This research explores Early Years Education (EYE) a field often neglected in decolonial discourse, as a critical site for either perpetuating epistemic injustice or cultivating epistemic freedom. It questions the colonial legacies embedded within Early Years Education in Nigeria and reimagines pedagogical frameworks rooted in indigenous epistemologies and philosophies like Igwebuike and Ubuntu. This research is motivated by paucity of research on the decolonisation of EYE both in Nigeria and internationally. despite the continued impact of colonial and neo-colonial projects on education, including EYE.

Drawing on decolonial and feminist methodology, as well as indigenous philosophies, the research argues for a transformative curriculum that resists epistemic violence and affirms pluralistic ways of knowing. It examines how indigenous knowledge is integrated into the EYE curriculum, how EYE lecturers are engaging with decolonisation projects and the factors that are affecting the decolonisation of the sector. Underpinned by Igwebuike and Ubuntu, the research formulates a blueprint for an insurgent curriculum aimed at advancing decolonial EYE in Nigeria and beyond.

Using thematic analysis, data generated through qualitative semi-structured interviews with Early Years lecturers from selected universities in the Southwest and Southeast of Nigeria

revealed six major themes. These themes were analysed across three separate chapters in dialogue with existing literature and theorical frameworks underpinning the research. The implications of the findings are discussed and recommendations for future practice and policy are proposed.

This thesis contributes to the debates on decolonisation in education by articulating a relational pedagogical model that values indigenous knowledges and is grounded in the learners' socio-cultural context. It calls on educators, scholars and policy makers to recognise education not merely as a process of knowledge transmission, but as a transformative practice that reclaims education as a space of possibility, justice and care. From this perspective, the research argues that decolonisation must begin at the Early Years Education.

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DEDICATION

To Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o whose work 'Decolonising the Mind' acted as catalyst. He was glad to hear that this research was on decolonising the youngest minds of society. Unfortunately, he could not read the full work because he died a few months before its completion. To Paulo Freire for writing the 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' which aroused my consciousness and opened my mind to understand education as a political tool-to control or liberate. Lastly to my parents Nze and Lolo Ubadigbo Akabueze for praying for me from above.

Acknowledgements

I thank God Almighty for giving me the inner force that sustained me throughout this journey. Completing this doctoral journey has been both a privilege and a profound exercise in intellectual humility. I owe my deepest gratitude to my family: my darling husband Dr Kaius Ikejezie whose unwavering support, wisdom and companionship made this endeavour possible. To my son Dr JuniorCaius Ikejezie for pushing me above my limit. To my son Mr Carl Kenchi Ikejezie for encouraging me and always being there for me.

To my supervisor, Dr Richard Budd, thank you for your gentle provocations and relentless encouragement. Your feedback taught me that structure and creativity need not be in tension, they can dance. Your mentorship reminded me that rigor and kindness are not mutually exclusive. Thank you so much for your kind words. They mean a lot to me, and they were words of encouragement.

To the children of Nigeria, whose futures sparked this inquiry, may this work contribute to building classrooms where their stories are cherished, their languages celebrated and their knowledges honoured. To my participants whose lived experiences shaped the outcomes of this research, may you continue to struggle to shape positively the next generation of Nigerians.

This thesis is not mine alone. It is a chorus of voices, ancestral, intellectual, communal that have shaped my understanding of education, justice and the power of indigenous knowledge systems. To the thinkers who became companions in this process, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o; Linda Tuhiwai Smith; Fikile Nxumalo; bell hooks; Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni; Achille Mbembe; Nancy Fraser; A. Babs Fafunwa; Paulo Freire; and a host of others, thank you for your bravery and brilliance. Your texts provoked, unsettled and guided me toward a pedagogy

rooted in decolonial possibility. To all you who see education as a site of resistance, this is our collective testament. May it nourish the movement that imagine better.

To Ubuntu and Igwebuike, you were compass, much than theoretical anchors. Finally, to the girl I once was, sitting cross-legged under orange tree and asking why the world feels uneven, you were right to ask. Keep asking.

List of Acronyms

BERA British Educational Research Association

CHE Council on Higher Education

EYE Early Years Education

FASS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

FME Federal Ministry of Education

GDPR General Data Protection Regulation

HE Higher Education

LUMS Lancaster University Management School

NNPE Nigerian National Policy on Education

NUS National Union of Students

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

STEM Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

TA Thematic Analysis

TETFUND Tertiary Education Trust Fund

UBE Universal Basic Education

UDHR Universal Declaration of Human Right

UNESCO United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNN University of Nigeria Nusukka

WAEC West African Examination Council

ZMO Leibniz- Zentrum Modenner Orient

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale for Research

'*No job is more important than working with children in the early years (Development Matters, 2021')*.

1. 1 Introduction

This thesis aims to contribute to the decolonisation of education particularly Nigerian Early Years Education (EYE), and the ongoing debates on the decolonisation project globally and nationally (Nigeria). The decolonisation project is a process to undo some of the effects of colonialism (Nyoni, 2019). In the field of education, it seeks to free knowledge from Eurocentrism, seeing knowledge from only a European perspective (Ibid).

One of the aims of decolonisation in education is to create an equitable, contextually relevant learning environment that respects the identities, languages and cultures of learners (Nasrullah, 2017; Nyoni, 2019). This is crucial especially at the early phase of education; a stage at which epistemic orientations, identity formation and notions of what counts as valid knowledges are first cultivated (Soto and Swadener, 2002; Nsamenang, 2006). This is why this research matters. By intervening at this stage, decolonisation becomes preventive rather than corrective; addressing epistemic injustice before it becomes entrenched. Decolonising EYE therefore contributes to equipping the children with different worldviews.

It is unacceptable for a sovereign state like Nigeria to have a foreign language (English) as its language of instruction. The result is that many children born in Nigeria cannot speak their mother tongue. This alienates them from their culture (Agbanusi, 2018). EYE is associated with improving the educational outcomes, especially for poor children who stand to benefit

from early years education (Barnett and Nores, 2015; Gambaro et al., 2014; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2023; 2025).

The project of Western colonisation had three strategies. The first was the dismissal and mockery of the culture of those colonised. This justified the imposition of the Western culture on them. The devaluation of the culture of the colonised was thorough and gradual, through evangelical enthusiasm (Razak, 2012). The second strategy was education. The creation of Western education system was a deliberate, conscious endeavour aiming to produce competent but submissive clerks for the needs of the colonisers. Razak, citing Mohamed Idris, says, 'We must at present do our best to form a class of who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern, a class of persons Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste and opinion, in morals and in intellect. This class would in time become by degree fit vehicles for conveying our knowledge to the great mass of the population' (Ibid, p.24). The third instrument was language. The colonisers, knowing the importance of language, took the indigenes' languages away from them and imposed their own language onto them. The adoption of the coloniser's language came to be seen as a status symbol (Phillipson, 1992; Razak, 2012) and the only avenue left for promotion within the career chain set by the colonisers. Language is not only a medium of communication, but a window to one's culture (Ngugi, 1986).

The focus of decolonisation must be on these three instruments of colonisation. Unfortunately, this did not happen. The first phase of decolonisation mainly aimed for political liberation, leading to the formation of sovereign states with the patterns of colonial power intact (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). Political decolonisation in different contexts failed to question the Western epistemology upon which institutions including education were built. Education was an instrument of colonial rule, and its epistemology cannot be neutral towards the project of colonisation. The colonial masters left their institutions while going (if they really have gone!) and we are afraid to change them (Razak, 2012).

On their independence, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and other colonised countries inherited an education system and curriculum built for the exploitation of their labour, land, etcetera. On independence, power was given to the minority elites, who were the products of the above

education system. Nigeria for example gained political independence in 1960, but its educational curricula, language policies, theories and teaching practices are still influenced by British legacies (Okebukola, 2005; Oguejiofor, 2019). This could also be said of other countries, like Ghana or Kenya.

The colonisers set up an education system in Nigeria not because there were no such systems before their arrival, but because the new system had an agenda. Education in precolonial Africa was part and parcel of life as learning and ways of living were not separated (Razak, 2012). Such indigenous knowledge systems were marginalised by the colonialists, leading to the creation of learners who are alienated from their cultural identities, while promoting Western ideals and values (Fafunwa, 1974; Taiwo, 1980).

The tasks of the institutions of learning in Africa today are the protection, preservation and promotion of African culture/identity to pass them down to the younger generation. However, the institutions are failing in this direction as they are transmitting European philosophies, values and culture to the students (Razak, 2012). This is because African universities were set up by Europeans to support colonisation and up till now there has been no single African university that believes it can be great without appealing to Europe (Ibid). This explains the need to decolonise education. This is where this research is situated – precisely, in EYE.

Decolonisation involves identifying and eliminating institutional, linguistic and cultural elements that had sustained colonial control even after the colonised had achieved freedom (Nasrullah, 2017). Recently, students from the Global North and South have been calling for the decolonisation of education. From the South African student movement, a call termed the 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign focused on the removal of the John Rhodes statue from the University of Cape Town, together with addressing workers' rights, curriculum and other issues (Kamanzi, 2015). From the University of Oxford a similar campaign, also known as 'Rhodes Must Fall', came with three broad areas in which it was committed to work within Oxford University: iconography, curriculum and representation (Bhambra et al, (2018). From the UK's National Union of Students (NUS) came the students' march (2011-2015) with the issues 'Why is My Curriculum White', and 'Liberate My Degree' (Hussain, 2015); all these aimed to challenge 'Eurocentric domination and lack of diversity' in curricula across UK universities.

A few important works on the decolonisation of education will suffice here. Bhambra et al, (2018), Decolonising the University, includes essays that address colonial legacies in university curricula. The introduction of the work connects with some of the campaigns above, as well as the question why university should be decolonised. The Western Universities were, according to Bhambra et al, sites where colonial intellectuals developed theories that support colonial endeavours. Knowledge is produced, consecrated, institutionalised and naturalised (Bhambra et al, 2018, p.19). Another work is Alvares and Faruqi, (eds) (2012), Decolonising the University aiming to discuss the future of African Universities and how to decolonise them.

The decolonisation of education has been explored in many research projects which mainly focus on the decolonisation of Higher Education (HE). In, fact, Bibliometric analysis (between 1985-2020) carried out by Adefila et al (2021) revealed that out of 96 widespread Journals across the globe, 51 had decolonisation, with HE 46 times as key words. The areas of interest are Engineering, Technology, Health, Law, Arts, Linguistic, Theology, Communication, Information Sciences, etcetera. This supports Swadener et al (2013), who opine that EYE institutions are invisible in decolonial debates. Zembyas (2018) reports that, when decolonisation aims for teacher education, attention is still on tertiary level training. This apparent lack of interest in EYE from decolonial scholars gave impetus to the choice of this research topic.

1.2 Rationale and Motivation

Leading on from this observation of HE-centric decolonising research, the situation in Nigeria appears to mirror this. Debates and scholarly works on the decolonisation of education in Nigeria focusing on HE from available literature are overwhelming (Adeogun, 2020; Okofu and Fakere; 2022; Fomunyam, 2020; Agbedo et al, 2012; Ojo, et al 2023; Falola, 2021; Adekunle and Meroyi, 2023, etc.). The focus of these works ranges from decolonising the Nigerian Education System to decolonising architecture, mathematics, music, engineering and so on. A search on websites of the Nigerian Association of Early Childhood Professionals showed paucity of research works on decolonising Nigerian EYE.

There are scholarly works that had investigated the EYE, mostly from its beneficial perspective both in Nigeria and elsewhere. Globally, EYE has been associated with improving the educational outcomes, especially for poor children who stand to benefit from the provision of childcare services (Barnett and Nores, 2015; Gambaro et al., 2014; OECD, 2023; 2025). It is also important in the development of young children's cognitive, linguistic, physical and social behaviour (Bosah et al., 2015). Mahuta (2007); and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund {UNICEF}, (2019) state that pre-primary education helps to identify and address children's problems and enhance their learning, leading to positive and holistic development. EYE facilitates the entrance of all children into primary school on equal footing, thus creating a space for inclusion and justice (Ebrahim, 2014). Unfortunately, the sector does not enjoy much attention from either scholars or governments, not even in terms of funding (Obiweuozor, 2020; Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013; Udofot, and Akpan, 2022).

Research works on EYE from Nigeria seem to focus on topics such as policies, funding and practices: Salami (2016); Policy Implementation, Obiweuozor (2015); Issues and Problems, Sooter (2013); The Role of the Government in Funding Early Childhood Education in Nigeria, Udofot, and Akpan, (2022), to cite but a few. There are also some research works on the decolonisation of EYE internationally, including, but not limited to: Nxumalo and Cedillo (2017) Decolonising Place in Early Childhood Studies: Thinking with Indigenous onto-epistemologies and Black Feminist Geographies; Nxumalo (2021) Decolonial Water Pedagogies: Invitations to Black, Indigenous, and Black-Indigenous Work-Making; Miller, (2017), Reconceptualist Work in a Colonising Context: Challenges for Australian Early Childhood Education; Abawi, (2022), Decolonising Early Childhood Curricula: A Canadian Perspective. In Moncriett (ed) Decolonising Curriculum knowledge; Abebe et al, (2022), Southern Theories and Decolonial Childhood Studies and others.

Though interest in decolonising EYE internationally is slowly growing, I have so far yet to come across any research focusing on EYE Nigerian lecturers' perspectives. This gap in knowledge, was a motivating factor for the choice of this topic. By addressing some of the

gaps in the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria, a contribution can be made to the broader discourse on the decolonisation of education. This research examined how Nigerian EYE-HE lecturers perceive the EYE curriculum and how they engage with the decolonisation project. This includes how and why they are incorporating indigenous cultures, languages and traditions into the EYE curriculum; how they engage in decolonising EYE; and their experiences and challenges. Another reason for this research was the exclusion of the education of children aged from zero to four years from government financial responsibility, so it is left it in the hands of private providers (Nigerian National Policy on Education, {NNPE}, 2013). This policy contradicts Section 1 Article 'D' of the same policy, which states that education is compulsory for every Nigerian, irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour or ethnic background. and any peculiar individual challenges. My question was, 'are these children not Nigerians?' Of course, they are and their education matters.

The choice of the lecturers' perspectives was guided and justified by the fact that university is a site of knowledge production and consecration and has the power to decide which knowledge or histories are considered valuable and worthy of attention and dissemination (Bhambra et al, 2018). As lecturers are one of the major actors in the university, their perspectives matter. The choice was also motivated by the idea that EYE lecturers could contribute to decolonising the Teachers' Education Programme. The existing courses could be made to showcase African ingenuities and epistemologies, thereby invoking the consciousness of the self and national identities (Falola, 2024).

1.3 Delimitation of the scope of the Research

This research focuses on decolonising EYE in Nigeria. Decolonial theory entails the rejection of Western European epistemic supremacy (the belief by which Western knowledge is considered superior to other ways of knowing). The research draws on decolonial theorists such as Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2013; 2018; 2022); Mbembe, (2016); Mignolo and Walsh, (2018); Santos, (2015) and a host of others. The omission of government funding in the education of children aged from zero to four years in Nigerian Education Policy is both a political and an

economic injustice, perpetuating an academic gap between children from poor socio-economic backgrounds and those from affluent backgrounds (Stewart & Waldfogel, 2017). On average, children from poor households are about 15 months behind their peers in vocabulary (OECD, 2023). This report claims that on entering primary school at age 5, these children will be at the level of 3.75 years (Ibid).

Decolonising early years education in Nigeria contributes towards freeing children from colonial ideologies (Nkrumah, 1964). The early years in human development are the stage where children internalise whatever information is presented to them. This forms their world view and the way in which they see themselves (Soto and Swadener, 2002; Nsamenang, 2006). In postcolonial countries it becomes a stage of tension between indigenous knowledge systems and Western educational models (Pence and Nsamenang, 2008). Failure to equip children with correct knowledge of who they are will lead them to being alienated from their environment (Cannella and Viruru, 2004; Pence and Marfo, 2008). Cultivating African values such as solidarity and communality are easier in children than in adults (Ibid). This is why decolonisation should begin at the foundation stage of education, rather than at university.

The EYE sector is so important but so neglected by both scholars and governments. hooks (1989) opines that academia, and academicians play an important role in fostering a critical consciousness among those who are marginalised. Education is, according to Freire (2017, p.54), not neutral; it could be a 'practice of freedom' (a platform where critical discussions take place) or a forum for consolidating existing oppressive superstructures. Focusing on the EYE lecturers offered me the opportunity to learn from their experience about how to make EYE a case study for exploring decolonial movements in Nigeria and beyond. By engaging lecturers in this research, my intention was to make them aware of their role in challenging the colonial legacies within the educational institutions, to reflect and take actions against the colonial matrix of power, a collective problem that requires concerted solutions, as majority interests intersect with those of the privileged minority.

This research is contributing to our understanding of the EYE in Nigeria. Although the research focuses on EYE in Nigeria, empirical data therefrom contributes to wider debate challenging the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge systems and seeks to recentre indigenous and marginalised ways of knowing in curricula, pedagogy and other aspects of

teaching and learning (Smith, 2012; Andreotti, 2011; Sabaratnam (2017). Decolonisation in education aims to create a learning environment that respects the identities, languages and cultures of learners (Nasrullah, 2017; Nyoni, 2019). This is important at the early phase of education, where the curriculum is fluid and children's world views could be shaped (Devarakonda, 2022; Soto and Swadener, (2002); Nsamenang, (2006)). The research will inform our knowledge of decolonising the sector in Nigeria thereby impacting on future research on decolonising EYE globally.

1.4 Background and Context

This research lies within the broader context of the debate on the decolonisation of education, with its focus on Nigeria. Falola and Heaton (2008) opine that Nigeria is a 'colonial construct' to identify the British territories around the River Niger, on the West Coast of Africa, after the Berlin Conference of 1884. This phrase indicates that the nation presently referred to as Nigeria is an artificial entity created by British colonial administration, with Frederick Lugard playing the major role of amalgamating the Southern and Northern geographical regions in 1914 and his mistress Flora Shaw coining the name 'Nigeria'; a shorter term for the Royal Niger Company Territories (Siollun, 2021). This amalgamation is often blamed for creating lasting structural tension in Nigeria. Falola and Heaton (2008) argue that Nigeria is a product of British administrative convenience, economic interests and imperial power, rather than any pre-existing sense of shared nationhood. The territory formally consisted of different kingdoms before the arrival of the Europeans (Fafunwa, 1974). These kingdoms include the Sokoto Caliphate, Oyo Empire, Benin Kingdom, Igbo Republican Communities, Niger Delta City-States and others. Each of these states and empires had different political and cultural worldviews, as well as different religions, economics and so on. There was no political structure linking them into a single entity. Nigeria was part of Britain's expansion in the region (Falola and Heaton, 2008). The borders were drawn for imperial convenience and the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorate in 1914 was to facilitate colonial rule. The imperialists ignored ethnic, linguistic and religious boundaries. The resulting state (a combination of groups with little or nothing to share politically or otherwise) was artificial (Fafunwa, 1974; I Afigbo, 1981; Falola and

Heaton, 2008). Logically speaking, Nigeria is not a natural entity but a product of colonial power with long-lasting implications for its cohesion and governance (Falola and Heaton, 2008). It is like combining Britain, Spain and Portugal (though all are Europeans) together. Imagine what that country would be like and your guess is as good as mine.

It is believed that the economic union was not designed to build a political or social nation for Nigerians but to serve British economic interest (Fafunwa, 1974; Garba, 2012). This explains persistent ethnic and regional tensions, struggles with national cohesion, the difficulty of building a unified national identity, political instability etcetera (Afigbo, 1981; Falola and Heaton, 2008). In other words, Nigeria was not built on indigenous political foundations, but inherited a fragile, externally imposed structure demanding continuous negotiation (Falola and Heaton, 2008; Afigbo, 1981). In fact, the name Nigeria is a subject of decolonisation, but that is outside the focus of this thesis. Nigeria has a population of about 170 million people. It is a multi-ethnic, culturally diverse federation of 36 states with the Federal Capital Territory at Abuja (World Bank, 2024). The states are not autonomous because they are controlled by the executive president (Osaghae, 1992). Before the amalgamation each kingdom had its own language and educational system (Fafunwa, 1974). With the arrival of the imperialists, the British system of education was introduced into these territories, and the English language became the official language of communication (Faleye, 2013).

Language has a dual character (Ngugi, 1986). It is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture. To maintain the colonial regime, Garba (2012), the missionary organisations, European traders and diplomats thought it necessary to replace the indigenous system of education and establish their own system. This led to the subjugation of the indigenous system of education. The aim of education was modified, from a progressive one, which means preparing learners for participation in the community, to an essentialist one, aiming to help the colonialists achieve their goal of colonisation (Fafunwa, 1974; Garba, 2012). Bewley (1931) believed that the imitation of the European educational system destroyed the independence of character and inventiveness of the native territories and their educational years.

Unfortunately, the education system operating in Nigeria still bears the imprint of colonisation. The system is reproducing the colonial structure erected by the colonists, whose

desire was to create of a low-level labour force for the financial and material exploitation of Nigeria (Gabriel, 2015). The system was created to segregate the indigenous people by not making education available to all (Fafunwa, 1974). Efforts to reform the colonial system have been ongoing (Universal Basic Education Act 2004; NNPE, 2013; Curriculum Reforms, 2012; 2019; National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Education, 2004). These policies look good in print but are sadly lacking in their implementation (Sooter, 2013; Obiweluozor, 2016; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation {UNESCO}, 2022).

1.5 Theoretical Frameworks

The research drew on decolonial and social justice theories. Decolonial theories entail the rejection of Western European epistemic supremacy, while social justice examines fairness, equality and equity. Smith (2012) opines that political participants see education as the key to reducing inequality. Nelson Mandela (1994) says that education is the engine of personal development, as the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor. Kenneth Kaunda is reported in Lusaka Time (2016) as saying that education allows individuals to break free from the shackles of ignorance, inequality and poverty. Every child deserves an opportunity to acquire a quality education to better their livelihood in future (Ibid).

A fair and equitable system of education is an engine for promoting social justice (Smith, 2012). Inspired by Fraser's theory of justice, I therefore ask again: are children aged zero to four years in Nigeria not Nigerians? This question is pertinent because the NNPE, (2004, p.7) Section 1.4, under the Nigerian Philosophy of Education, states that every Nigerian child has a right to equal educational opportunities. In the 6th edition of the same document thereof (2013p.ii), the Minister of Education, in the person of Ezenwo Nyesom Wike, says, 'Our covenant with every Nigerian child therefore is access to quality education.' Why, then, is the education of some Nigerian children privatised and not funded by the government, considering the high cost of early years education? This creates an academic gap among children. Education at this early phase of human development is critical to children's overall

future academic achievement (Stewart & Waldfogel, 2017; OECD, 2023). Another question is, why is the sector missing from decolonisation debates in Nigeria?

The answers to these questions may be found when the purpose of European education in Nigeria is analysed. Education during colonial rule aimed to serve the interests of the colonial masters (Fafunwa, 1974; Garba, 2012). The first education policy, drafted in 1925, did not mention EYE in its memorandum (Fafunwa, 1974). This goes to support Cannella and Radhika (2004, p.3), who described children as an invisible presence in actions and discourses surrounding colonialism. The role of colonial discourses will be discussed in Chapter Two.

The invisibility of the sector from the decolonial research works and debates amounts to social injustice, according to Fraser's three-dimensional theory of justice (Fraser, 2009; Fraser and Honneth, 2003; Bozalek et al 2020). Following this theory, the sector suffers from misrecognition, which requires that all groups be recognised, and their identities respected. Lack of representation of the sector is another issue. This demands participatory parity in decision-making processes. Lastly, the neglect of the sector goes against the redistribution aspect of the theory, which demands equitable distribution of resources (Fraser, 2009; Fraser and Honneth, 2003). All this is despite the important role of the foundation stage of education. A house without a solid foundation is bound to fall. Therefore, this thesis contended that education in Nigeria cannot be fully decolonised without the decolonisation of early years education. Further, the education of all children in Nigeria should be funded by the government irrespective of the parents' socioeconomic status.

Neglect of the sector also goes against the spirit of Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies. One of the pillars in the principles of Ubuntu and Igwebuike is inclusion. Ubuntu philosophical principles hinged on a community bond, the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity (Ogude, 2019). It emphasises community as opposed to individualism. Igwebuike, philosophically speaking, captures the Igbo philosophy of relationality, complementarity and the interconnectedness of reality (Kanu, 2019). The neglect of the sector from decolonisation debates when analysed by Ubuntu and Igwebuike contradicts the spirit and principles of these philosophies, which are grounded on inclusion, interconnectedness, relationality, complementarity etcetera. The African Worldview is erected on these pillars (Ramose, 2002; Metz, 2014; Letseka, 2012; Kanu, 2015; 2017).

Decolonial feminist methodology informed the research design and guided researchers' interview approach, which resists the hierarchical researcher as an expert model and rather aims for conversation with purpose (Smith 2022; Alcoff, and Potter, 1993; Landman, 2007). In this research, drawing on Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies, a blueprint for EYE curriculum was formulated. It is hoped that such a curriculum will contribute towards the promotion of equality and justice among children.

1.6 Significance of the research

This research focuses on bringing the knowledge and experiences of Nigerian EYE lecturers into decolonisation debates and giving them the authority to narrate and construct as one with authority. As no known research project has focused on the decolonisation of Nigerian early years education or bringing the experiences of Nigerian EYE lecturers into decolonial literature, the research may be unique. It may be the first to report on the application of the three-dimensional approach to justice in analysing EYE in Nigeria and may thus inform subsequent research works. I would be delighted if thousands of people, including policymakers in Nigeria, would read this thesis and future publications. This research is therefore contributing to the debate on the decolonisation of education in general and in the early years in particular. It has stressed the need for equitable early years education. The research will above all:

give voice to early years lectures by exploring their lived experiences

contribute to decolonisation in general, as well as the small but growing literature on decolonising early years education

contribute to the policy debate regarding government financial investment into the sector

inform future studies on the decolonisation of early years education in Nigeria

1.7 Myself and my voice: The Importance of Place

If the starting point of every research work is informed by the researcher's worldview (Reason & Bradbury 2008), it is no surprise that my interest in this research grew out of my socio-economic and professional background. As Austin & Sutton (2014) submit, one's special location facilitates the process of studying reality because it is the point where one makes sense of, understands, interprets and articulates realities. Thus, locating oneself in this research is important because it helps the readers to understand that the personal is always political (Lorde 1984). Talking about place, it is not just who I am presently, but where I am coming from, the numerous voices speaking within me. I have come face to face with silence, unable to express myself. hooks, or, to cite Lorde, 'when we are silent, we are still afraid, so it is better to speak' (hooks, 1989, P,17). The lines below come from a personal struggle to name that location from which I come to speak. For Collins (2000), finding oneself in research is not only reflexive: it also reveals undesired truths that expose the feelings of the researcher. Hence, my choice to talk about myself, my context and what brings me to this research is not just a matter of revealing my desire for self-emancipation, but a call for equity and social justice.

As an early years' lecturer, I taught in different socio-cultural, economic and political contexts with vulnerable, oppressed, deprived and marginalised children and young adults both in Nigeria and abroad (Italy and England). Consequently, considering my background, my choice for this research may come as no surprise to my readers. I belong to the margin, but not the one imposed by oppressive structures: rather, by choice. hooks (1982), citing Stuart Hall, says that the lives of those living in the margin matter and those who choose this as their position of research or to research people who are marginalised come from the margin themselves.

1. 8 Research Questions (RQ) and Overview of the Chapters

As noted, and cited above, there is some research focusing on decolonising EYE internationally, I locate this research within this space and also within the decolonisation of Nigerian HE. Available research evidence is limited in empiricism on decolonising EYE in Nigeria. This is a gap that needs to be addressed. I have developed the research questions that would facilitate an exploratory study based on a critical and reflexive approach (Haraway, 1988; Harding 1987) to engage the EYE lecturers in an in-depth interview.

How do Nigerian EYE lecturers perceive the EYE curriculum and how do they engage with the decolonisation project?

Auxiliary questions

How do the lecturers conceptualise decolonisation/the decolonisation of education?

How do the lecturers consider the EY curriculum (content and practice) – as Eurocentric or Indigenous – and why?

What is the role of EY lecturers in curriculum development?

What factors affect the lecturers' attempts to decolonise EY in Nigeria?

How do the lecturers seek to engage in decolonising both the content and the practice of the EY curriculum and why?

To answer the above questions, a semi-structured, in-depth interview was conducted with the lecturers who are directly involved in the formation of early years educators.

This thesis is made up of eight chapters. Chapter 1 is introductory, while Chapter 2 builds on the introduction, by reviewing existing literature relevant to the decolonisation movement in general, decolonisation of education and decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria. The chapter's aim is to contextualise the research within the broader academic debates and identify key points and theoretical frameworks, highlighting the gaps in the current literature that this study intends to address. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical frameworks that underpin this research and their relevance to the research questions. The frameworks are essential for understanding the variables and relationships, ensuring a coherent and rigorous approach to the research. The theories are decolonial ones and Fraser's social justice one. The decolonial theories analyse and critique colonial legacies in society, knowledge systems, culture and power

structures. Scholars provide decolonial theories as tools for understanding and resisting coloniality. Fraser's theory serves to investigate inequalities in Nigerian EYE. The chapter also showcases how a decolonial curriculum could be formulated drawing on Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies, thus contributing to social justice in Nigerian education.

Chapter 4 presents the research design and the choice of the research paradigm and links them to the research objectives. The research methodology is underpinned by feminist perspectives. The sampling method, including criteria for participants' selection, are explained. The chapter aims to provide a comprehensive and transparent description of steps taken to ensure the study's rigor, validity and reliability. Ethical considerations of the study are thereby presented, providing a critical context for the interpretation of the results. Chapter 5 is the first of the three chapters to analyse the research findings, which are divided into three parts, following the research questions and themes. The formulation of the interview questions is in line with the research questions. The chapter presents participants' concept of decolonisation and their perception of the EYE curriculum. In chapter 6, the focus is on the role of the lecturers in curriculum development and factors affecting their attempts to decolonise EYE in Nigeria. The findings revealed that lecturers do not have a voice in the development of the curriculum. Lecturers are among the stakeholders in education and therefore their input in curriculum formation matters. Chapter 7 focuses on how EYE lecturers engage in decolonisation. They do so through creation of awareness, celebration of cultural days and cultural ways of life, the use of local resources, and inclusion of local authors in the reading list, conferences research and workshops. Chapter 8 is the conclusion of the thesis. It brings together the key insights thereof, summarising key points, contributions, areas for future research and limitations of the research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature relevant to the decolonisation movement, the decolonisation of education and the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria. The chapter aims to contextualise the research within the wider context, identify key themes and theoretical frameworks, and highlights the gaps in the current literature that this study seeks to address.

This review begins by exploring the foundational theories and seminal works that have shaped the understanding of colonisation, colonial discourses, the social construction of child and childhood, and the decolonisation project. Subsequent sections delve into recent advancements and debates, focusing on the decolonisation of education and EYE. By reviewing the contributions of various scholars, this chapter explains the evolution of thought within the field and underlines the significance of the present research. I begin with colonialism.

2.1 Colonialism

Assante (2006) describes colonialism as systems and practices whereby the will of one people is imposed on another for the benefit of the imposer. It involves the forceful displacement of indigenous populations, the presence of colonial administrative structures and the extension of a nation's political and economic control over other people (Grosfoguel, 2008; Nwosu, 1992; Ezenwe, 1984). Colonialism is not a past event; it is a living historical one that shapes institutions, ideologies and human knowledge (Falola, 2022). This could come from international corporation exploiting the natural resources of a foreign nation, such as Shell BP in Nigeria, or from religious entities such as Christianity and Islam (Okhumode, 2017; Babalola and Joshua, 2023). For Falola (2022), citing Lewis R. Gordon, (2014),

knowledge has never been free as it is only available in the context of modern Europe. Until recently, any knowledge outside of Europe has not been accepted as such. Indigenous knowledge systems were either destroyed or discredited during colonialism to impose Western ways of knowing. This justifies the conquest and control and the 'civilisation' mission (de Sousa Santos, 2014; Battiste, 2005). This notion, described as evidence of a 'collective colonised mind', is deeply rooted in the society and in the academic fields (Falola, 2022, P. 28).

Colonisation involves the control of the social production of wealth. In controlling the social production of the wealth of the colonised, the domination of their mental universe (Grosfoguel, 2008) is indispensable. By targeting the language of the colonised, the colonisers disconnected them from their culture and the way in which they perceive themselves, thus achieving domination of their mental universe (Mikaere, 2017). Controlling people's culture is equal to controlling their tools for self-definition in relationship to others. The imposition of the English language as the medium of instruction in Nigeria while suppressing the indigenous languages is a good example (Bamgbose, 1991). Another case is developing school curricular drawing on Eurocentric knowledge systems and the devaluing knowledge systems of the learners, thus instilling a sense of cultural inferiority and alienation (Fanon, 1964; Fafunwa, 1974). This breaks the harmony that exists between the colonised child and other aspects of the child's mother tongue (Mikaere, 2017). For example, language is not only a communication tool: it carries culture, which consists of norms and values (Thiong'o, 1986; UNESCO, 2003). When children are taught in a language other than their mother tongue, this implicitly means that the mother tongue is inadequate, leading to linguistic alienation and detachment from tradition (Bamgbose, 2000; Thion'o, 1986). To achieve academic success, for instance, the child must reject their roots, resulting in a split of identity (Brock-Utne, 2001).

Language during colonial rule was synonymous with knowledge. Knowledge, according to Abdullah in Alvares and Fatruqi (2012, p.4), 'is the arrival of meaning from information that is true'. This is the crux of the matter when trying to analyse what is true and meaningful. Whose truth and meaning are we talking about? Abdullah says that his grandparents were regarded as illiterate purely because they could not read or write in the language of the colonisers, but for him they are not illiterate when judged from their cultural context, because they can read and write in Arabic. In the context of colonisation, literacy is redefined. It

involves power relations and whose language has power. Illiteracy is no longer the absence of knowledge, but the denial of epistemic legitimacy that excludes other ways of knowing (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Smith, 2012). This is what Spivak (1988) refers to as epistemic violence, the silencing of indigenous voices and knowledges.

In Nigeria, (Igbo), the elders are consulted as custodians of knowledge. Knowledge in the Igbo context consists of practices in different aspects of life, such as in agriculture, healthcare, skills and social development, which are passed down from generation to generation (Eneh and Anyaoku, 2017). Though this knowledge is circumscribed within the Igbo context, it could be applied to any other context but cannot be claimed to be universal as its meaning may change according to the linguistical context. Therefore, language cannot be equated with knowledge. This takes us to the role of discourse in propagating the superiority of the colonisers.

2.2 The Role of Colonial Discourse in the Project of Colonisation

Ullah et al, (2019) citing Noorani, (2016) contend that it is not only military might but colonial discourses which helped Britain – with about 31 million people – to colonise India – with more than 400 million people – for over 190 years. Colonial discourses are used to the optimum to colonise the minds of the natives. The role of discourse in which knowledge was emphasised was made explicit by Arthur James Balfour, when addressing the British Parliament on the challenges to the Empire. Balfour equates discourse to knowledge and described knowledge and power as two invisible foundations of the imperial authority (Ullah et al (2019). Balfour, according to Said, says that economic and political control must be coupled with the idea of 'knowing other people', which will persuade them to know themselves as inferior and subordinate to the European (Said, 1978, as cited in Ashcroft et al, 1995). Balfour claims that the British know the civilisation of Egypt better than the Egyptians themselves (Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 1910). In other words, what Balfour is saying is that the British knowledge of Egyptian civilisation is superior to the knowledge the Egyptians have of their own civilisation. Britain's knowledge in Balfour language is rational,

enlightened, while Egyptians' knowledge of their civilisation is backward, irrational, thus needing guidance. That said, the Egyptians must accept colonial rule because they are not capable of governing themselves.

Discourse constructs modes of representation and experiences and ways of looking at the world in accordance with the context within which it is constructed. It is viewed from its values, tenets and the categories that it embodies (Ullah et al, 2020). Foucault (1972, p.80) states that discourses may stand for the general domain of all meanings, specialised groups of statements or a regulated practice that accounts for several statements. Discourse aimed to affirm the superiority of the colonisers over the colonised and justify their dominance (Charles, 1995). It was used to instil into the colonised ideas that justified their colonisation and acceptance of their inferior and subservice status in the colonial arrangement (Ullah et al, 2020).

Elaref (2023), citing Foucault (1970), argues that discourse is an epistemological device that generates its objects of knowledge by the formation of the practice of a particular language register. For example, in his book 'Orientalism' (1997), Said shows how the West established the East as its external Other by generating recurring language representations. Colonial discourse uses otherness based on colour, gender and social class to emphasise the difference between the coloniser and the colonised and to legitimise the coloniser's position of authority (Cèsaire, 2000).

The language of the colonisers is the medium by which discourses are propagated. Language is not a mere means of communication. It embodies the world view and shapes our approach. The meanings assigned to objects and ideas are associated with values that influence priorities. These underpin the idea of superiority and inferiority, good and bad (Ullah, et al 2019). McLeod, (2010); Wa Thiong'o, (1986) state that language is a carrier of culture, values and belief systems, social structures and systems of relationships to things around us. Colonial language is not therefore, separated from colonial discourses, whose aim is to define the identity of the colonised as in low terms in relation to the colonisers. Fanon, (1952, p.110-111) paints a good picture of the colonised; how they are described as 'less than fully human', while the colonisers are represented as 'civilised, rational, and intelligent'. This places the colonisers on a higher pedestal of social status. Thinking about language, policies thereof in Nigeria are affected by the colonial discourse. English is packaged as a global

language and the key to success, thereby marginalising indigenous languages (Wa Thiong'o, (1986; Brock-Utne, 2000; Pennycook, 1989).

The unearthing of the colonial discourse is crucial as it gives insight into the imperial past and present. It helps us to learn how concepts and institutions were used to keep people under control. Understanding the colonial discourse can assist in identifying and challenging oppressive structures in the colonial context that are rooted in colonial legacies. By uncovering the colonial discourse, we can learn more about cultures and histories that have been silenced or excluded from dominant narratives. This can open new perspectives on history and culture, fostering a greater mutual understanding between diverse nations and peoples (Said, 1978; Smith, 2022; Battiste, 2013).

Discourse is constructed; therefore, it can also be deconstructed. People can challenge and resist colonial discourses by creating counter-discourses, thereby reclaiming silenced and marginalised voices. Decolonial scholars are resisting and challenging colonial discourses in education by advocating for indigenous knowledges, mother-tongue education and inclusive pedagogies (Mignolo, 2007; Andreotti, 2011; Hooks, 1994). This research is in line with the deconstruction process. This process of unveiling the colonial discourse helps us to understand the hidden meaning of certain concepts and how these concepts and institutions were used to keep people under control. One such concept, important in this research is 'child'; used to degrade the colonised, as can be seen in the lines below.

2.3 Social Construction of Child and Childhood in the Project of Colonisation

Child and childhood are social constructions, and they aid in how we view those categorised as children. This concept changes according to the needs and contexts of social theorists (Sorin, 2005). John Locke (1959) described the mind of a child as tabula rasa; a blank slate that needs nuggets of knowledge to be deposited by adults, as Freire (2017) would say. This means that children are perceived as incompetent, vulnerable and dependent – Cannella and Radhika (2004) – leading to over-protection, which in turn becomes surveillance and control.

Children are no longer given opportunities to act on their own behalf (Dockett, 1998; Sorin, 2003). This gives others legitimacy in regulating and controlling the behaviour of those who are labelled as children. The labelling limits the expectations of what those in that category can do (Cannella and Radhika, 2004).

During colonisation, 'child' was used to describe the natives as people who were *'*wild and uncivilised*'*, therefore needing control and education (Liebel, 2020, p.37). This is justification for their subjugation. The metaphor of the colonised as a 'child' was borrowed by some African politicians. In 1957 Leopold Sedar Senghor, demanded both self-rule for the overseas territories and their membership within the French Union. He gave this analogy: *'*When children grow up in Africa, they leave the hut of their parents and build next to it a hut of their own, but within the same compound' (Cohen, 1970, p.427). This metaphor views growth not as disconnection but as an act of expansion within community. It suggests that in African culture the individual is never really separated from the community, but remains physically and symbolically connected to their roots, ancestors and traditions (Senghor, 1964).

In 1901, it was reported that a French colonial journal, L'Afrique Francaise, spoke of the need to treat the African as a child. 'He was to be taught his duties, to accept French authority, and kept under control' (Cohen, 1970, p.427). Another French Minister of Colonies was quoted to have described the Congolese as a 'people in their childhood, whose entire education we must guide.' (Ibid, p. 427). Another French minister, twenty years later, described the colonial subjects as 'peuples enfants', meaning infantile people who must be treated as French minors, and said that the role of France should be seen from the perspective of the mother-child relationship where the French plays the role of a generous mother (Ibid).

In Nigeria, the colonial governor Hugh Clifford was quoted in 1924 as saying 'I am certain that the West African races have to be treat much as one would treat children when they are immature and under -developed' (Idris in Alvares and Faruqi, (eds), 2012, p. xii; Cohen, 1970, p.427). This view is not only held by only the French and the British. Holland for example explained their refusal to grant independence to their colony in these words: 'If a young child is allowed to stand on his own legs too soon, it will be easy for him to stumble and fall or wander off the good path (Ibid p. 427).

The view of colonised as children was an ideological weapon used to justify imperial violence and domination. Imperialism was baptised as a civilising mission necessary to save the childlike peoples (Said, 1978; Fanon; 1964). The very thing has been going on till today, when countries are categorised as underdeveloped, developing and developed. The standard of development is Europe and America, and the rest must catch up with them (Escobar, 1995). The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) is there to help the emerging and developing worlds with aids, dictating reforms just as parents do for their children, whereas these are not aids but death warrants. Aid, according to Rodney (1972), Shivji (2009), is not charity. It is a continuation of colonial control through economic means. Some Global South leaders who openly rejected the aids were either killed or overthrown. One example will suffice: Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso says in a press conference (1987), 'He who feeds you, controls you'. He was assassinated by Blaise Compaoře on October 15th, 1987. It is believed that the coup was backed by foreign aid and France in particular (Harsch, 2014).

Aid and reforms come with impacts on education. In Nigeria, Ibrahim Babangida's 1986 Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) led to cuts in public spending on education and health (Mkandaawire, 2005). These cuts affect the poor who depend on government subsidies. For aids to be of any help, the countries should sit at the table as peers during the negotiation terms. We now turn to pre-colonial education in Nigeria.

2.4 Colonial Education in Nigeria and its Impacts on Nigerian Education

Nigeria is a British construct. The kingdoms that occupy the territory had education systems according to their needs before the arrival of the colonists (Fafunwa, 1974). The mother tongue was the language of instruction. This is carried out through plays, stories and folklore. The aim of education was to produce honest, respectful, skilled, co-operative individuals who conform to the social order of the society Fafunwa, 1974, p. 20). The guiding principle was functionalism, focusing on local histories, customs and the values of the community (Ibid). Emphasis is on civic engagement, career orientation, political participation and spiritual and

moral principles (Fafunwa, 1974; Jekayinfa, 2003). Learners take an active part in ceremonies, ritual, recitation, rites and demonstrations. Children are prepared to contribute to the growth of their community, adjust to role expectations and study and produce economic skills for self-sufficiency. There was no writing, so students had to rely on their memories to help them retain information and pass it on to the next generation (Garba, 2012). An African proverb says that when an old man dies, a library burns to the ground (Achebe, 1995). Education was progressive and functional because of its applicability to the needs of the society. No child is excluded in the traditional education system because children are divided into groups (from zero- to four- year-olds); they are mainly trained by mothers and from five years and above other family members join in (Fafunwa, 1974, p.18-19).

Western education was introduced into Africa because of European imperialism and projects of exploitation on the continent in the nineteenth century (Faleye, 2013). Because of the quest to exploit, Europeans threw the sense of morality to the winds and constructed lies about the natives; these include the idea that 'the colonised were infantile, uncultured and bizarre beings who needed to be cultivated and saved' (Idris in Alvares and Faruqi, (eds), 2012, p. xii). European education became a medium for propagating these lies and helping the colonialists achieve their goal of colonisation (Garba, 2012; Idris in Alvares and Faruqi, (eds), 2012). This led to alienation of the indigenous systems of education. Education in Nigeria mutates from progressive to essentialist. The focus was on the acquisition of skills to serve colonial system masters and the formation of an elite who would uphold and defend the colonial system (Garba, 2012). The emphasis was on reading, writing, arithmetic and tests. The numbers and ranks of a school's examination results received most of the points awarded for performance (Ibid). The educated citizens became isolated and cut off from their cultural roots and connected to the European worldview, values and norms, which they then internalised (Idris in Alvares and Faruqi, (eds) 2012).

The resultant effect of this radical social engineering (Ibid) was the production of citizens with colonised minds, crippled imaginations and a lack of creativity and originality. This led to a lack of self-confidence, self-esteem and dignity, as they tried to emulate the colonial masters in tastes and values (Ibid). The educated citizens became citizens of their motherland in blood but Europeans in taste, opinions, morals and intellect (Idris in Alvares and Faruqi, (eds) 2012; Ullah et al 2020). However, this situation did not last long. The same elites who

were products of Western education refused to accept their earlier inferior position, like the rest of the colonised masses; rather, they resisted and challenged the colonial rule (Ullah et al 2020). This is like the story of Victor Frankenstein, written by Mary Shelley (1818), whose creation became a monster after being abandoned and isolated by the creator. The monster then took the path of revenge. These Westernised Africans took over -power at the dawn of their country's independence. Unfortunately, the institutions, including education, which served the colonial masters were passed over to the elites. In Alvares and Faruqi (2012) Idris opines that the ex-colonised leaders continued to operate these systems without dismantling the philosophical and ideological paradigms underpinning them. Enwo-Iremv (2013) argues that colonial education was not meant for the development of the populace but rather for domination and the creation of a dichotomy between those who attended school and those who did not do so. The opening of the first school at Badagry in 1843 saw in attendance two native chiefs and their households (Fafunwa, 1974). Arguably, inequality and social injustices that are verified in education could be traced back to the colonial era (Aluede et al, 2012; Umar, 2001). Colonists initially excluded early years education from the educational programme. It was later provided for the colonists' children and a few affluent Nigerians (Fafunwa, 1997; Oduolowa, 2003).

Gilley (2017) argues that colonialism has many advantages, one of which is a civilising mission that led to improvements in the living conditions of most 'Third World people'. I wonder what Gilley means by 'civilising mission' and 'improvement'. By the 2nd -4th centuries, Africa was a major intellectual and spiritual hub of Christianity– producing scholars such Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage, Augustine of Hippo, Athanasius of Alexandria to name just these few(Wilhite, 2017; Oden, 2007). Christian tradition holds that Mark the Evangelist brought Christianity to Alexandria around 42 CE. This is centuries before the missionaries came to Africa, The missionaries subjugated African religions and languages, exploiting and humiliating Africans through their involvement in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (Rodney, 1972; Said, 1978, Achebe, 1958). Whatever came from Britain was imposed on the citizens. This was not meant to benefit Nigerians but to exploit and dominate them. Such physical and mental exploitation of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade meted untold hardship onto the natives.

Some parts of the present-day Nigeria (the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Biafra) were hubs of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (Lovejoy, 2000; Falola, 2003). Some cities near the coast

were used to send Africans as slaves to America and Europe. Exchange of human beings for goods such as firearms or alcohol took place in markets around Oyo, Calabar, Lagos and other places (Eltis and Richardson, 2008). Some local leaders were complicit, capturing and selling fellow Africans as slaves to Europeans (Falola and Heaton, 2008). The consequences of the slave trade are enormous. It led to disruption of social systems, depopulation of some communities, militarised societies and so on (Lovejoy, 2000). The slave trade also laid the foundation of racial and cultural hierarchies that justified European domination (Rodney, 1972).

Some of the lasting impacts of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and subsequent colonisation in present day Nigeria are a lack of national cohesion and conflict in interethnic relations (Afigbo, 1981). In his book, 'The Igbos and Their Neighbours', Afigbo points to a long-lasting historical chain of social, political and psychological consequences of the slave trade in Nigeria. The author opines that slave trade did not merely take away people from their lands but also reshaped how the communities related to one another in such a destructive way that outlived the slave trade itself. Afigbo argues that this destroyed trust between ethnic groups as communities raided each other for captives. It gave rise to fragile alliances, increase in interethnic suspicion etcetera. The author states that this phenomenon created a political environment lacking cooperation with constant conflict resulting in localised and ethnic self-protection. According to Afigbo, this situation favoured colonial rule which in turn accentuated the division. The colonial masters exploited the existing division and distrust, and this led to weakening of interethnic solidarity. The resultant effect is the creation of unequal power relations that left some groups traumatised while enriching others. While Falola and Heaton, (2008) drawing on Afigbo (1981) opine that Nigeria is an economic union not designed to build a political or social nation for Nigerians but to serve British economic interest, this research describes Nigeria as a patchwork where individual pieces remain distinct –citizens often feel a stronger sense of loyalty to their specific patch (their ethnic or religious group) rather than to the national fabric of the country. Falola and Heaton believe that the slave trade destabilised and intensified conflicts in the society. This according to these scholars explains persistent ethnic and regional tensions and struggles with national cohesion. However, they argue that some communities benefited from the slave trade and that the lack of national cohesion cannot be blamed only on this trade but on a combination of further factors such as colonial boundaries, missionary education and post-independence politics.

The church was accused of being the backbone of the slave trade. Many European Christians believed that the Africans they encountered were irreligious and uncivilised. Therefore, slavery was rationalised as work for Christianising and civilising the slaves (Sundkler and Steed, 2000). Pope John Paul 11 has, amongst other Popes, apologised for the church's role in the slave trade. He said, 'I cannot but deplore this cruel and sad offense to the dignity of the African man' (John Paul 11, 1992). Calls for forgiveness and healing are still on-going. The church has been called on to ask the victims of slavery to forgive the church for the harm it has caused (Williams, 2020). Constructive forgiveness allows perpetrators to acknowledge their responsibility and show remorse. The researcher, as a member of the church family, is joining that voice. The church must ask the victims of slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade for forgiveness.

2.5. Postcolonial African States and Decolonisation Project

A postcolonial world was, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2021), a myth of the twentieth century. This is because multiple global structures put in place over a period of 450 years did not disappear in the blinking of an eye. The elimination of colonial administrations does not result in decolonisation; rather, it metamorphosised into the Colonial Power Matrix (Anibal Quijano, 2000). The Colonial Power Matrix is a structuring process in the modern/colonial world-system. It articulates peripheral locations in the international labour division and how colonial structures of domination had continued to shape modern global systems, including labour, knowledge, culture, gender and governance (Quijano, 2000). Some nations, mainly from the Global South, are designated as sites for the provision of raw materials and cheap labour, while the Global North focuses on advanced manufacturing, financial capital etcetera, thus perpetuating and reinforcing dependency in the South (Amin, 1976; Rodney, 1972)

With judicial-political decolonisation, the world moved from a period of global colonisation to one of global coloniality. Most countries on the periphery are politically independent states but are still living under Euro-American exploitation and domination (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 219). Two concepts merit consideration: coloniality and decoloniality.

2.5.1. Coloniality

The Belin Conference of 1884-5 (Chamberlain, 2013, Pakenham, 1991, Boahen, A.A., 1987; Ajayi, 1969) led to Europe's political and administrative domination of other counties. This came to an end between the 1950's and 60's. Nigeria achieved political independence in 1960, but Nigeria, like some other ex-colonies, it is still under foreign capitalist domination (Ndlovu- Ga tsheni, 2013). The name Nigeria is itself colonial.

The concept of coloniality was articulated by Anibal Quijano (1989), as sustained inequalities and asymmetries at the global level that stem from nearly 500 years of European empire-building (Quijano 2007; Mignolo,2017). Quijano argues that, after the end of colonialism, the instruments of social domination survived and continued to shape Eurocentric forms of rationality and modernity. These instruments are hidden in institutions such as universities, museums, monasteries and so on. The idea of race and racial classification that legitimated colonial structures of power depends on labour production. This gave rise to the asymmetry of power and unequal conditions of existence that persist in varied forms even today. The abolition of political colonisation gave birth to coloniality. Coloniality refers to the logic, culture and structure of the modern world system (Quijano, 2007; Grosfoguel, 2008; (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

Coloniality is underpinned by coloniality of power (Quijano, 2007). Coloniality and coloniality of power encapsulate the dark side of modernity (Mignolo, 2011). While coloniality helps a deeper understanding of the continuity of colonial forms of domination, coloniality of power points to the structuring process that subordinates peripheral societies to the global imperial design (Grosfoguel, 2011). Coloniality lives while colonialism dies. Coloniality is kept alive in books, criteria for academic performances, cultural patterns, the self-image of people and so on (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). It defines intersubjective relations and knowledge production. Coloniality enables us to expose the camouflages of imperialism which are often presented and narrated from Eurocentric standpoints. African relations with Europe can hardly be detached from the multiple manifestations of coloniality.

The old Empire was sustained by colonialism, but today's Empire is maintained by coloniality. Both colonialism and coloniality are held in place by power structuring processes. Ndlovu- Gatsheni (2013) articulates the operation of colonial matrices of power. During colonialism, for instance, colonial matrices of power helped empires to take control of both African economies and African kingly authority. In today's African societies, the colonial matrices of power have reduced some of the presidents to a sub-ordinate status in global governance (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Grosfoguel (2007) distinguished nine shades of coloniality of power in today's Western-dominated world. They include formation of global class, international division of labour, the creation of an inter-state system of political-military organisation, global racial/ethnic hierarchy, global gender hierarchy, privileging of Christianity over all other non-Christian/non-Western spiritualities, epistemic hegemony and coloniality of knowledge. Some examples will suffice. Gender norms and patriarchy were imposed on some colonised countries, thus disrupting precolonial gender relations (Lugones, 2007; Adadiume, 1987). Global patterns of migration, border control and labour exploitation maintain colonial patterns. African migrants work under exploitative conditions in precarious, low-paid jobs in Europe and the Middle East (Mbembe, 2003; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Epistemic hegemony and coloniality of knowledge are important in this thesis.

Epistemic hegemony privileges Western knowledge and cosmology over non-Western ones. This is evident in universities across the world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Epistemic hegemony also consists of linguistic hierarchy, whereby Western languages (such as English, French, Spanish and others) take the global stage over non-Western ones, thus pushing African languages to the barbarian margins of folklore (Grosfoguel, 2007, p.216-217). This includes university ranking that privileges certain forms of knowledge and measuring non-Western universities against standards set by former colonial powers (Hall and Tandon, 2021; Shahjahan, et al, 2022).

Coloniality of knowledge is a complex process, developing global imperial technologies of subjectivation and taking the form of translating and re-writing other cultures, other knowledges and other ways of being through Western rationality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018,

p.33). Ndlovu-Gatheni, citing Mingolo, (2007, p.162), opines that coloniality of knowledge worked actively in 'silencing or relegating other epistemologies to a barbarian margins, a primitive past or a communist or Muslim evil'. Since the time of European Renaissance and Enlightenment, agents of Euro-American modernity and hegemony (such as the missionaries, colonialists, philosophers and others) had worked relentlessly through Christianity, colonisation et cetera to propagate European knowledge as the only truthful and universal knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatheni, 2018). The colonialists, through the exertion of imperial power, inscribe coloniality across Africa and the rest of the world. In this way, Western domination and Eurocentrism assumed universality (Ibid).

Discussion of the coloniality of knowledge is important as it enables critical interrogation of epistemological questions on how colonial modernity interfered with African modes of knowing, social meaning-making, imagining, seeing and knowledge production (Ibid. 33). The African epistemologies were replaced by Eurocentric epistemology. Eurocentric epistemology is defined as objective, scientific, neutral, universal and the only truthful knowledge (Escobar, 2007). Haraway (1988) argues that the notions of objectivity and neutrality of knowledge are mythical, created to preserve the authority of the Western dominant group. Western knowledge systems are not neutral, but rooted in the colonial power structure (Said, 1978; Smith, 2022). This is what Fricker (2007) conceptualises as epistemic injustice; that is, injustice relating to knowledge. It includes exclusion, and silencing; systematic distortion or misrepresentation of one's contribution, undervaluing of one's epistemic status and so on.

Asante (2003) articulates what he calls Afrocentricity or recentring African epistemology. Afrocentricity is a theory of human liberation and an intellectual critique of Eurocentrism. Asante talks about Africa speaking for itself, but at the same time recognises that it is not going to be easy. He says that the escape from the Western hegemony is tough and, just as we have announced our escape, we recognise that the Fortress West is not going to let us leave the mental plantation without a struggle. In other words, Africans must be ready to thrust themselves to the epistemic centre and narrate their stories by themselves. Asante maintains that there will be a true revolution when Africans, with self-awareness, leave the margins of

Europe to the centre of their own reality. This, he opines, will bring an end to white hegemony (Asante, 2007). This thesis is contributing to Asante's call but without romanticising precolonial Africa (Wiredu,1998). Appiah (1992) argue that it risks essentialising African identity and reifying race as epistemic foundation. In the same vein, Mbembe (2001) critiques nativist discourses that romanticise authenticity. However, this thesis avoids an essentialist Afrocentric alternative.

2.5.2. Decoloniality

Coloniality gave rise to decoloniality. Decoloniality is a component part of the struggles, movements and actions to resist and refuse the legacies and ongoing relations and patterns of power established by external and internal colonialism (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). The political liberation of African states from Western physical domination occurred in the 50s and 60s. That could be called the first wave of decolonisation. The project of decolonisation today is deeper and focuses on epistemology and knowledge. The undoing of the colonial legacy, starting from epistemology and knowledge, is decoloniality. De Sousa Santos (2014) advocates for epistemologies of the South; Bhambra (2007) calls for epistemic justice that validates knowledge from the South; Quijano (2005) argues that colonial structures had continued to shape knowledge and social hierarchies; while Manthalu and Waghid (2019) call for inclusivity, epistemic diversity and democratic educational practices in Southern Africa. Decoloniality thus stands as building a praxis of living and communal organisation delinking from the modern state and capitalist economy (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p.121)

Some may ask the reason for the change from decolonisation to decoloniality. Decoloniality came into being because of loopholes in the decolonisation project. While efforts concentrated on freeing the colonised states from the clutches of the colonial masters, the logic of coloniality was left intact. The changes were only superficial. Decoloniality seeks to expose the hierarchical structure of race, gender, heteropatriarchy and class that continues to control life, knowledge, spirituality and thought. The global capitalism of Western modernity is made up of this interwoven hierarchical structure (De Sousa Santos, 2014; Quijano 2005). Decoloniality aims to make visible power relations and perspectives that had been

marginalised by coloniality and to disprove Western rationality ‘s claim to be the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis and thought (Quijano 2005; Dei, 2000; Battiste, 2013).

Decoloniality is therefore concerned with the liberation of epistemologies and knowledges that have been devalued by narratives of modernity. It proposes a delink from the colonial matrix of power. Conceiving coloniality as a complex structure of management and control helps one to grasp the ‘underlying structure’ of Western civilisation and of Eurocentrism (Quijano, 2005; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p.125). Understanding the working of the complex structure of control is a necessary step towards delinking from coloniality. Delinking involves thinking and acting; and there is no master plan or privileged actor; rather, there are people who organise themselves as decolonial thinkers, actors and doers (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). For this reason, this thesis attempts to find out how Early Years lecturers in Nigeria are involved in this delinking process. This takes us to decolonisation.

2.6. Decolonisation

Decolonisation is as old as colonisation itself. Mignolo (2011) citing Wright (1956), says that the project of political decolonisation came into being in the Bandung Conference. This conference did not accept capitalism or communism as they are seen as two sides of the same coin of colonialism (free market or state control); both were products of the Enlightenment. The Bandung begins the long process of decolonisation and decoloniality as a set of global projects without a centre (Mignolo, 2011). Decolonisation is a contested word with a variety of meanings and is sometimes mistaken for a metaphor. This is why Tuck and Yang (2012) posit that decolonisation is not a metaphor. They state that it must deal with indigenous people’s struggle for recognition, the contributions of indigenous intellectuals, activities of activists to decolonial theories and frameworks and reparation for the indigenous land and lives of the indigenous people. Decolonisation is concerned with undoing some of the legacies of colonialism. It means the emancipation and uncaging of the colonised and trapped mind, by removing the Western worldview as the driver and measure of what is progress as based on Western capitalist norms (Nyoni, 2019). Decolonisation initially aimed for the

political liberation of the colonised, leading to the formation of sovereign nation-states (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018).

Resistance to colonial rule in different contexts may have various undertones, but the aim has always been to drive away the colonisers. In Nigeria, for example, there were many incidences of resistance. There were about three major ones after British authority took control of the country. These show how Nigerian communities reacted to the imposition of British authority on their communities. The aim is to correct the single narration of the British colonialism in Nigeria that paints the indigenous people as passive observers who folded their arms and were unable to react to what the British were dong to them. These are 'The Northern Resistance, The Silent Ones, Women's Wars of 1925 and 1929' (Siollun, 2021). 'The Women's War' was a protest against the manhandling of a woman by a warrant chief over tax collection. This escalated into a taxation protest, and then into a protest over the excesses of warrant chiefs and the colonial system. It started in one part of Igbo land and within a short time spread like wildfire to other parts thereof. 55 women were killed and 55 were wounded by British officials, who opened fire on unarmed women. Their sacrifices changed everything. The British abolished the warrant chief system and never dared to tax women again (Ibid).

2.6.1 The Impacts of Mental Colonisation

Mental colonisation means dominating of the mental universe of the colonised. It is the control of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world (Wa Thiong'o, 1986). Mental colonisation is the most important area of domination and worst form of colonisation. It stole the souls of the colonised, invaded their consciousness, and destroyed and distorted their imagination of the future (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013 p.50). Ndlovu-Gatsheni describes this as a crisis that is well painted by Zeleza (2006, p.124), when he posited that 'foreclosed are the possibilities of visioning a world beyond the present, imagining alternatives to capitalist modernity'. Mental colonisation is so terrible that even some of the

Africans initiating the political decolonisation were worst affected by the very system they were fighting (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013 p.50).

Almost all the political fighters were graduates from colonial schools and Western universities (Ibid p.50). Initially, they fought for inclusion in colonial systems, only turning to mass mobilisation when this strategy failed (Ibid). Some founding fathers 'internalised their oppressor's image' (Freire, 1970 p.21), straddling the African world they were taught to despise and the European world they were conditioned to admire. A split consciousness leaves some dreaming in both colonial and African tongues (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). This reveals the epistemological roots of the limits of decolonisation that endures decades after the formal empire collapsed.

Most Nigerian intellectuals think in English and their mother tongue. The use of a colonial language in this research underlines this point. This could be seen as a failure of the Nigerian education system. However, borrowing from Achebe (1975), the use of colonial language in this research could be considered as a tool to challenge colonial systems of thought from within the established frameworks, thereby restoring a sense of balance. Language was used by the colonists to dominate the intellectual universe of the colonised. Decolonisation provides a language that stimulates conversations about intellectual decolonisation within and beyond the academia (Bhambra et al, 2018). Economic or political decolonisation cannot be effective without mental decolonisation (Nkrumah, 1964; Wa Thiong'o 1986). This is the hardest aspect of decolonisation.

2.6.2 Decolonisation of Education

In Chapter One, we read about calls to decolonise education across the world. This is because of the failure to question the Western epistemology upon which different institutions, including education, were built. The postcolonial states took overpower with the patterns of colonial power structure intact (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). Decolonising education (knowledge) therefore requires questioning the foundation of the Western educational system and knowledge.

From the University of Cape Town 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign (Hlophe, 2015), which metamorphosed into calls for the decolonisation of education (Kamanzi, 2015); from the UK's National Union of Students (NUS), such as 'Why is My Curriculum White?' and 'Liberate My Degree' – they all aimed to challenge the 'Eurocentric domination and lack of diversity' in curricula across UK Universities (Bhambra et al, 2018, Laakso and Adu, 2023, et cetera). These protests are inspired and motivated by similar campaigns in other parts of the world; for example, the campaigns against caste prejudice occurring in some Indian Universities (Bhambra et al, 2018). They also build on earlier movements and protests organised under notions of social justice and inequality. Others include campaigns such as those led by the Black and Asian Studies Association, concerning the representation of Black History within the UK National Curriculum, and those in defence of the Public University and Remaking the University, among others (Ibid). Collectively, these movements sought to transform the terms upon which university and education exist, the purpose of the knowledge it imparts and produces, and its pedagogical operations.

Decolonisation in the field of education is an initiative aiming to challenge Eurocentrism, which is seeing things from the European perspective only (Nyoni, 2019) and confronting the legacy of colonialism within the educational system. In this sense, decolonisation seeks to disrupt the assumption that Western knowledge is neutral or universally applicable. Decolonisation rather promotes the recognition of multiple epistemologies, especially those grounded in indigenous cultures and local communities. By foregrounding these marginalised epistemologies, decolonisation challenges the hierarchical positioning of Western knowledge as superior– whilst, according to Nasrullah, (2017), it entails identifying and eliminating the institutional, linguistic and cultural elements that had sustained colonial control after the colonised had achieved freedom. Moosavi (2020) states that calls for educational decolonisation aim to reverse the effects of colonialism in academia. He opines that colonialism affects how academia is perceived and what is studied, published, cited and taught (Ibid).

Moosavi observes that intellectual decolonisation is required to overcome the exclusion of minority groups and perspectives from the academia. This exclusion not only harms minorities, but also hinders universities, academics and students from realising the potential that only the acceptance and inclusion of diversity can facilitate (Ibid). Intellectual decolonisation aims therefore to end 'Global Apartheid in education' (Mbembe, 2016, p. 38).

This is a metaphor referring to structural inequalities in global knowledge and access to education originating from South Africa's racially discriminatory apartheid education system, which privileges some people over others (Hunt Davis and Kallaway, 2004). Global apartheid also refers to inequalities in global knowledge production and dissemination, whereby institutions, curricula, and research agendas are dominated by the Global North as it marginalises knowledge from the Global South. Therefore, decolonisation involves addressing these inequalities and ensuring that knowledge from historically colonised contexts is recognised as legitimate and valuable. Global apartheid is not a formal policy, but policy-driven exclusion; an example is the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act (2004) in Nigeria. This Act covers only primary and junior secondary and excludes EYE. This gives EYE Non-Compulsory Status, so that poor parents do not enrol their children in EYE (Osanyin, 2012). The Act sets some children behind their peers, as we have seen in Chapter One.

Decolonisation of education addresses the epistemic violence of colonial knowledge and ideas through justice (Pillay, 2015). Epistemic violence results in damaging a given group's ability to speak and to be heard (Spivak,1988). Addressing epistemic violence demands embracing non-Western epistemologies and challenging the dominance of Western epistemology by opening space for alternative knowledge canons (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Santos, 2015). Africa's liberation requires epistemic freedom; the power to produce knowledge beyond Eurocentric paradigms (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). According to Sabaratnam (2017), who cites Harghad Keval, decolonisation demands reordering the centre and the margins of knowledge and power. This gave rise to an African Renaissance in education, a call to recognise indigenous African Knowledge and to rebalance power relations (Hoppers, 2020; 2022; Seepe, 2001a, 2001b).

The conceptualisation of decolonisation as seen above varies significantly across geographical, political and disciplinary contexts. In some scholarship, decolonisation is framed as curricular diversification; in others, it is centred on land restitution and indigenous sovereignty (Tuck and Yang, 2012). Within African higher education, it has often been associated with epistemic justice and the dismantling of Eurocentric knowledge hierarchies (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). The conceptualisation of decolonisation in this research is influenced by some of these definitions while being underpinned by coloniality theorists like

Fanon (1961/2004; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2013); postcolonial governance analysis Mbembe, (2001); and others. However, Tuck and Yang, (2012) cautioned against the metaphorisation of decolonisation. Therefore, this research defines decolonisation from a constellation of perspectives and grounds it on a social justice theory (Fraser, 2000; 2008). The definition of decolonisation according to this research is presented in subsequent pages below. The conceptualisation draws on both decolonisation theorists such as Nyoni, (2019); Nasrullah, (2017) to mention only these two and decolonial and postcolonial scholarship, while remaining attentive to Nigeria's specific colonial formation under British indirect rule. A foundational distinction informing this thesis is that between colonialism and coloniality. Colonialism refers to formal political domination. Coloniality, by contrast, refers to the enduring structures of power, knowledge and hierarchy that outlived formal independence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Nigeria achieved independence in 1960; however, coloniality persists in linguistic hierarchies privileging English; administrative structures shaped by indirect rule; epistemic dependency on Western developmental psychology; and the borrowing policies from former colonial metropolises. This research argues that decolonisation in Nigeria must be understood as a multidimensional restructuring of epistemic, material and institutional relations shaped by coloniality, rather than as symbolic reform or cultural nostalgia.

According to Fanon (1961/2004), coloniality operates not only materially but also psychologically, shaping aspirations and perceptions of legitimacy. English proficiency, for example, continues to function as symbolic capital within Nigerian education, reflecting what Fanon describes as the internalisation of colonial linguistic hierarchies. Fanon's critique of colonial education highlights how knowledge systems function to legitimise hierarchy. Similarly, Mbembe (2001) argues that colonial administrative rationalities persist in postcolonial institutions, shaping what counts as authoritative knowledge. Mbembe analyses how colonial administrative logics persist in postcolonial states. Policy–practice gaps in Nigerian education often reflect inherited bureaucratic structures rather than isolated inefficiencies (Mamman et al, 2025; Okeke and Chukwudebelu, 2024). Gatsheni (2013) extends this analysis by arguing that coloniality is embedded within global modernity itself. One of the central domains in which coloniality manifests itself is epistemology. Postcolonial states remain integrated into global systems of economic and epistemic dependency. In

Nigeria, the Early Years teacher training programme often relies on imported texts and UK-aligned frameworks. This reflects what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) describes as epistemic extraversion — outward orientation towards Western centres of authority. Globally, early childhood education has been heavily influenced by Euro-American developmental psychology, which is often presented as universally applicable (Penn, 2011). Such frameworks can obscure socio-cultural variability and local pedagogical traditions. Thus, decolonisation in Nigeria cannot be reduced to national reform alone; it must engage with transnational knowledge flows and global hierarchies. In the context of EYE, this means examining how Western developmental frameworks and quality assurance metrics become naturalised as universal standards.

A major limitation of certain decolonisation discourse lies in its focus on recognition at the expense of material transformation. In African higher education debates, epistemic justice is often in the foregrounded, yet structural underfunding remains under-theorised. To address this gap, this research draws on Nancy Fraser (2000; 2008), whose multidimensional theory of justice to argues that justice requires (economic redistribution, (cultural), recognition and (political) representation. Recognition without redistribution risks symbolic reform without structural change. In Nigeria, Early Years Education is chronically underfunded in comparison with other sectors. Infrastructure deficits, low lecturer remuneration and limited research capacity constrain pedagogical innovation (Aguh, 2023). These material conditions shape the feasibility of decolonial aspirations. Thus, decolonisation in Nigerian EYE must include fiscal investment in the early childhood infrastructure; redistribution of educational resources; and valuation of feminised early childhood labour. This aligns with Walter Rodney's (1972) argument that narratives of African underdevelopment obscure structural global exploitation. Without redistributive justice, decolonisation risks becoming rhetorical. Fraser's third dimension– representation, which in this context is not symbolic inclusion but structural participation in decision-making processes – highlights political voice and participatory parity. In educational governance, this concerns who shapes curriculum frameworks and policy agendas. Early Years lecturers frequently operate within top-down policy environments influenced by international benchmarks and federal directives (Apple, 2004). Decolonisation, therefore, requires institutional transformation, allowing lecturers to participate in curriculum design and policy development.

While Afrocentric scholarship, as pioneered by Molefi Kete Asante (1987), has been vital in challenging Eurocentrism, critic like Appiah (1992) argues that it risks essentialising African identity and reifying race as epistemic foundation. Similarly, Mbembe (2001) critiques nativist discourses that romanticise authenticity. However, this thesis does not provide an essentialist Afrocentric alternative. Wiredu (1998) cautions against romanticising precolonial traditions or rejecting Western knowledge wholesale and advocates conceptual decolonisation as a critical interrogation rather than cultural substitution. This thesis therefore avoids framing decolonisation as a return to precolonial purity. Nigeria's internal diversity — linguistic, ethnic, and religious — complicates any singular African epistemology. Moreover, contemporary Nigerian society is deeply entangled within global networks. Decolonisation will not be anti-modern nor anti-global; rather, it seeks equitable participation within global knowledge systems without epistemic subordination.

Synthesising these strands of argument, this study conceptualises decolonisation of EYE in Nigerian as a multidimensional process to dismantle coloniality within epistemic hierarchies, linguistic structures, governance systems and material resource distribution, in order to enable contextually grounded, participatory and –socially equitable early childhood education. This definition integrates: coloniality theory (Fanon; Ndlovu-Gatsheni), postcolonial governance analysis (Mbembe); critical caution against metaphorisation (Tuck and Yang) and social justice theory (Fraser). It is geographically specific, sectorally grounded, and normatively structured. Decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria therefore involves epistemic pluralisation: disrupting the ordering of hierarchical knowledge, while enabling contextual adaptation. It is not about replacing Western theory with a singular African canon, but about destabilising epistemic monopoly. It cannot be reduced to curricular diversification, nor can it be equated with Afrocentric cultural restoration. Decolonisation must simultaneously address epistemic hierarchy, material inequality and institutional power. By conceptualising decolonisation as structural transformation across recognition, redistribution and representation, this study provides a framework theoretically robust enough to analyse how coloniality persists within Early Years Education and how it may be disrupted. The research recognises the limitedness of any single knowledge system and proposes multiple knowledges (Adebisi, 2016). The focus is on the classroom, which classroom becomes a

theatre where teachers and students can be decolonial thinkers, actors and agents of delinking and relinking.

2.6.3 Decolonisation of Education in Nigeria

Recent debate on decolonising education in Nigeria mainly focuses on transforming the university curriculum to reflect Nigerian realities such as cultural values, knowledge systems and others. The movement aims to address the effects of colonialism on education as they marginalise African perspectives. In an interview (Vanguard, 2024), Falola explained why higher education in Nigeria must promote Afrocentric research methodologies and curricula that reflect African realities. In his book on decolonising African knowledge and epistemologies Falola opines that this work could serve as theoretical framework on decolonising higher education in Nigeria and beyond (Falola, 2021). Adekunle and Meroyi (2023) call for the decolonisation of Nigerian curriculum as a path to self-reliant education. Here the authors talk of education and curriculum in general. Education must, they argue, aim to achieve progress and development; thus, a school's curriculum must fall in line with the aims of education. The Nigerian curriculum has been criticised for being incapable of promoting self-reliance and national development, they conclude.

Agbedo et al (2012) call for a paradigm shift in language teaching methodology to support the revalorisation of the indigenous languages. They suggest using of these languages as the media of instruction in EYE. Ojo et al (2023) call for decolonisation of the Nigerian Educational system as an impetus for holistic development. They commend the National Policy on Education (2014), which conceives education as an instrument for change and national development, but highlight poor implementation of the policy. Children, they said, should be encouraged to value their cultural heritage and decolonisation should concentrate on all levels.

Okofu and Fakere (2022) focus on decolonising the curriculum of architectural education in Nigeria, arguing that the curriculum was formulated according to British and American pedagogical models, reflecting nothing about Nigeria. The result is lack of agency and capabilities to self-initiated projects and consequently unemployment. Salami and Okeke (2017), using the titled Transformation and Decolonisation of Mathematics, A Case Study of its Learning Trend in Nigeria, examined performance trends in Mathematics to determine at what level learning begins to decline. It was discovered that pupils started experiencing a decline from primary 111 class. This, according to the authors, calls for a review and contextualisation of the subject from year 3 primary class.

Adeogun (2020), Towards Decolonising University Music, argues that coloniality remains embedded in Nigerian universities's music education and that local musical paradigms are marginalised. The author demands critical engagement, transformation, contextualisation and relational understanding of multiple music knowledge, rather than the mere inclusion of African content. Fomunyam (2020), Decolonising Engineering Education in Nigeria Higher Education, argues that the curriculum and pedagogical structures set up by the British had persisted, without any major adaptation to address Nigeria's socio-cultural or developmental needs. Fomunyam's work aligns with Adeogun, who calls for systemic transformations in curriculum, pedagogy and the language of instruction. The focus of these scholarly works is mostly on curriculum/ pedagogy and the language of instruction in HE in Nigeria.

These works contribute to the decolonisation of education, and this research aligns with some of them, but deviates from the existing literature because it cuts across decolonising, HE and EYE. It includes curriculum, language of instruction, policies and EYE teacher programmes through engagement with the university lecturers. The research speaks to both the EYE sector and universities. It argues that the decolonisation of education cannot be fully achieved without the decolonisation of EYE, exploring the EYE curriculum and how and why Nigerian EYE lecturers consider the curriculum as Eurocentric or Indigenous; how and why; how the lecturers engage in decolonising the EYE curriculum; and factors affecting the lecturers' attempts to decolonise EYE. The research suggests ways to decolonise the curriculum and goes a step further by formulating curriculum principles that can contribute to decolonisation

of EYE in Nigeria and beyond. Decolonising the minds of children is a step towards epistemic freedom. It leads to deconstructing and reframing inaccurate colonist historical accounts as well as blocking their reproduction (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

An example of an inaccurate historic account is Mungo Park's discovery of River Niger as contained in the history curriculum (Adichie, 2007). It is incorrect to say that Mungo Park discovered the river because Africans already knew about its existence. It is necessary to change the narrative and put historical facts in their correct perspective. Discovery places the so-called discoverer on a higher pedestal over the unsung native who was the first to see River Niger. This is in line with discovery doctrines which subtly emphasise the importance of exploration, thereby laying claims over land and peoples (Gonnella, 2010). How can a foreigner discover a river which people have been fishing on for a long time? This is one of the problems of Europe, Eurocentrism, putting patency on everything, imperialistic thought and the mania for conquest (Kaskins, 2019, DNlee, 2015, Drake, 2018, Allan, 1995). Mungo Park may have been the first European to see the River Niger after he was carried to it by the natives.

2.6.4 Decolonisation of Early Years Education

A little research on decolonising EYE has been carried out internationally. Beginning with Fikile Nxumalo (2020; 2019); these works offer radical, practice-shifting foundations for decolonising EYE that can inspire decolonisation of EYE in Nigerian. Nxumalo's contribution focuses on reorientation of how we understand childhood, land, knowledge and power. Nxumalo uses post-humanism, a theoretical perspective challenging the idea that humans are the centre of the world and the most important source of knowledge and power, whereas post-humanism instead argues that humans exist in relationship with non-human entities such as animals, plants, land, water etcetera and that these relationships shape learning, knowledge and life. Nxumalo uses post humanist and indigenous perspectives to challenge the idea that knowledge in early childhood education should be centred on Western human perspectives and argues that childhood is never neutral or universal; it is shaped by land, colonial histories, and ongoing power relations. In her work, Nxumalo shows how

children's learning is entangled with the histories of land they inhabit, the ecological relationships around them and the colonial dispossession that shaped those landscapes. Following this line of argument, it means that, in Nigeria, EYE must be grounded in local ecologies, histories and cultural landscapes, rather than imported developmental norms. She challenges the dominance of Western developmental psychology, which pathologises Black and Indigenous children and argues for developmental understandings grounded in cultural context. Nxumalo encourages the rejection of Western milestones, recognises culturally specific competencies and sees children's participation in the household and community life as learning. Nigerian educators following Nxumalo's works are invited to treat the Nigerian environment–rainforests, rivers, markets and so on as pedagogical spaces rich with indigenous knowledge. Her pedagogical method encourages outdoor learning and supports Yoruba ethics as a developmental framework and Hausa-Fulani communal caregiving as pedagogy (Nxumalo, 2020; 2019). This shifts the intent of practices such as 'cultural celebration' away from mere celebrating to epistemic grounding– where Nigerian worldviews shape the curriculum from the inside out.

Another important work by Nxumalo, (2021) argues that place comprises of not only human inhabitants but also more-than-human ones. This concept of place disrupts colonial settler and anti-Blackness inheritances which include Euro-Western human exceptionalism, and it emerges in place-based education: in other words, the understanding that nature is separated from, and lesser than, humans (Bang et al.; 2014; Nxumalo, 2019). This view of nature reinforces colonising and extractive views of the world where nature is considered as passive and primarily in terms of how it can benefit certain humans. This is a colonising view because it erases the reciprocal relationship between the indigenous peoples with land (Cajete, 2000). Nxumalo critiques how Western early childhood education romanticises 'nature' as a neutral, apolitical space. She maintains that land is political, shaped by colonial extraction, environmental racism and indigenous dispossession (Nxumalo, 2019). In another study, Nxumalo and Cedillo (2017) emphasise the need to bring to the centre indigenous onto-epistemologies and black feminist geographies in considerations of place, environment and 'nature' in early childhood studies. Onto-epistemologies refer to the interconnectedness of ontology and epistemology, meaning that our understanding of what exist is inseparable from how we know. This challenges the traditional philosophical models that separate ontology and epistemology. Nxumalo and Cedillo aim to disturb the dominance of Euro Western knowledges in encounter with nature/culture and human/nonhuman dualisms in

environmental and place-based childhood studies. The authors argue that anthropogenic (pollution or environmental change) vulnerabilities, anti-blackness and settler colonialism are entangled within North American contexts. Teachers are therefore encouraged to educate children about local environmental issues such as erosion, flooding and desertification through indigenous ecological knowledge and reconnect children with land-based practices such as fishing, farming, weaving etcetera. This challenges colonial narratives that frame African environments as 'underdeveloped' and strengthens children's sense of belonging to a place ((Nxumalo and Cedillo, 2017). The authors argue that bringing together indigenous onto-epistemologies and black feminist geographies will enrich critical place-attuned early childhood studies. In conclusion, a post humanist approach to the decolonisation of EYE helps us to reconsider education in ways that value land, community and ecological relationships as opposed to the colonial education system which often separates humans from nature and priorities Western scientific knowledge. This is in line with Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies, which underpinned curriculum formulation in this research as we shall see in the next chapter.

The next work on decolonising EYE that is of interest in this research is Miller, (2017), a 'Reconceptualist' piece in a colonising context. This work challenges Australian early childhood education and contributes to the Reconceptualist movement that critiques developmental, universal frameworks ignoring local and cultural specificity. In this piece, Miller explores how early childhood education must be reconceptualised in diverse sociocultural contexts. The author emphasises the need for a shift in the preparation of educators, without which the movement will remain superficial and fail to dismantle engrained colonial influences in early childhood education. Miller situates early childhood education in Australia within a settler-colonial context where colonial power structures continue to shape educational policies, curricula, and professional practices. Miller argues that decolonisation requires confronting colonial discourses in education.

The work emphasises that colonial power relations are often reproduced within everyday early childhood practices, even when educators intend to promote inclusion. She demonstrates that colonial discourses shape curriculum decisions, educator identities, relations between indigenous and non-Indigenous educators and interpretations of policy. This insight means that decolonisation must be relational, involving dialogue and collaboration with Indigenous peoples rather than having educators act as the sole knowledge

authorities. Thus, decolonisation cannot mean merely adding indigenous content to curricula: it requires critical examination of the colonial assumptions embedded within educational structures and professional practices. This insight challenges the superficial approach of 'inclusion' and frames decolonisation as a structural and epistemological transformation instead.

Miller argues that despite policy commitments to embedding indigenous perspectives in early childhood curricula, colonial discourses continue to shape how educators interpret and implement these initiatives. This shows the difficulty of pursuing genuine decolonisation within institutions historically structured by colonial ideologies. Drawing on whiteness theory Miller shows how dominant cultural norms shape early childhood education systems. She stresses the importance of critiquing 'Whiteness' in Early Childhood Education and demonstrates that non-indigenous educators often unintentionally reproduce racialised power relations as well as whiteness structures decisions about curriculum, knowledge legitimacy and participation. Consultation with indigenous communities can, Miller opines, become tokenistic when power remains with non-Indigenous educators. This can regulate curriculum development and consultation processes, thus limiting, meaningful Indigenous participation and maintaining dominant control. The implication of this point in regard to decolonisation is that it encourages educators to critically reflect on their own positionality, privilege and authority in knowledge production. Miller emphasises the need for sustained and reciprocal partnerships with indigenous communities rather than symbolic inclusion. These partnerships enable access to local indigenous knowledge, culturally appropriate pedagogies, respectful consultation and curriculum development.

Miller draws on reconceptualist scholarship which challenges dominant developmental and technocratic models of early childhood education. These approaches emphasise critical theory, poststructuralism, feminist perspectives and postcolonial analysis. They question the universalising assumptions of Western developmental psychology, opening up space for alternative cultural understandings of childhood. Underpinned by reconceptualist scholarship Miller conceptualises early childhood education in Australia as operating within a colonising context, meaning that educational systems continue to be shaped by colonial histories and

structures. The author opines that recognising this context allows educators and researchers to understand how colonial power relations persist in education, why decolonisation requires systemic change and how educational knowledge systems marginalise Indigenous epistemologies. Another concept deriving from this piece is identity work and professional reflexivity, where educators critically reflect on their professional identities and assumptions. Educators may occupy shifting positions such as that of advocate, mediator, observer and protector. Therefore Miller argues that through reflective engagement with indigenous scholarship and critical theory, educators can develop greater awareness of how their identity, privilege and experiences shape their pedagogical practices.

When it comes to methodology, Miller's work contributes to methodological approaches that support decolonising practices in early childhood education. These include action research and critical reflection as method. Action research involves cycles of reflection, inquiry, data gathering and practice transformation. Educators participate in collaborative projects aimed at critically examining their own practices and developing more culturally responsive pedagogies. Action research is valuable for decolonisation because it centres practitioner's reflection, promotes transformation of practice and links theory with lived educational contexts. Critical Reflection as Method on the other hand encourages educators to question their assumptions about indigenous knowledge, power relations in classrooms and the hidden colonial narratives within curricula. This reflective method allows educators to identify how colonial knowledge systems continue to shape everyday pedagogical decisions.

Drawing on Miller's work, decolonisation in early childhood education may entail critically examining colonial assumptions in curricula and pedagogy, acknowledging the historical and contemporary colonial context, building genuine partnerships with indigenous communities, centring Indigenous knowledge systems and worldviews, encouraging educator reflexive regarding power, identity and privilege and adopting research approaches that transform practice, such as action research. However, while Miller's work provides valuable theoretical and methodological insights, it also highlights tensions within decolonising efforts. Educational institutions remain embedded within colonial structures, which can constrain transformative change. Consequently, decolonisation requires ongoing critical engagement

rather than a fixed outcome, challenging educators to continually question how colonial power relations shape knowledge, pedagogy and professional practice.

Next on the list is Abawi (2022) 'Decolonising early childhood curricula: A Canadian perspective' in Marlon Lee Moncrieff (ed), Decolonising Curriculum Knowledge. This work examines early childhood curricula in Canada within a broader context of settler colonialism, racial inequities and the systemic exclusion of indigenous and racialised knowledge. Abawi argues that early childhood education systems in Canada have historically privileged settler-colonial norms and neoliberal interpretations of diversity, leading to colour blindness that overshadows structural inequalities and marginalising indigenous perspectives and the lived experiences of diverse communities. The work contributes to debates on what decolonising the early childhood curriculum means and how it can be enacted in practice, particularly within institutions shaped by colonial histories. Abawi calls for a shift from superficial multiculturalism towards a curriculum that recognises, disrupts and dismantles whiteness and systemic racism. One of the pivotal points for decolonising Early Childhood Education is, according to Abawi, that decolonisation must be conceptualise as disrupting Eurocentric curricula, knowledge systems and dominant cultural assumptions. This requires challenging the assumption that Western knowledge is universal or neutral. It involves questioning dominant narratives embedded in curriculum materials, recognising how colonial histories shape what is considered legitimate knowledge and amplifying perspectives that have historically been marginalised or silenced. This means that decolonising curriculum work must challenge dominant viewpoints and centre marginalised knowledge systems in education. It also means that early childhood education must reconsider the knowledge children are exposed to and recognise diverse cultural epistemologies. Another insight is that decolonisation must be aimed at addressing racism and colonial legacies in Early Childhood Education. Abawi underlines that colonialism and racism have continued to shape educational institutions, including early childhood settings influencing teacher expectation, representations of identity and children's experiences of belonging.

Abawi frames decolonisation as anti-racist and anti-colonial work, requiring educators to confront systemic inequalities embedded in curricula and pedagogy. This shifts

decolonisation from cultural inclusion to structural transformation of educational systems. The work emphasises that early childhood education should recognise children's identities, belonging and cultural knowledge and that the histories, and lived experiences of children should be considered as legitimate forms of knowledge. This approach to decolonisation encourages educators to validate children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds, incorporates community knowledge into learning and supports children's identity development and sense of belonging. The perspective challenges deficit discourses that portray marginalised communities as lacking knowledge or resources.

Abawi contributes to the concept of epistemic justice by arguing that diverse knowledge systems which have been marginalised should be recognised and valued. In early childhood education this means acknowledging indigenous knowledge systems, valuing community knowledge and challenging the dominance of Western epistemologies in curriculum design. Abawi's work also contributes to anti-racist and decolonial curriculum and by linking decolonisation to anti-racist education, Abawi argues that curriculum reform must address systemic racism in early childhood education. This involves examining racialised representations in teaching materials, challenging colour-blind ideologies and supporting children's understanding of diversity, justice and equity. Abawi sees the curriculum as a political and social space therefore not neutral. Curriculum Abawi affirms reflects historical, cultural and political power relations. Understanding the curriculum as political allows educators to question whose knowledge is taught, whose histories are absent and how power shapes educational knowledge.

Drawing on critical pedagogy, Abawi emphasises the importance of reflexivity. Educators are encouraged to critically reflect on their own positionality and privilege, how colonial narratives shape teaching practices and the ways curriculum materials reproduce dominant cultural perspectives, and both to question dominant knowledge systems and to reflect on their own assumptions and practices. Critical pedagogy in early childhood education involves facilitating discussions about fairness and justice, encouraging critical thinking about representation and identity and supporting educators to challenge inequitable structures in education. This reflective practice enables educators to identify and challenge colonial

assumptions within everyday teaching. Abawi equally emphasises on the importance of collaboration with indigenous communities and racialised groups when designing curricula. In this case, decolonising practices involve engaging with indigenous knowledge holders, incorporating community narratives and histories and above all ensuring that the curriculum reflects local cultural contexts.

From Abawi's perspective, decolonising early childhood education involves, critically questioning Eurocentric curriculum knowledge, addressing racism and colonial legacies within educational institutions. It means valuing indigenous and community knowledge systems, promoting children's cultural identity and belonging, supporting educator reflexivity about power, privilege and representation and building partnerships with communities in curriculum development. While Abawi provides a strong critique of the Eurocentric curriculum and emphasises anti-racist approaches, the work equally highlights the challenges of implementing decolonisation within institutions historically structured by colonial systems like Nigeria EYE. As such, decolonising EYE in Nigeria requires ongoing critical engagement, institutional change and relational collaboration with communities, rather than superficial curricular adjustments.

The last but not the least work on decolonising early childhood education cited in this research is Takek Abebe et al (2022) who argue that childhood studies and early childhood education have formerly been shaped by Eurocentric and Global North theoretical frameworks. These frameworks often present Western childhood experiences and developmental models as universal, marginalising the diverse realities of children in the Global South. The authors therefore advocate for Southern theories and decolonial childhood studies, which seek to challenge dominant knowledge systems and centre perspectives from historically marginalised contexts. This perspective is important because curriculum frameworks, teacher education and developmental theories often draw heavily on Western psychological models, which may not reflect the cultural, social and economic realities of children in other contexts.

Their work contributes to broader debates about decolonising knowledge production in childhood research and education. The authors criticise the ways children's experiences are interpreted through the Northern lens and call for ways of knowing children that cut across the North-South encounter. The work engages with the issue of epistemic plurality and bottom-up theorisation that could rectify the onto-epistemological imbalance in childhood studies. This will, they argue, bring back indigenous knowledge systems that have been marginalised. One of the central insights from Abebe et al. is the critique of the universalisation of Western childhood theories. They argue that dominant developmental frameworks— often derived from European and North American contexts— shape curriculum design and teacher training as well as policy assumptions about children's development. The authors maintain that these frameworks marginalise local child-rearing practices, cultural values and community-based understandings of childhood. Decolonisation of EYE therefore requires educators and researchers to question the dominance of Western developmental psychology and to recognise diverse cultural constructions of childhood. They emphasise that childhood is socially, culturally and historically constructed rather than universal and that children's experiences differ depending on cultural norms, family structures and socio-economic context as well as political and historical conditions. Recognition of multiple childhoods will, the authors opine, challenge deficit perspectives that paint children in the Global South as lacking or underdeveloped according to Western standards. This insight encourages curricula and pedagogies that reflect diverse cultural understandings of childhood and development.

They highlight global inequalities in knowledge production stating that knowledge about childhood is produced within global power hierarchies. Takek Abebe and colleagues argue that scholars from the Global North dominate academic publishing and research funding, as well as theoretical frameworks used in childhood studies. Southern theories therefore seek to rebalance these knowledge hierarchies by foregrounding scholarship, experiences and epistemologies from the Global South thereby recognising that local communities, educators and families are legitimate knowledge producers.

By contributing to the ongoing debates on the politics and ethics of knowledge production in 'global' childhood studies, the authors call for decentring dominant Northern-centric models of childhood and using Southern and other epistemologies that have been marginalised. They

emphasis context-specific knowledge, analysis of colonial power relations and also alternative ways of understanding social phenomena. Southern theories encourage educators to draw on local cultural practices and indigenous knowledge systems. The aim of decolonial approach to childhood study is, according to Abebe et al is to transform how childhood is studied by addressing colonial histories and epistemic inequalities as well as highlighting how colonialism has shaped educational systems, policies affecting children and research agendas about childhood. They opine that decolonial approaches seek to recentre marginalised perspectives and challenge colonial assumptions about childhood and development. Epistemic and knowledge plurality is another concept that emerged from Southern theories, and this demands the recognition and valuing of diverse knowledge systems. It involves acknowledging indigenous knowledge systems, community-based child-rearing practices and culturally embedded learning processes. This, they opine promotes knowledge plurality, where multiple ways of knowing coexist rather than being ranked hierarchically.

In terms of methodological contribution, Abebe et al. emphasise the importance of contextually grounded research methods that recognise the social and cultural realities of children's lives. This includes examining local cultural practices, historical legacies of colonialism and socio-economic inequalities shaping childhood while challenging the tendency to apply universal research frameworks across different cultural contexts. The authors advocate for participatory and child-centred research methods. These research approaches recognise children as active participants in knowledge production. Participatory research methods include child-centred ethnography, participatory observation and visual or narrative methods that capture children's perspectives. These approaches challenge traditional research models where children are treated only as objects of study. Abebe and colleagues also emphasise collaborative knowledge production involving local communities, educators and families. They opine that rather than imposing external theoretical frameworks, researchers should work with communities to co-produce knowledge. They call for the recognition of local expertise and for ensuring that research reflects lived experiences. Such approaches they maintain align with broader decolonial principles of equity and relational accountability in research.

Drawing on Abebe et al. (2022), decolonisation in early childhood education involves questioning universal Western developmental frameworks, recognising diverse cultural constructions of childhood, centring knowledge from the Global South, valuing indigenous and community knowledge systems, adopting participatory and context-sensitive research approaches, and lastly recognising children as active contributors to knowledge. While Abebe et al. provide a strong critique of dominant knowledge systems, the transformation of early childhood education remains challenging within institutions structured by colonial histories and global knowledge hierarchies. Decolonising early childhood education therefore requires ongoing efforts to transform both research practices and curriculum knowledge, ensuring that diverse perspectives on childhood are recognised and valued.

The impact of these groundbreaking works on decolonising early childhood studies may be seen in different sections of this research. There may be certain variations in their contexts from this research such as settler-indigenous and colonialised contexts but most of the works have so much in common with this present research which aims to contribute towards decolonising EYE in Nigeria. These pioneer works influence the conceptualisation of the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria as a multidimensional process, dismantling coloniality within epistemic hierarchies, linguistic structures, governance systems and resource distribution; in order to enable contextually grounded, participatory and – socially equitable early childhood education. The research extends the global debate on decolonising EYE by situating Nigerian Early Years education within the discussion. It brings a West African dimension to a debate that is often dominated by settler-colonial contexts, thus expanding the comparative base of decolonial scholarship. By bringing lecturers' perspectives into the debate, this research ensures that African voices and experiences are documented, rather than subsumed under a Global North framework.

The education structure in Nigeria is part of colonial legacy. This has led to many young children missing out on early learning, with significant social impacts on their development. Obiweluozor (2015) reports that many children aged from zero to four years lack adequate early education and care. This negatively affects their well-being and development. The education of children aged from zero to four years in Nigeria is in the hands of private

providers (NNPE, 2013). It is reported that only 36% of Nigerian children access early years education (UNICEF, 2022). Statistics show disparity in attendance between children from rich households and those from a poor economic background; 87% and 8% respectively (UNICEF, 2022). This intensifies educational disparities between children, as we have seen above. This is a social justice issue. Therefore, every child should have access to quality EYE to reduce social inequality.

This research also argues that the invisibility of EYE in decolonial debate in Nigeria is a by-product of colonialism which has its origin in the concept of child that aided the conquest of the African people and patriarchal hierarchy in society. Decolonising the early phase of education is important because this is a stage where children's foundational worldviews, values language hierarchies and ideas about knowledge are first formed (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Battiste, 2013). To avoid equipping children with only the master's tool, I argue that decolonisation of education should start at the foundation stage, where curriculum fluidity allows for alternatives to the master's tools. As Lorde (1984) warned, the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. Yet Mignolo (2011) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) suggest that subversion is possible; not by using those tools, but by confronting epistemic discomfort through decolonial thinking and doing. We can also, without destroying the 'Big' house, use the same tools, develop additional ones and build our own houses of thought, rather than dismantle Western ideas (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018 p.7). It follows therefore that successful decolonisation of education cannot be achieved from the universities as African universities are still 'Western-oriented institutions', housing theories and discourses that aided colonisation and imperialism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p.56; Mbembe, 2016, Arowolo, 2010).

Education underpins social mobility and economic growth, playing a key role in shaping a fair and just society (Callaghan, 1976). A fair education system can help address social and economic inequality (OECD, 2023). Guided by the aims of education as contained NNPE, 2014, this research advocates for new curricula in Nigerian EYE. Keval (2021) emphasises the need to reposition who, and what occupy the centre and margins of society, aiming to rebalance power relations. This research asks, who is in the centre of Nigerian Education Curricula? Decolonising is about reconnecting with, reorganising and reclaiming knowledge and teaching methods that have been marginalised or hidden. It does not aim to erase Western or colonial knowledge, but to place non-Western histories and knowledges within the context

of imperialism, colonialism and power, questioning why they have been submerged (Mignolo, 2021).

Conclusion

This has chapter presented an overview of some relevant literature on the decolonisation of education and highlighted gaps in literature. One such gap is a lack of literature on the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria. The research thus contributes towards filling this gap as well as increasing our knowledge of decolonising EYE globally and nationally. Major themes that emerged from the literature review include, but are not limited to, the following: decolonisation of knowledge and knowledge production, language and intellectual decolonisation, the concept of child and childhood, colonial discourses, coloniality and decoloniality.

CHAPTER 3: Theoretical Frameworks

3. Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks that underpin this research and their relevance to the research questions. This research is theoretically grounded in African thought, decolonial theories and black African feminist methodology. It conceptualises Early Years Education in Nigeria not as a neutral pedagogical field, but as a historically situated site shaped by coloniality, linguistic hierarchy, gendered labour and global policy circulation. The decolonial theories analyse and critique colonial legacies in society, knowledge systems, culture and power structures. Scholars provide decolonial theories as tools for understanding and resisting coloniality. Fraser's theory serves to investigate inequalities in Nigerian EYE.

3.1 Decolonial Theories: African; Afro-diasporic Thinkers Underpinning this research

Decoloniality involves continual delinking and recentring of indigenous and marginalised ways of knowing. Decoloniality exposes the marginalisation of local populations by colonial discourses. Colonial discourse was discussed in Chapter 2. Decoloniality resists binary categories, a classification system (two distinct, mutually exclusive groups), such as colonised and coloniser (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Decoloniality in education is a school of thought aiming to delink from Eurocentric knowledge hierarchies. This research draws on decolonial theories which challenge and seek to dismantle enduring colonial structures, ideologies and power systems shaping societies, knowledge and identities. These theories provide frameworks for understanding how European colonialism has shaped exaggerated or distorted ethnocentric discourses in knowledge production and dissemination (Yúdice, 2003). Decolonial theory rejects Western European epistemic supremacy; the dominance of Western ways of knowing and understanding the world over other forms of knowledge systems

(Ngûgî wa Thiong, 1986, Walter Mignolo, 2000). The features of Western epistemic supremacy include Eurocentrism characterised by the belief that European ways of knowing are universal and superior to and more rational than other knowledge systems; and the colonial legacy such as imposition of colonial language, religion, education systems etcetera on the colonised peoples.

English, for example, enjoys social, political and economic prestige globally thanks to colonisation and globalisation: it thus enjoys status which indigenous languages do not have (Phillipson, 1992; James, 2011; Teilanya, 2011; Adepoju, 2019). In Nigeria, English occupies the highest position in language hierarchy, being the official language used in education and other functions. Indigenous languages like Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, which are widely spoken across regions do not have the same status. Other features include the institutionalisation of knowledge through universities and publishing industries that prioritise Western theories and methodologies, while excluding and devaluing non-Western knowledge systems. This creates hierarchies that elevate Western disciplines like philosophy and economics, while marginalising other epistemologies.

Decolonisation of Early Years Education in Nigeria draws on a constellation of African; Afro-diasporic and indigenous thinkers whose works challenge colonial knowledge systems, re-centre African epistemologies and foreground children's lived realities. These include: Fikile Nxumalo, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Frantz Fanon, Achille Mbembe, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Kwasi Wiredu, Walter Rodney, Amina Mama and others. Beginning with Fanon's analysis of colonialism, this provides a foundational lens for understanding how education operates as a site of psychological and cultural domination. In Black Skin, White Masks (1952/2008), Fanon argues that colonialism produces internalised inferiority through language and cultural assimilation. Mastering of the coloniser's language becomes associated with intelligence, civilisation and legitimacy. He critiques colonialism and suggests a roadmap for liberation of the oppressed (Fanon, 1963). In the Nigerian context, English retains the symbolic authority as the language of upward mobility and formal schooling. Fanon's work enables this thesis to conceptualise English-language dominance in EYE not as pedagogical inevitability, but as an enduring form of epistemic and cultural subordination.

The privileging of English within EYE classrooms cannot be reduced to parental preference alone; rather it reflects what Fanon (1961/2004 describes as the persistence of colonial structures within post-independence institutions (Ake, 1996; Ekekwe, 1986). The Early Years curriculum thus becomes a mechanism through which colonial hierarchies are subtly reproduced (Fafunwa, 1974; Taiwo, 1980). These works substantiate the argument that Fanon's structural critique resonates with Nigerian's political and educational continuity. However, Nigerian postcolonial condition is shaped less by settler racial binaries and more by ethno-regional politics, military rule and oil-based political economy thus exceeding Fanon's Algerian settler-colonial framework (Suberu, 2001; Osaghae, 1998; Watts, 2004).

Coming down to the next scholar, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1986), his work provides a crucial theoretical foundation for questioning language politics in Nigerian EYE. Ngugi Wa argues that colonial education alienates children from their cultural environment by privileging European languages as vehicles of knowledge and civilisation. Language is not merely communicative but epistemological; it shapes what counts as legitimate knowledge. In Nigerian EYE, the prioritisation of English in early literacy instruction marginalises indigenous languages and knowledge systems (Bamgbose, 1991; 2000; Adegbija, 2004). While policy frameworks may rhetorically support mother-tongue instruction, practice often reflects linguistic hierarchy shaped by colonial history and global economic aspiration (FRN, 2013). Ngugi wa advocates for decolonising language and literature by promoting African languages and stories (Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1986). Ngugi's work allows this thesis to theorise parental preference for English as structurally rational within a stratified global order, rather than as a cultural betrayal. It situates language choice within broader systems of power and symbolic capital. The multilinguistic nature of Nigeria complicates Ngugi's Kenya-centred Gikuyu model as English functions as a political stabiliser– even as it perpetuates coloniality (Mustapha, 2006; Simpson, 2008; Igboanusi, 2008).

Moving on to the next scholar of interest is Achille Mbembe, with his notion 'On The Postcolony' (2001) which provides a framework for understanding governance structures in post-independence African states. Mbembe argues that colonial administrative logics often persist within postcolonial institutions, shaping bureaucratic practices and power relations. In

the Nigerian education system, policy discourse frequently invokes reform, quality assurance and global competitiveness. However, implementation remains constrained by bureaucratic fragmentation, uneven funding and institutional inertia. Mbembe's framework enables analysis of this disjuncture between reform rhetoric and lived institutional realities. Early Years Education becomes a microcosm of postcolonial governance—where colonial administrative forms coexist with neoliberal policy discourse and limited material transformation.

Another important theorist to underpins this research is Ndlovu-Gatsheni whose work provides a comprehensive framework for analysing how colonial power relations persist beyond formal independence and continue to structure knowledge systems, institutions, language hierarchies and educational priorities in Africa. For Ndlovu-Gatsheni, decolonisation is not an event but an ongoing struggle against coloniality and the enduring patterns of power, knowledge and being that survived the end of colonial administrations. Central to Ndlovu-Gatsheni's work is the argument that Africa's post-independence education systems remain trapped within what he calls the colonial matrix of power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni's, 2013). Coloniality manifests itself in three interrelated dimensions – coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of being. Africa for example remains burdened by epistemological colonisation through mission and secular schools, religious institutions and other Western cultural imperialism (Ibid). Today's schools, colleges and universities in Africa are Western-oriented, producing graduates who are often alienated from the African society and values (Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1986; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Applying this framework to Early Years Education (EYE) in Nigeria allows this study to move beyond surface-level curriculum reform and to question deeper epistemic and structural continuities.

The next scholar is Kwasi Wiredu (1998), who introduces the notion of 'conceptual decolonisation,' arguing that African societies must critically examine inherited Western conceptual frameworks before adopting them. Wiredu does not advocate wholesale rejection of Western knowledge but insists on philosophical scrutiny of its applicability. This concept is especially relevant in analysing the dominance of Western developmental psychology within Nigerian EYE. Constructs such as 'school readiness' and universal developmental stages often circulate uncritically within curriculum design. Wiredu's framework prompts interrogation of whether these concepts align with Nigerian socio-cultural contexts or impose

epistemological dependency. Conceptual decolonisation thus becomes central to this study's critique of curriculum borrowing and the uncritical transfer of pedagogical models.

We now come to Walter Rodney's work titled 'How Europe Underdeveloped Africa' (1972) which furnishes a political economy perspective through which funding disparities and implementation gaps in Nigerian EYE can be analysed. Rodney contends that colonialism did not only exploit African resources but actively restructured economies in ways that entrenched dependency. From this standpoint, the chronic underfunding of Early Years provision in Nigeria is not accidental but historically patterned (Fafunwa, 1974). Policy frameworks often mirror global standards, yet material investment fails to match rhetorical ambition. Rodney's analysis shifts the interpretive frame from the individual's to the institution's failure in structural underdevelopment embedded within global economic relations. This point of view is particularly significant when analysing policy–practice gaps. Rather than framing lecturers as resistant or ineffective implementers, this study conceptualises their constraints as manifestations of structural inequity.

The next on the list is Fikile Nxumalo, whose work offers one of the most generative and practice-shifting foundations for decolonising EYE and translates this into the Nigerian context. Fikile's contribution focuses on the reorientation of how we understand childhood, land, knowledge, and power. Fikile argues that childhood is never neutral or universal; it is shaped by land, colonial histories and ongoing power relations. In some of her works (2020; 2019) Fikile shows how children's learning is entangled with the histories of land they inhabit, the ecological relationships around them and the colonial dispossession that shaped those landscapes. Translating Fikile's, argument onto EYE in Nigeria, this means that early childhood education must be grounded in local ecologies, histories and cultural landscapes, not imported developmental norms. She challenges the dominance of Western developmental psychology, which pathologies black and indigenous children and argues for developmental understandings grounded in cultural contexts. Fikile encourages the rejection of Western milestones and recognises culturally specific competencies, seeing children 's participation in household and community life as learning. Nigerian educators are therefore invited to treat the Nigerian environment–rainforests, rivers, markets and so on as pedagogical spaces rich in

indigenous knowledge. Fikile (2020; 2019) supports Yoruba ethics as a developmental framework and Hausa-Fulani communal caregiving as pedagogy. This shifts the intent of practice such as 'cultural celebration' away from mere celebration to epistemic grounding– where Nigerian worldviews shape the curriculum from the inside out.

African feminist scholarship deepens this theoretical research framework by placing gender and knowledge production in the foreground. Amina Mama (1995) critiques academic knowledge production, arguing that African scholarship is often marginalised within global hierarchies. Applying Mama's insights to EYE research challenges the dominance of Eurocentric childhood theory and positions Nigerian lecturers as epistemic agents rather than policy subjects. This feminist lens is particularly relevant in analysing the feminisation and undervaluation of Early Years labour (Okeke, 2000). Early childhood teaching in Nigeria, as elsewhere, is disproportionately performed by women and often under-resourced. Integrating African feminist political economy perspectives allows this study to theorise undervaluation as intersecting with colonial and gendered hierarchies. Together, these frameworks shift this research analysis away from technical implementation challenges to structural, historical and epistemic critique. The frameworks situate decolonisation not as curriculum modification alone, but as a broader struggle for epistemic autonomy, linguistic justice and material redistribution within EYE in Nigeria.

3.2 Other Decolonial Scholars: How their Work Resonates with and Diverges from the Nigerian Context

Aside from African decolonial scholarship, other scholars have also influenced this research. Decolonial scholarship was initiated in Latin America, and it has challenged the assumptions and foundations of educational theory and practice. We begin with Quijano (2000) who introduced the concept of coloniality of power focuing on how colonialism shapes global power dynamics, Quijano argues that although formal colonialism has ended, the coloniality of power – a global model of domination based on racial classification and Eurocentric

knowledge – persists as the 'dark side' of modernity. In the context of EYE in Nigeria, coloniality of power is evident in the continued reliance on British-derived curriculum structures, the dominance of Western developmental psychology as universal frameworks, the privileging of English -medium early schooling, policy borrowing from Euro-American model of early years education etcetera (Thióng 1986; Falola, 2021; Adekunle and Meroyi, 2023; Agbedo et al 2012). However, Quijano's framework focuses on racial hierarchies rooted in Latin American colonial experiences. Nigerian colonial history shaped by indirect rule and ethnic fragmentation produces a more complex configuration of power. In EYE contexts, hierarchies may operate less visibly through race and more through class stratification, language prestige and urban-rural disparities. Therefore, while Quijano's analysis of coloniality of power illuminates structural dependency, it requires contextual reinterpretation within Nigeria's multi-ethnic national formation.

The next scholar is Dussel who focuses on ethics, philosophy and coloniality of power. His work critiques Eurocentrism, modernity and the structure of power as they continue to oppress the Global South (Dussel, 1998). Enriqu Dussel (1998) provides an important philosophical foundation for decolonial thought through his critique of Eurocentric modernity. In his book 'The Underside of Modernity', Dussel argues that modernity should not be understood as an exclusively European achievement. Instead, he contends that modernity was constituted through colonial expansion and the exploitation of colonised societies. This argument challenges dominant Western narratives, which present modernity as a universal and progressive project while obscuring the violence and marginalisation experienced by colonised peoples.

Dussel's work resonates with the postcolonial geopolitical context of Nigeria. His critique of Eurocentrism helps in illuminating how colonial rule under the United Kingdom shaped political, economic and educational structures in Nigeria. Colonial education systems introduced Western epistemologies as dominant forms of knowledge while marginalising indigenous knowledge systems and local epistemologies (Alatas, 2000; Dei, 2011). In this sense, Dussel's argument that modernity has an "underside" is particularly relevant for understanding how colonial histories continue to influence contemporary institutions and

knowledge production in Nigeria. Furthermore, Dussel's work aligns with broader decolonial debates about the persistence of colonial power relations in the postcolonial world. Scholars such as Achille Mbembe conceptualise this persistence through the notion of the coloniality of power, which refers to the enduring structures of domination that emerged during colonialism and continue to shape global hierarchies of knowledge and labour. Similarly, Nelson Maldonado-Torres extends this analysis through the concept of the coloniality of being, highlighting how colonialism also shaped ontological hierarchies that positioned colonised populations as inferior.

However, there are also limitations when applying Dussel's framework to the Nigerian context directly. Much of Dussel's work emerges from Latin American experiences of colonialism and focuses heavily on the relationship between Europe and the Americas. While there are important parallels with African colonial histories, scholars such as Achille Mbembe argues that African postcolonial contexts are shaped not only by colonial legacies but also by complex internal political, social and economic dynamics (Mbembe, 2001). These dynamics include ethnic diversity, postcolonial governance challenges and the continuing influence of global political and economic structures. African scholars have therefore emphasised the importance of grounding decolonial analysis within African epistemological traditions and historical contexts. For example, Oyeřonñke Oyěwùmí critiques the universalisation of Western theoretical frameworks and argues for the recognition of indigenous epistemologies and sociocultural systems within African scholarship (Oyěwùmí, 1997). Similarly, Amina Mama highlights the need to situate research and knowledge production within the lived realities and intellectual traditions of African societies (Mama, 2007). Taken together, Dussel's critique of Eurocentric modernity offers a valuable conceptual lens for understanding how colonial histories continue to shape knowledge and institutional structures in Nigeria. However, critical engagement with his work requires situating it alongside African scholarship that addresses the specific historical, cultural and geopolitical dynamics of the Nigerian context.

Mignola (2000; 2011) is another decolonial scholar to influence this research. Mignola focuses on decolonising epistemology while proposing pluriversality as a framework for a

decolonial future. Mignola proposes the concept of epistemic disobedience — a deliberate delinking from Western universalist epistemologies. In curriculum debates, this suggests rejecting the assumption that Western developmental theories are globally normative. The calls to integrate indigenous languages and pedagogies culturally grounded in early childhood settings echo Mignolo's proposal. Theoretically, epistemic disobedience would challenge the universalisation of Piagetian developmental stages, question imported 'school readiness' frameworks and validate indigenous modes of play and learning. Yet Nigeria's geopolitical reality complicates full epistemic delinking. English serves as both colonial residue and a national unifier across hundreds of ethnic groups (NNPE, 2013). Moreover, global educational standards influence accreditation, funding and international collaboration. This means that while epistemic disobedience provides a critical vocabulary, wholesale delinking may risk isolating Nigerian EYE from global research networks and economic mobility structures. This research therefore opines that Nigerian context demands a strategy of critical adaptation rather than complete epistemic withdrawal.

Next comes Nelson Maldonado-Torres who writes about the coloniality of being, centring on the effects of colonialism on subjectivity and identity. Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007) contributes significantly to decolonial scholarship through his formulation of the coloniality of being. Building on the earlier work of Aníbal Quijano on the coloniality of power, Maldonado-Torres argues that colonialism did not end with formal political independence; rather, colonial relations persist through enduring structures of knowledge, power and subjectivity that continue to shape how certain groups are positioned within global hierarchies. Although his work primarily emerges from Latin American decolonial thought, aspects of his argument resonate with the postcolonial geopolitical context of Nigeria, while also presenting some limitations.

Maldonado-Torres' concept of the coloniality of being highlights how colonialism produced enduring hierarchies of humanity in which colonised populations were constructed as inferior or less fully human. This framework resonates with Nigeria's colonial history under the United Kingdom and the continuing influence of colonial structures within political, educational and epistemic systems. For example, colonial education systems introduced

during British rule privileged European epistemologies and marginalised indigenous African knowledge systems. Although Nigeria gained political independence in 1960, many educational structures and curricula continue to reflect Eurocentric frameworks (Thióng 1986; Falola, 2021; Adekunle and Meroyi, 2023; Agbedo et al, 2012). Scholars such as Walter Mignola and Boaventura de Sousa Santos argue that coloniality persists through the dominance of Western knowledge systems, which continue to shape global academic hierarchies. Maldonado-Torres' work therefore provides a useful lens for understanding how colonial power relations remain embedded within contemporary knowledge production in Nigeria. His arguments also resonate with debates involving language and identity. The continued privileging of English in education and governance reflects colonial legacies that shape access to knowledge and social mobility ((Thióng, 1986). In this sense, Maldonado-Torres' concept of coloniality helps explain how colonial hierarchies remain embedded in everyday institutional practices.

Despite these areas of resonance, Maldonado-Torres' framework also has limitations when applied to Nigeria's specific geopolitical context. Much of the Latin American decolonial tradition focuses on racial hierarchies shaped by Spanish and Portuguese colonial histories. While race remains an important dimension of coloniality globally, the Nigerian context is also shaped by ethnic, linguistic and regional diversity. Scholars such as Mbembe argue that postcolonial African states are shaped not only by colonial legacies but also by internal political dynamics, including postcolonial governance structures, elite power relations and state formation processes. These complexities suggest that while the concept of coloniality is useful, it must be adapted to account for the specific historical and sociopolitical dynamics within African contexts. Similarly, African feminist scholars like Amina Mama and Oyérónke Oyěwùmi critique universalist theoretical frameworks that do not fully engage with the gendered and culturally specific experiences of African societies. They highlight the need to situate decolonial analyses within local epistemologies and sociocultural contexts rather than to rely solely on theoretical models developed in other regions.

Overall, Maldonado-Torres' concept of the coloniality of being offers a valuable framework for understanding how colonial power relations persist beyond political independence. In

Nigerian context, his work helps in illuminating the continued dominance of Eurocentric knowledge systems within education and research. However, critical engagement with his framework also requires recognising its limitations and situating it within broader African postcolonial scholarship. By engaging with African scholars and contextual realities, this research can extend Maldonado-Torres' insights, while also ensuring that analyses remain grounded in the specific geopolitical, historical and cultural dynamics of Nigeria.

The last but not the least work is Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) 'Decolonization is not a metaphor'. This issues a forceful critique of the widespread metaphorisation of decolonisation within education. The authors raise critical caution against metaphorisation of decolonisation and argue that decolonisation is not synonymous with diversity, inclusion or curriculum reform. For example, it is tokenistic to include indigenous stories in curricula without addressing funding inequities or institutional voice. This they argue, does not constitute decolonisation. Decolonisation in settler colonial contexts fundamentally entails the repatriation of indigenous land and life. The work of Tuck and Wayne Yang unsettles the ease with which 'decolonisation' circulates in academic discourse. While their work emerges from the North American settler colonial context, it offers important provocations for the decolonisation of Early Years Education in Nigeria. However, it also raises critical questions about the transferability of settler colonial frameworks to postcolonial African states.

Tuck and Yang argue that when decolonisation is used metaphorically — to describe curriculum diversification, institutional reform or epistemic inclusion — it risks becoming a 'settler move to innocence.' Such moves allow institutions to appear transformative without materially disrupting colonial structures. They insist that decolonisation must involve the returning of indigenous land, the dismantling of settler colonial sovereignty and structural, rather than symbolic, transformation. Their critique is particularly directed towards educational institutions that adopt decolonial language while leaving property relations and sovereignty intact. Although Nigeria is not a settler colonial state in the same way as the United States or Canada, Tuck and Yang's warning about metaphorisation resonates strongly with debates about decolonising EYE in Nigeria.

In Nigerian Early Years contexts, decolonisation effort involves the inclusion of indigenous stories in textbooks, the encouragement of cultural days in schools and the introduction of local languages alongside English (FRN, 2013. While these measures are important, Tuck and Yang's argument compels us to ask whether such reforms risk becoming symbolic gestures rather than structural transformation. The questions that can arise are: does the teacher education programme remain grounded in Western developmental psychology; is curriculum diversification sufficient; do elite private nurseries continue to model themselves on British systems, does adding local proverbs fundamentally alter epistemic hierarchies, does funding structures privilege internationally benchmarked standards and can indigenous content disrupt power relations? Their critique therefore sharpens the analytical lens, encouraging scrutiny of whether decolonisation efforts in Nigerian EYE merely romanticise indigeneity but fail to challenge deeper colonial logics.

Despite these resonances, there are also important divergences. Tuck and Yang centre decolonisation on land repatriation in settler colonial states. Nigeria, by contrast, is a postcolonial nation-state where colonial settlers did not remain as a demographic majority controlling land sovereignty in the same way. Therefore, the Nigerian decolonial question is less about land return and more about epistemic sovereignty, economic dependency, linguistic hierarchies institutional reform etcetera ((Thiónğ 1986; Falola, 2021; Adekunle and Meroyi, 2023; Agbedo et al, 2012; Bamgbose, 2000; 1991; Adegbija, 2004). Thus, applying Tuck and Yang's framework uncritically could misrecognise Nigeria's geopolitical complexity as driven by factors other than settler-colonial occupation, such as ethnic plurality (over 500 group), indirect colonial governance legacies and internal regional inequalities (Suberu, 2001; Osaghae, 1998; Watts, 2004).

In EYE, prioritising one indigenous knowledge system risks marginalising other ones. This means that decolonisation in Nigeria must be navigated within the complex context of Nigeria unlike the settler/indigenous binary. Decolonisation in Nigeria cannot for example mean returning to a singular precolonial identity; it must navigate the Nigerian multiplicity context. Drawing on Tuck and Yang's insistence on material change, decolonising EYE in Nigeria would require reconfiguring teacher education so that indigenous epistemologies are

foundational, not supplemental, restructuring funding priorities to support locally generated research on childhood, revising policy frameworks to move beyond rhetorical inclusion of local languages towards enforceable implementation, and challenging elite educational aspirations tied to British and American nursery models. This moves decolonisation from symbolic curriculum inclusion to institutional reordering. Tuck and Yang's critique thus provides a methodological warning–this research must guard against reproducing decolonisation as a benign academic aspiration detached from structural realities. Tuck and Yang's assertion that 'decolonisation is not a metaphor' provides a powerful corrective to the dilution of decolonial discourse in education. In the context of Early Years Education in Nigeria, their work serves as both inspiration and caution. It inspires by insisting that decolonisation must be structural and material. It cautions by reminding scholars that decolonial language can mask continuity of power. For Nigerian EYE, decolonisation must therefore move beyond curriculum symbolism toward reordering epistemic authority, redistributing institutional resources and reconfiguring language hierarchies — while remaining attentive to Nigeria's distinct postcolonial geopolitical reality. Tuck and Yang's argument compels us to consider how deeply coloniality is embedded in everyday classroom practices — not only in policy documents.

Ironically, uncritical adoption of Tuck and Yang's framework in Nigeria could reproduce the very epistemic dominance that decolonisation seeks to dismantle. Their analysis is rooted in Indigenous North American struggles over land sovereignty. Translating it wholesale into Nigeria risks overextending settler colonial theory beyond its contextual limits, obscuring Nigeria's specific colonial and postcolonial dynamics, or replacing Eurocentrism with another externally derived theoretical authority. Thus, engaging Tuck and Yang productively requires contextual adaptation rather than theoretical transplantation.

Challenging the limitations of postcolonial thought, decolonial theories offer a deeper questioning on the enduring presence of coloniality in educational systems. Postcolonial theorists such as Said (1979) and Spivak (1988) exposed the global Eurocentrism that dictates who is centred and who is not in texts, discourse and science. Decolonial theorists, on the other hand, push this critique to the roots of epistemology and ontology. It is not the question

of merely shifting relations between foreground and background, but rather the fundamental matrix of domination that secures the rights of the West above those of others.

This research explores the Nigeria EYE curriculum and proposes a decolonial approach to build an epistemically insurgent curriculum grounded in non-Western epistemologies. Insurgency here contrasts with resistance and defence as it focuses on proactive creation and intervention, to shape present and future change (Walsh, 2010, p. 202). The aim of the insurgent curriculum is to disrupt the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge systems and pedagogies in formal education. Walsh argues that traditional curricula uphold colonial power by marginalising indigenous and non-Western knowledge systems. Walsh connects education with the struggle for epistemic and social justice. Drawing on Paulo Freire, she argues that an insurgent curriculum should foster critical consciousness, prioritise action over theory and engage communities to empower learners to challenge and transform oppressive systems (Walsh, 2010).

Africa remains burdened by epistemological colonisation through mission and secular schools, religious institutions and other forms of Western cultural imperialism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Today's schools, colleges and universities in Africa are Western-oriented, producing graduates who are often alienated from the African society and values (Ngugi wa Thiongo, (1986; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Students and scholars from both the Global South and the North have criticised universities for curricula, institutional culture and teaching practices that perpetuate epistemological biases, exclusion and gaps in attainment (Morreira et al, 2020). These concerns have sparked debates around the curriculum and pedagogy on campuses. This research advocates for an epistemically insurgent approach centring on non-Western ways of knowing Bailon and Lissovoy, (2019) and advocates a philosophical shift from Eurocentric to decolonial approaches in curriculum and pedagogy.

Though African countries have gained political independence, they remain trapped in the enduring colonial power structure imposed by Western modernity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Western modernity, which is rooted in the Enlightenment, privileges reason, logic and

empirical evidence over traditional beliefs (Descartes, 1637). According to Dussel (1995) and Mbembe (2019), Westen modernity is a complex system that shapes the contemporary global structures and reinforces colonial domination and economic disparities. Western modernity in education operates through the Eurocentric curriculum, language hegemony (English and French) and neoliberal educational policies prioritising privatisation of education, ranking and so on (Fraser, 2013; 2016; Walsh 2010; Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1986; Budd, Hall and Rajesh, 2021).

Muzvidziwa (2005) argues that African school systems still use curricula once employed to oppress and dominate the continent, thus promoting Western and American ideologies while marginalising indigenous knowledge. This leads to the alienation of Africans from their cultural foundations. Muzvidziwa, emphasises that the true struggle lies in reclaiming the mind and this highlights the need for a decolonial curriculum. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2018), it is necessary to defend African knowledge systems. This will end epistemic violence, a form of oppression and marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems and dismissal of indigenous philosophies like Ubuntu and Igwebuike as false assumptions and simple illegitimate African thinking (Letseka, 2014; Kanu, (2019). This is to preserve African values among young people (Ramose {ed}2002). The integration of Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies in the EYE curriculum is crucial because of their emphasis on social justice principles.

3.3. Paradigm Shift- New Philosophy of Education

This research is advocating for a shift in philosophy of education, from Eurocentric philosophies to indigenous philosophies. Drawing on Ubuntu – rooted in the Nguni Bantu Southern Africa (I am because we are) (Mbiti, 1997; Mangena, 2020) and Igwebuike from the Igbo people of Nigeria (strength in number) (Kanu, 2014) – this research proposes new education philosophies that promote co-existence, social cohesion, inclusivity, relationality, complementarity and the interconnectedness of reality (Ngubane and Makua, 2021; Kanu, 2014; 2018; 2019). Ubuntu (ethical and relational philosophy) is founded on the principle of

shared humanity (Mbit The purpose of this research was to explore how EYE lecturers in Nigeria engage with the decolonisation of EYE. i, 1997; Mangena, 2020); built on a community bond as opposed to individualism. It is also founded on the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity (Ogude, 2019). Metz (2011) contends that Ubuntu is rooted in social values of inclusion, participation and respect for all. Ubuntu is founded on African ontology and epistemology. Ontology is concerned with the nature or existence or being. African ontology as expressed in Ubuntu argues that 'a person is a person through other people' (Mbiti, 1990; Ramose, 1999; Letseka, 2012). The dignity of individual's existence is meaningful within relationships (Letseka). This extends to a holistic view of life in which the spiritual, moral and social are inseparable (Ramose, 1999). When it comes to epistemology (nature of knowledge), Ubuntu considers knowledge as communal and shared instead of privately owned (Waghid, 2014; Wiredu, 2004). Knowledge is transmitted orally through storytelling, proverbs and actual practices marking the role of experiences and tradition (Higgs, 2015). Truth in Ubuntu is dialogical, established through collective participation and consensus (Munyaka, and Motlhabi, 2009). Knowledge is inseparable from ethics as to know is to live rightly with others (Waghid, 2014).

Kanu (2019) states that Igwebuike (philosophy of solidarity, complementarity and communal strength) is rooted in African ontology and epistemology. Ontology the study of 'Being' –is according to Igwebuike that 'Being' is defined through communal strength (Kanu, 2018). To 'Be' is to live in solidarity and complementarity and to 'Be' outside is to suffer alienation (Kanu, 2018). This contrasts with Western ontology where 'Being' is individual, autonomous, while the self is the fundamental unit of existence. 'I think therefore I am' (Descartes, 1641, 1985). In Igwebuike philosophy, the concept of 'Being' outside or inside reflects its foundational emphasis on relationality, complementarity and community-centeredness. The person outside is according to Igwebuike alienated, vulnerable and disconnected from the group. Igwebuike relates to Fraser's theory in that 'Being' outside your community means exclusion therefore injustice. EYE in Nigeria is almost outside the decolonisation project and that means injustice according to both Igwebuike and Fraser. This is evidenced from existing literature on decolonisation of education in Nigeria; mostly focusing on HE. African epistemologies are entrenched in lived experiences, communal interactions and oral traditions. In Igwebuike, truth is not individual discovery, but a collective understanding that

promotes harmony (Kanu, 2017). Western epistemology in contrast privileges empirical observation, scientific methods and written documentation. Universal truth could be reached through an individual (Descartes, 1641, 1985). The new curriculum will be rooted in social justice. Social justice relates to principles of equality and equity towards members of a community or individuals who have been marginalised and disadvantaged.

The principle of shared humanity emphasises that a person is a person through other people (Mbiti, 1969). Ubuntu stresses ethics, justice, reconciliation and relationships (Ramose, 2002; Letseka, 2013; Waghid, 2014). This informs restorative justice focusing on healing rather than punishment (Tutu, 1999) (Mbigi, and Maree, 2005; Nussbaum, 2003; Chisale, 2018; Waghid and Smeyers, 2012). This principle encourages offenders, victims and communities to engage in dialogue that leads to healing. This principle was applied in post-apartheid South Africa, in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The commission drew on Ubuntu by fostering forgiveness and reintegration instead of vengeance (Tutu, 1999). In a bid to rebuild communal harmony, victims were encouraged to share their experiences while offenders confessed their wrongdoings and worked actively to repair broken relationships (Skelton and Batley, 2006).

In Ubuntu, knowledge is relational and emerges through shared practices, dialogue and moral reflections (Letseka, 2013). Application of Ubuntu in EYE will promote collaborative learning rather than competitive, individualistic approaches; learners' cultural identities and community knowledge will be valued and empathy, respect and care between teachers and learners will be encouraged (Waghid, 2018). Ubuntu informed the development of Curriculum 2005 in South Africa after apartheid, stressing social cohesion, mutual respect and collective responsibility in the classroom (Waghid, 2004). Teachers were encouraged to use strategies such as group discussions, community service projects etcetera to make learners understand that individual success is tied to the well-being of others (Letseka, 2012). From literature it was found that parents prefer English to local languages (Ayling, 2015; Adepoju, 2019). The introduction of the British education system led to the marginalisation of other knowledge systems (Nyoni, 2019; Garba, 2012). The application of Ubuntu will reverse this situation. Local languages will be included as languages of instruction and indigenous knowledge systems will be embedded in the curriculum (Prah, 2009; Higgs, 2012).

Igwebuike serves as a framework for education that is inclusive, culturally grounded and transformative. By emphasising collective strength, interdependence and complementarity of people and knowledge systems, it promotes collaborative learning, shared responsibility and cultural values in the classroom (Kanu, 2016; Kanu, 2015; Uzonwanne, 2020). In Igbo traditional education, apprenticeships and storytelling are forms of teaching and learning. They rely on communal participation, thus showing that to learn is to learn with others (Asouzu, 2011; Okeke, 2005). Students are encouraged to view knowledge as co-constructed and shared for the benefit of all. This involves the integration of epistemology of solidarity (Kanu, 2017). The complementarity aspect of Igwebuike, for example, could act as a panacea for correcting the imbalance and gender-stereotyping prevalent in the education of the African girl-child. Igwebuike conceives education as a tool for the development of the entire society and the human persons living in it and this includes the female gender (Kanu, 2017, p.15; Edeh, 2020). Igwebuike could act as a hermeneutical tool, to interpret African values, ethics and spirituality, leading to valuing indigenous epistemologies alongside other global epistemologies. This will dismantle hierarchical division between Western and African knowledges, leading to the promotion of equity (Ezenweke, and Kanu, 2012; Kanu, 2015; Mbiti, 1990). The integration of indigenous knowledge into the curriculum makes learning inclusive and relevant to learners.

Ubuntu and Igwebuike are criticised for being idealistic and vague Metz (2011), which thus makes it difficult to apply them in a complex society. Another criticism comes from the feminists that see Ubuntu and Igwebuike as being gender blind, overlooking the marginalisation of women's voices and not challenging patriarchal norms (Nnaemeka, 2004; Nzegwu, 2006). Eze (2010) accuses Ubuntu of ignoring the diversity of African culture, while Van Binsbergen (2001) argues that Ubuntu is politically used in South Africa, to, for instance, suppress dissent and encourage reconciliation without justice. Igwebuike is said to be grounded in Igbo metaphysics and may not represent broader African contexts and is criticised for little engagement with power dynamics and for overlooking how communal philosophies can mask intra-community oppression and marginalisation (Wiredu, 1996; Achebe, 1995).

Ubuntu is defended as a valuable critique of individualism, emphasising relational personhood and moral responsibility to others (Ramose, 2002). The practical application of Ubuntu is demonstrated in restorative justice and reconciliation. An example is the South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Tutu, 1999). Letseka (2012) defends Ubuntu for providing the African foundation with moral reasoning, social justice and educational frameworks. Asouzu (2004) defends Igwebuike as a tool for constructing knowledge systems that are African-centred, dialogical and communal. Kanu stresses that the African value of inclusion in Igwebuike is crucial in decolonising Western frameworks (Kanu, 2019; 2014; 2018). Kanu states that Igwebuike aligns with Ubuntu, thus reinforcing other African philosophies, and contributes to a wider framework of African identity and solidarity. This research defends Ubuntu and Igwebuike for inspiring a curriculum that has no gender barrier. A curriculum founded on our common humanity does not discriminate against gender. This takes us to Fraser's theory.

3.4 Nancy Fraser's Theory of Social Justice

This research draws on Nancy Fraser, a critical feminist, to argue that the little attention given to EYE by the decolonial project and the lack of government funding for education of some children are viewed as issues of injustice. A question could be why Nancy Fraser, a Global North scholar in a decolonisation project? The application of Fraser's theory in South African universities exposed the injustices in the educational system (Bozalek, et al {eds}2020). Decolonisation does not mean throwing away everything from European or other traditions, but re-centering, which involves challenging West-centric knowledge production (Walker and Martinez-Vargas, 2020; Mbembe, 2016; Smith, 2021). It involves decentring Europe and European thought (Chakrabarty, 2000) and democratisation of Euro-American hegemonic knowledge, so that other knowledges from the periphery could be recognised as equally important and relevant (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). If I resort to reductionist Southern dogmatism (Mbembe, 2016), I might fall into the same error of Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism

in education simply means the dominance of European knowledge perspectives and cultural values and the positioning of European knowledge systems at the centre as the only truth, marginalising other knowledge systems (Nyoni, 2019).

While this study is grounded in African decolonial theories and African feminist research scholarship, it avoids essentialist Afrocentric orientation. While Afrocentrism is important in challenging Eurocentrism, risks cultural romanticism and insufficient engagement with material redistribution. Drawing on Fraser's three-dimensional theory of justice enables an integrated analysis of recognition, redistribution and representation, ensuring that decolonisation in Nigerian Early Years Education is examined not only as cultural reclamation but as structural transformation. This does not mean rejecting African-centred scholarship. Rather, I am signalling that this thesis is critically grounded in African thought without collapsing into essentialist Afrocentrism.

Afrocentrism is associated with Molefi Kete Asante (1980; 2003) who argues that Africa should be the epistemic centre of analysis, that European knowledge systems are inherently hegemonic, and that precolonial African systems provide normative alternatives. Afrocentricity is therefore proposed as a corrective system to Eurocentrism. Afrocentrism emerged as a political and epistemic intervention against colonial misrepresentation, epistemicide and racialised knowledge hierarchies. It played and continues to play — an important emancipatory role. However, Afrocentrism has also attracted critique including essentialism – treating 'Africa' as culturally homogeneous, romanticising precolonial pasts and constructing an authentic African essence (Wiredu, 1998; Appiah, 1992). Nigeria's internal diversity (ethnic, linguistic, religious, regional) for instance complicates any singular 'African' epistemology. Mbembe (2001) argues that Afrocentrism mirrors the structure of Eurocentrism by replacing one epistemic centre with another and prioritising identity over structural analysis. In this sense, it risks substituting cultural pride for political economy critique. According to Appiah 1(992), Afrocentric frameworks often focus on identity, cultural restoration and symbolic recognition but may engage insufficiently with material redistribution, structural inequality and political economy that are relevant in Early Years

Education in Nigeria, where funding, labour conditions and infrastructure are central issues (Apple, 204; Nnaemeka, 2004; Nzegwu, 2006).

Nancy Fraser's framework offers a way to avoid both Eurocentrism and essentialist Afrocentrism. Fraser's theory of justice distinguishes between redistribution (economic justice) recognition (cultural justice) and representation (political justice). The framework allows the integration of cultural decolonisation (recognition), analysis of material underfunding (redistribution) and examination of governance and voice (representation) without reducing decolonisation to identity politics. Avoiding an Afrocentric approach does not mean rejecting African thinkers, privileging Western theory or diluting decolonial critique; rather, it means avoiding cultural romanticism. Fraser prevents the argument from becoming that African knowledge is inherently 'better.' rather, it becomes justice in Nigerian EYE. The EYE requires equitable recognition, redistribution and representation. Afrocentric cultural reclamation alone cannot explain why Early Years Education is underfunded, why implementation gaps persist and why the workforce is feminised and undervalued. Fraser's redistribution lens places structural inequality before culture. The framework also prevents binary framing Africa verses West; Indigenous verses Modern or Tradition verses Global. It allows for hybrid normative evaluation of modernities without civilisational binaries: rather, structural critique that is not identity-essentialist. Fraser (2008) situates Nigeria in Global Justice, in which Nigeria's educational challenges are shaped by Global capitalism, policy borrowing and aid structures. An Afrocentric frame alone might over-localise the problem. Fraser allows me to analyse how global economic structures shape local EYE provision.

An uncritical Afrocentric thesis on Nigerian EYE might frame decolonisation as a return to precolonial models, overstate cultural authenticity, under-analyse gendered labour exploitation, minimise intra-African power hierarchies, and reduce justice to epistemic recognition. Avoiding an Afrocentric approach means rejecting essentialised African authenticity, recognising Africa's internal heterogeneity, engaging critically with both African and Western thought, situating Nigeria within global political economy, and also holding culture and structure together analytically. It is not anti-African, but it is anti-essentialist. Building this research on African decolonial thinkers (Fanon, Mbembe, Ndlovu-

Gatsheni) and incorporating African feminist methodology and Fraser, the research maintains structural and redistributive critique and avoids cultural reductionism and also refuses Eurocentric universalism.

Fraser's theory states that justice is equal to parity of participation (Fraser, 2008; 2004; Fraser and Honneth, 2003). Fraser argues that justice prevails when social arrangements permit individuals or groups to participate as peers in social interaction (Fraser, 2008; Fraser, 2007). Parity of participation as a framework is centred on redistribution, recognition and representation. Fraser explains that overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalised barriers that inhibit some people from participating with others as full partners in social interaction (Fraser, 2008). People can be blocked from full participation by economic structures that deny them the resources they need to interact with others as peers; in this situation they suffer from distributive injustice or maldistribution (Ibid). Fraser maintains that issues of poverty, economic exploitation, socioeconomic inequalities and class divisions – thus economic injustice – should be addressed by redistribution through the equitable distribution of income and resources (Fraser, 2007a; Fraser and Honneth 2003).

Redistribution deals with fair allocation of resources and opportunities to redress socioeconomic inequalities. In the context of EYE in Nigeria, redistribution will involve (a) ensuring that resources including qualified teachers, learning materials and safe learning environments are equitably distributed across schools, regardless of their location or the socioeconomic status of the children: (b) addressing economic barriers to education, such as school fees that aggravate educational inequalities, so that access to quality education depends on the ability to pay; with its long-term negative impact on the children's development and future opportunities (Obiweluozor, 2015; Stewart & Waldfogel, 2017; OECD, 2023). However, it has been reported that the mere removal of economic barriers is not enough to remove the impact of economic injustices (Power, 2012). This is because children from poor backgrounds could access low-quality settings with less qualified staff, leading to a gap in academic outcomes. Therefore, it is not enough only to give access, as this does not translate into a quality outcome (Ibid). A compensatory policy may be required. Examples of compensatory policies are those that emerged in England following the Newsom Report (1963) and the Plowden Report (1967) (Power, 2012).

Recognition, according to Fraser (2000), means fair treatment of individuals and groups through the assertion of their identities, cultures and contributions. It focuses on respect and

the validation of diverse identities, cultures and epistemologies. When people are blocked from full participation with others by the institutionalised hierarchies of cultural values that deny them the requisite standing as peers, Fraser considers this as injustice. Fraser lays emphasis not only on identities or cultural values, but also on status. This form of injustice Fraser refers to as misrecognition. Misrecognition occurs when individuals or groups are culturally or symbolically excluded or given inferior status or even made invisible by institutionalised patterns of cultural values denying them full societal participation (Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Fraser, 2004). Fraser stresses that what is crucial for cultural justice is not the need to recognise a group's distinctive identity, but the demand to recognise of people's standing as full partners in social interaction, able to participate as peers with others in social life. Fraser considers respecting different identities and children's unique needs as fundamental aspects of social justice (Fraser, 2003; Mackie and Tett, 2013).

The neglect of children's developmental rights in education policy (NNPE, 2013) exemplifies this injustice. When institutions systematically disadvantage certain groups, they create conditions of subordination. From the perspective of justice, these children face barriers aganist parity of participation in the Nigerian education system (Fraser, 2003; Hargreaves et al, 2021). To remedy this situation, the policy should be revisited, as it neglects some children's educational needs and denies the recognition of their capacity to learn and grow at this crucial stage. The right to early years education is enshrined in Article 26 (1-3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948) and Education (Article 13 and 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1999); Article 29 (1): The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2001). Denial of these rights leads to the widening of the academic gap between children from the affluent families and those from poor economic backgrounds (Stewart & Waldfogel, 2017). It places the burden of childcare on parents, especially mothers, thus limiting their economic and social participation. Education has three values which intersect and overlap, and they are concerned with well-being and agency freedoms (Sen, 1985). These freedoms relate to the social conditions to secure instrumental, intrinsic and positional values through education (Unterhalter and Brighouse, 2007). Unterhalter and Brighouse discuss education in relation to Amartya Sen's capability approach: how freedoms are essential for achieving instrumental, intrinsic and positional values through education. These freedoms relate to social conditions that enable individuals to fully participate in and benefit from education. For example, education could

help to achieve instrumental value such as economic mobility, health, political participation through reducing financial barriers, and class-based inequalities.

In the case of young children, these freedoms entail concern freedom from interference with the children's welfare rights and the protection of their potential to develop agency freedom through attending school (Brighouse, 2002). This means putting in place equitable policies and decolonial curricula, and accessible EYE is necessary to enable these freedoms. Education should contribute to justice rather than reinforce existing hierarchies. If social justice were to be pursued as an aim of education and its connection to the moral education of children, if learners were to reach a critically informed understanding of what it is to be committed to a just society, it follows that schools must be arranged to achieve this end (Clark, 2006). The virtue of caring and genuine concern for others (Noddings, 1984) is nurtured in education, especially in its early phase, where the curriculum is fluid (Devarakonda, 2022).

Representation dimension of the theory refers to the political voice and participation (Fraser, 2005). It is concerned with social belonging, addressing political exclusion and the need for participatory governance. Representation ensures that all social groups have equal standing in decision-making processes. It supplies the stage on which struggles for distribution and recognition are played out. As representation is concerned with social belonging, it entails exclusion from or inclusion in the community of those entitled to make social justice issues towards one another (Fraser, 2007, p.21). The central issue is membership and procedure, which involves boundary-setting. The focus is on the terms on which those included or excluded are based.

Representation has two levels. At the first level, it is concerned with the boundary-setting aspect of the political. Representation at this level becomes a matter of social belonging. The bone of contention is the exclusion from or inclusion in the community of those entitled to make social justice issues towards one another (Ibid). At the second level, representation pertains to the decision-rule, concerning the procedures that structure public processes of contestation. The issue here is how those included in the political community air their claims and adjudicate their disputes (Ibid). At both levels, some fundamental questions could arise as to whether the relations of representation are just. Do the boundaries of political community wrongly exclude some who are entitled to representations? Do the community's decision rules accord an equal voice in public decision-making to all members? How just are relations

of representation (Fraser, 2008)? Excluding the education of children aged zero-four years from government responsibility and leaving it in the hands of private providers NNPE (2013) in Nigeria is a clear issue of injustice of representation. Although Fraser is not specifically referring to the education of young children in Nigeria, she argues that the adoption of certain government policies that exclude some people from public funding such as childcare is an issue of injustice (Fraser, 2009). The Policy (NNPE, 2013) has underrepresented the educational needs of these children in national priorities.

In a privatised education system, decision-making power rests within private entities rather than the public ones. This leads to a lack of representation for certain groups, especially those who are marginalised or disadvantaged, in shaping educational policies and practices. Privatisation compounds educational inequalities by making access to quality education dependent on the ability to pay, thus excluding children whose parents are unable to pay the high childcare cost. This divides children into members and non-members, and it constitutes what Fraser refers to as grave injustice (Fraser, 2009, p.19). The Nigerian government contradicts itself by stating that education is a tool to empower the poor and socially marginalised groups (NNPE, 2013). From literature, it was found that, due to the high cost of childcare, many children are unable to access early years education in Nigeria.

Fraser's theory is used to analyse and challenge the power structure and unfairness ingrained in the education system in Nigeria. The recognition dimension of the theory, for instance, requires the recognition and respect of cultural diversity. This means acknowledging and incorporating Nigerian cultures, languages and traditions into the curriculum. It is about ensuring that Nigerian children see their culture represented in their education. It also entails the recognition of all groups and respect for different identities as well as children's unique needs, which Fraser posits as a fundamental aspect of social justice (Fraser, 2003; Mackie and Tett, 2013). Therefore, the exclusion of some children aged 0-4 from early childhood education is unjust and must be rectified.

From available literature, it emerges that EYE is almost totally neglected by both the Nigerian decolonial scholars and the Nigerian government, constituting injustice of recognition, distribution and representation. The exclusion of children aged zero-four years from accessing early years education through government policy and unavailability of educational resources amounts to economic injustice. Their exclusion leads to status inequality, thus misrecognition, in the sector. The invisibility of the group through policy and

a lack of scholarly research works impede their voices in decision-making processes affecting them. This means that the sector suffers triple injustice: invisibility in decolonisation debates, not being paid for by the state and not being given sufficient attention by scholars.

Therefore, a call for politics of acknowledgment, cultural or symbolic change is being made in this research to correct these ills. Fraser (2003) as well as Mackie and Tett (2013) suggest that reassessing marginalised identities or respecting cultural variety will be necessary to achieve justice. According to Oghenekohwo and Torunarigha (2018), providing quality education that is accessible to all will promote wellbeing and freedom, and could also contribute towards reducing social inequality in Nigeria. The best place to start such a project is in the early years, where children could be supported in making the right choices. This is the stage when foundations for learning, behaviour, identity and life chances are formed. Fraser's call for recognition of cultural diversity and respect for individual identities aligns with the decolonisation project, which seeks to recognise and value indigenous cultures, histories and knowledges that have been marginalised or erased by colonial systems (Bozalek et al 2020; Keddie, 2012).

I cannot overemphasise the importance of Fraser's theory in decolonising Nigerian EYE, a sector that is overlooked by the decolonisation project in Nigeria. On a global level, some scholars have researched the sector and reported that its workforce is populated by women, marked by poor salary, status subordination and lack of representation in policy framing (Cannella and Radhika, 2004; Osgood, 2005; Moss, 2006; Findlay et al, 2009). Although the focus of this research is not the EYE workforce, the application of the third dimension of Fraser's theory in analysing Nigerian Education Policy (2014) does show how boundary setting was used as an exclusion strategy. Fraser calls this misframing; when the boundaries of who counts as a stakeholder are narrowly drawn, thereby excluding some individuals, who are entitled to justice (Fraser, 2008). Drawing on Fraser, this research calls for the inclusion of diverse voices, such as rural educators, lecturers, parents, community leaders and marginalised or disadvantaged groups in the processes of boundary-setting and decision-making.

Decolonised EYE underpinned by Frasers' theory will entail the redistribution of educational resources, where children from all backgrounds will have equal opportunities to access quality EYE. It has been reported that, despite policy recognition, disparities persist, especially in rural and underserved areas (Salami, 2016; Sooter, 2013). Decolonised EYE

will centre indigenous knowledge systems, languages and child-rearing practices; thus, moving away from Eurocentric models that dominate the current system. The curriculum should reflect Nigerian diverse cultures, histories and ways of knowing, ensuring inclusivity, accessibility and equity. However, while Nancy Fraser's theory of justice provides a robust and integrative framework for understanding and addressing various forms of injustices in Nigerian EYE, it is not without its limitations.

While Nancy Fraser provides valuable insights for the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria, there are certain limitations to its application. Below is a summary of one of them.

Spivak sees the framework as Western Centrism (1988). This could limit its applicability in non-Western or post-colonial contexts, where historical, cultural and socio-political dynamics can be fundamentally different. In her later work (Fraser 2003, 2008), Fraser argues for a more nuanced approach, considering different cultural, geographical, environmental and historical contexts. Fraser's theory has been applied in the decolonisation project, which seeks to recognise and value indigenous cultures, histories and knowledges that have been marginalised or erased by colonial systems (Bozalek et al 2020; Keddie, 2019; 2012). There are other critics of Fraser, such as Butler (1992; 1997), Axel Honneth (2003) and Iris Marion Young (1990). Even though Fraser has taken time to address most of these criticisms, the theory is used in this research in conjunction with other decolonial theories. The theory has provided a robust and integrative framework for understanding and addressing various forms of injustices in Nigerian EYE. Critics and proponents alike continue to engage with and refine Fraser's ideas to better address the complexities of justice in contemporary societies. With this, we turn to the formulation of a new curriculum blueprint for Nigerian EYE.

3.5. Formulation of a Theoretical Framework for a New EYE Curriculum

Informed by decoloniality, an ongoing process of delinking from colonial ways of thinking.

and knowing, while centring indigenous and marginalised perspectives, this research advocates an EYE curriculum to include indigenous knowledge systems that have been marginalised in Nigeria's formal education. This is despite their relevance to local contexts

and potentials to enrich children's learning experiences (Garba, 2012). The importance of integrating indigenous epistemologies into education has been emphasised by Battiste (2002) and Emeagwali and Dei (2014), who argue that these knowledge systems offer valuable insights into sustainability, community, and holistic approaches to learning.

Indigenous philosophies such as Ubuntu and Igwebuike provide frameworks for rethinking education. Both philosophies emphasise communal learning, the interconnectedness and the collective well-being of individuals and society, values that are often absent in Western models of education, which prioritise individual achievement and competition. In this way, this research contributes to the existing literature that is examining how indigenous philosophies can inform the decolonisation of EYE and contextualise relevant curricula (Nxumalo, 2021; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2021; Miller, 2017; Abawi, 2022; Abebe et al, 2022). It aligns with global efforts to reclaim indigenous knowledge in education and to challenge the dominance of Western epistemologies in education (Smith, 2022).

Adekunle and Meroyi, (2023) argue that modification of the Nigerian school curriculum has yielded little or no result, because the reforms are like putting new wine into the same calabash. The colonial structures that housed the curriculum have not been challenged (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). This research attempts to lay down a theoretical framework that brings decolonial theory into concrete engagement with curriculum formulation for EYE in Nigeria. Engaging the EYE lecturers in this research means encouraging them towards deeper understanding of their role in decolonising education in general and EYE in particular. Their discipline deeply affects the education of the youngest of our society as they teach the next generation of EY educators.

Karl Marx's 11th Thesis on Feuerbach says that philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the point, however, is to change it (Marx cited in Taiwò, 2021). This is one of the eleven private critiques of Marx on Feuerbach, leading to Marx's break up with traditional materialism. These theses laid the foundation of Marxism. According to Marx (1845), philosophy must move from theory to praxis, from contemplation to practice, from abstract to revolutionary change. In line with moving from theory to praxis, this research tries to design an indigenous curriculum for EYE in Nigeria.

Designing any curriculum takes into consideration four major stages: identifying needs and setting objectives; selecting and organising content, teaching and learning, and evaluation of progress. When these four steps are followed, the following hypothetical objectives may be realised according to this research:

1. Increased awareness of African and other indigenous knowledges that have been marginalised. Colonial masters referred to African indigenous knowledges as primitive and imposed Western ways of knowing on Africans (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Smith, 2012; Santos, 2014; Odora Hoppers, 2002; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

2. Improvement in loving that which is African. This links directly to decolonisation. Colonial education propagates the idea that African languages, culture and indigenous knowledges are inferior to European ones (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 2009; Cheikh Anta Diop, 1987; Chinue Achebe, 1975). Cheika Anta Diop for instance argues that colonial educational systems intentionally dismissed the existence of significant African civilisation to justify colonial rule. He calls for the reclaiming of African historic legacy, which is he believes, essential for building a modern integrated African culture. Achebe on the other hand critiques colonial education for creating a cultural and psychological conflict in an *assimilated black man* through misrepresentations in colonial curriculum. The assimilated black man, according to Achebe, loses his primary national values and ends up alienated. He therefore advocates for a balanced self-perceptive.

3.Challenge to democracy in Africa. Democratic institution in Africa is inherited from the colonial masters and was not designed to give participation and a voice to every citizen, as the dominance of an elite is entrenched in the system. It is necessary to reclaim the African traditional form of governance, such as the *Umunna* System of Governance (Umunnacracy; Ikejezie, 2026) of the Igbos, which was the greatest impediment to British colonial administrators as they could not understand how the Igbos were governed without a centralised head. This form of governance described as a king in every Igbo man (Perham, 1937; Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1940) was erroneously interpreted as a headless state (acephalous society), implying political deficiency. This erroneous interpretation by the above-named colonial administrators was challenged by Afigbo, who argues that, in reality, Igbo communities possessed political order that was maintained through diffused authority rather than by a monarchy. The absence of a centralised head does not mean political fragmentation, but rather than authority is distributed. It entails participation, consensus -

decision making and collaboration, as well as moral accountability (Afigbo, 1972; 1981). This will give rise to a democratic education system where power circulates. The metaphor of king in every Igbo man could be pedagogically reframed as the recognition of moral and epistemic agency in every child. This will activate critical thinking and also arouse culturally grounded views in the citizens (Obanya, 2004; Soudien, 2012; Penn, 2008; Tamale, 2020).

To achieve these hypothetical objectives, the philosophical paradigm shifts from a Euro- to an Afro-philosophical paradigm that is grounded in African ontologies and epistemologies. Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies can cultivate and restore African indigenous values and culture in the educational setting. Bringing theory into practice, the new curriculum will be underpinned by the Collective Fingers Theory borrowed from an African Proverb (Mbigi, 1997). Although a thumb is strong, it cannot kill aphids on its own; it will require the co-operation of the other fingers, Mbigi theorised. When fingers come together to form a fist, they symbolise unity and strength. This union magnifies their individual capabilities, allowing for greater achievements and resilience (Mbigi, 1997). The Collective Five Fingers Theory states that, just as the five fingers of a hand must work together to grasp, hold or lift an object, so must individuals within a community cooperate and support each other to achieve desired goals, leading to the recognition of others as equals. This promotes willingness to participate, resulting in collective culture, a core African value.

Kanu (2017) adapted the proverb in education. The proverb is a metaphor used to illustrate the concept of unity and strength in African communalism. The metaphor is explained thus: individual fingers represent individuals within the community. Each finger has its own unique strengths and abilities but is limited in what it can achieve alone. In education, the fingers represent the adaptability of the curriculum, teaching methods and learning environments to meet the diverse needs and challenges (Kanu, 2017, p.45-53). The thumb stands for leadership and guidance and plays a critical role in giving strength and direction. This represents teachers, mentors and leaders, who guide the learning process and provide direction. The index finger represents direction and focus, pointing the way and indicating direction. It represents the vision and goals of education. The middle finger is the tallest of the fingers and represents the core support system in education. This includes infrastructure,

resources and policies upholding the learning process. The ring finger highlights the importance of building strong relationships between students, teachers, parents and the community. The last is the little finger, which, though small, still adds balance and adaptability to the hand (Ibid). This means that in education no viewpoint is irrelevant. EYE requires diverse perspectives. Decolonial EYE cannot be Eurocentric but must incorporate multiple worldviews, leading to epistemic justice (Fricker, 2007; Mbembe, 2015). The content of this curriculum is explained in the concluding chapter as part of the research contributions.

Conclusion

This chapter espoused the theoretical frameworks that informed this research. It explained the decolonial theories and Fraser's theory and their impacts on this research. It shows how Ubuntu and Igwebuike influenced the development of a curriculum framework for EYE in Nigeria and beyond. Education that is inspired by this curriculum will contribute to promoting solidarity and complementarity, thus transformative education.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Introduction

This research focuses on decolonising Nigerian EYE, and the aim is to investigate how the EYE lecturers perceive the EYE curriculum and why and how they are engaging in the decolonisation project. My philosophical position, research design, approach to the research questions and the sampling strategy, including the criteria for participant selection, are covered in this chapter. The chapter addresses ethical considerations and provides a critical context for the interpretation of the research findings.

Methodology consists of rules that outline how social inquiry should be approached (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). It encompasses the principles, procedures and practices that guide research design and data collection, thus making knowledge valid and authoritative (Landman, 2007). It is a theory and analysis of how research does and should proceed (Landman, 2007, citing Harding). It is shaped by the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher. In this research, a constructivist ontology with an interpretivist epistemology paradigm will be the guide. Qualitative research methods will be used to explore the subjective experiences of EYE lecturers. Below is a brief consideration of ontological and epistemological positions guiding this research.

4.1 The Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

According to Crotty (2003:10), ontology is 'the study of being', concerned with 'what kind of world we are investigating, nature of existence, and structure of reality'. For Guba and Lincoln (1989:83), ontological assumptions respond to these questions: 'What is there that

can be known?' or 'What is the nature of reality?' This research is influenced by African Ontology, which is rooted in the African Philosophies of Ubuntu and Igwebuike. Ubuntu is, ontologically speaking, the belief in the shared humanity built on the community bond (Mbigi, 1997; Mangena, 2020). Igwebuike, on the other hand, defines Being through the communal strength; to 'be' is to be in solidarity and complementarity (Kanu, 2017). The focus of this research is Nigerian Early Years Education, a world populated by human beings who have their own thoughts, interpretations and meanings. Thus, the exploration of this world is realised through the use of interpretive research methods and techniques, such as semi-structured interviews, to interpret participants' lived experiences.

Grix (2010) considers ontology and epistemology as the building blocks and compass directing the whole research process. They guide research assumptions that inform the research questions, choice of research methodology, and methods and sources of information. There are two ontological considerations: objectivism and constructionism (Bryman, 2016). Objectivism states that individuals cannot influence social phenomena, while constructionism believes that individuals influence social phenomena and that knowledge is not static (Ibid). Constructionism, by focusing on literary style and subjectivist approaches, recognises multiple constructions pertaining to the subjective meaning of individual experiences (Creswell 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). While foundationalism starts with hypotheses and uses experimental designs and measurement techniques to verify or falsify truth about causality, anti-foundationalism invents through meaning-making, reflexivity, conversation and sense-making with understanding in view (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008).

Though it is argued that researchers cannot be categorised into binary but are rather a spectrum (Lincoln, and Guba, 1986), this research still follows Grix's (2010) categorisation, namely positivist and interpretivist researchers. A positivist researcher takes as the starting point the assumption that there is absolute reality outside the human one. This position is what Snape and Spencer (2003) refer to as realism. The interpretivist researcher claims that reality is constructed in each context under some social and cultural environment (Grix, 2010). As I am a scholar in the field of social sciences, my ontological position is underpinned by the constructionism paradigm, with an interpretivist view of reality and is influenced by Ubuntu and Igwebuike: I believe that beliefs, values, etcetera are constructed and that there are multiple realities. We understand how the world functions through consensus and complementarity.

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and how people come to know what they know (Crotty 2003). Epistemology is, according to Bryman and Bell (2013), concerned with what should be considered as knowledge and how we come to know it. Grix (2010) argues that there are two epistemological positions: foundationalism and anti-foundationalism. Foundationalism, according to Grix (2010), claims that reality is outside us, truth can only be reached through logical deduction, and knowledge is informed by an unnegated set of truth. Anti-foundationalism, on the other hand, holds the belief that there is no absolute reality and there is no knowledge of the world outside the individual. Reality is rather constructed through the actions of individuals; meaning that reality is subjective as truth is always in constant construction and knowledge could be reached through induction (Grix, 2010). Induction is, according to Creswell (2014), the reasoning process used in research, in which patterns and theories are derived from observations. Epistemology is also 'concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate' (Maynard in Crotty 2003:8).

The theoretical underpinning of constructivism is that the researcher and social world are parts of the same system, so that they influence one another. It means that facts and values cannot be separated, and findings are essentially value-bound and influenced by the researchers' perspectives (Guba & Lincoln 1994; Creswell 1998). Accordingly, it is not possible to conduct an objective, value-free assessment of the social world. Thus, the social constructivist paradigm helps researchers and participants to explore the social reality under investigation (Nigerian EYE), rather than forming a 'generalised causal relationship' (Ormston et al. 2013). The approach creates the opportunity for interaction for the purpose of generating knowledge regarding how the social world of the Nigerian EYE is experienced, understood and interpreted within the context of the research questions.

4.1.1 Feminist Epistemology

Feminist epistemology is an offshoot of a critique of traditional epistemology and its search for dominant narrative; knowledge exists independently (objective reality) (Ibid). Feminist research has moved beyond a critique of traditional research to a reframing of the

problematics of knowledge to find the politics of epistemology (Alcoff and Potter, 1993, pp.2-3). Alcoff and Potter argue that, if feminist research aims for the liberation of women by researching women's oppression, it must address all forms of domination as women fill the ranks of every category of oppressed people. Alcoff and Potter further opine that feminist epistemology 'seeks to unmake the web of oppressions and reweave the web of life' (Ibid, p.4). Feminist theory provides a critical lens for examining power relations within educational systems, particularly in postcolonial contexts, where gender, race and colonialism intersect. Feminist scholars such as bell hooks (1994) and Chandra Mohanty (2003) have argued for the decolonisation of education as a means of dismantling patriarchal and colonial systems of oppression that marginalise women. This research, guided by feminist epistemology and methodology, rooted in principles of equity, inclusivity and social justice, centres the experiences and perspectives of EYE lecturers, many of whom are women, to bring to light the unique challenges they face in navigating colonial and patriarchal legacies within the education system.

Feminist epistemology has no one single reference points, but it is a means of integrating women's knowledge and experiences. The term refers to women's 'way of knowing', 'women's experiences' or, expressed differently, 'women's knowledge' (Alcoff &Potter, 1993, p.1). This means that feminist epistemology is concerned not with one woman's voice but with 'multiple voices of women' (Duran, 1991, p. xiii). Lorraine Code, in line with Alcoff and Potter, says that the traditional mainstream epistemology creates an illusion of universal 'Truth', thereby discarding what are referred to as 'unacceptable' points of view. According to Code, when subjectivity is brought into account, it is found that these unacceptable points of views are the experiences of the oppressed. Code contends that the goal of feminist epistemology is to overturn 'perspectival hierarchies' (Alcoff, and Potter, 1993, p.5). Feminist epistemology aims to validate women lived experiences as knowledge and they must be brought to the centre in feminist research (Landman, 2007). Women should become the subjects, not merely the objects, of research.

4.1.2 Decolonising Feminism

Decolonial feminism springs from decolonial theory, which critiques Western representation of the 'other'. The decolonisation theory reveals that knowledge from the West is steeped in the colonial element, which underlies the West's politics of domination of knowledge, and at the same time reduces the 'other' to a mere object of knowledge production (Mignolo,2007; Prasad, 2003; Said, 1978). Decolonial feminism emerges as a theoretical concept, inspired by decolonial theory and led by Lugones (2008, 2010). It engages with debates concerning coloniality/modernity and indigenous identity and gender. It gives room to voices and lived experiences of marginalised, non-Western(ised) women (Manning, 2020; Bhambra, 2014; Lugones, 2010)). Postcolonial feminist's criticisms levelled against white Western feminists' theorising and ideologies stem from the fact that such theorising and ideologies are derived from the white Western feminists' position of privilege. Their writings are based on their own experiences, so they are generalised when speaking for/about women globally.

The leading postcolonial feminists Spivak (1985; 1988; 1999) and C. Mohanty (1988; 1991; 2003a; 2003b) argue that Western feminist writings digressively appropriate the diverse material and historical elements of the lives of women in the Global South. The diversity in the experiences and knowledge of Global South women is mostly ignored by both mainstream studies and Western feminist studies (Mohanty, 2003, Ozkazanc-Pan, 2012). This gave birth to an amalgamation of one Global South woman- the homogenised, gendered 'other' – an image that carries with it the authorising signature of Western imperial discourse. Western feminists' studies like most fields of studies have not distanced themselves from the Eurocentric position; rather they operate within the coloniality of power. They have failed to see the necessity of dismantling the edifice of the Western knowledge hierarchy, which is an inevitable step towards epistemic freedom (Wynter, 2003). Analysing the warning of Audre Lorde, true feminism involves learning to stand alone and connecting with those outside the structure to search a world where everyone can flourish (Lorde, 2007). Western feminists' thoughts have embraced some concepts like family, patriarchy, equality, empowerment, rights and so on as their bone of contention and present them as universal during the time iin which the European civilisational mission of capitalism was utilised to exercise racial terror and

subjugation on Africa and the rest of the world (Purewal and Ung Loh, 2021). Fraser has been vocal in her call to dismantle of any obstacle that prevents parity of participation. The call to decolonise Western feminism is one to recognise and dismantle the apparatus of coloniality that is rooted in Western feminism to move towards epistemic change (Fraser, 2008). How can Western feminism justify using the master's tool by partnering with the state's violent machinery of policing, incarceration and killings of targeted and racialised communities (Puar, 2017)? Western feminism has kept silence on some issues of direct physical colonial violence such as the detention of Mau Mau women in Kenya during the British rule (Bruce-Lockhart, 2014). This was the period in which feminists in Britain were debating the welfare system and the recognition of their unique value as women (Britain, 1953). It was also a period in which Britain still had colonies in different parts of the world (Ibid). These examples show the accrediting of some rights/lives over others (Purewal and Ung Loh, 2021). Western feminists' failure to interrupt white supremacy and their privileging of the West and its Eurocentrism led to the need to decolonise feminism. One of the issues addressed by postcolonial feminists is that of the representation of women in the Global South and theorisation of gender.

4.1.3 AFRICAN FEMINISM

African feminists argue that their current struggles are inextricably linked to their past as a continent, diverse pre-colonial contexts, slavery, colonization, liberation struggles, neo-colonialism and globalization. Focusing the issue of gender, Oyèrónke Oyěwùmi, (1997) argues that colonialism imposed Western gender categories onto Yoruba society. According to the author, 'The woman question is a Western-derived issue/ a legacy of the age-old somato – centricity in Western thought' (Ibid, p.ix). Oyèrónke Oyěwùmi argues that the fundamental category 'woman' which is the bone of contention in gender discourse in the West did not exist in Yorùbà land before its encounter with the West. There was no such preexisting group characterised by shared interests, desires or social position. Social categories including woman is a derivation from the Western ideology of biological determinism in which biology provides the rationale for social organisation. Woman as a category is analysed in relation to and in opposition to another category man. In, other words, the presence or absence of certain

biological organs determines social position. Oyèrónke Oyěwùmi however, emphasises that the absence of woman as a social category in precolonial Yorùbà does not translate to anti materialist hermeneutics but that the body was never a basis for social roles, inclusions or exclusions. It was not the foundation of social thought and identity. This analysis according to Oyèrónke Oyěwùmi, to challenge (a) the universalisation of gender in Western feminist writing, (b) the notion that gender is a fundamental organising principle in all societies, (c) there is an essential, universal category 'woman', whic is characterised by the social uniformity of its members (d) the subordination of women is universal (e) the category 'woman' is precultural, fixed in historical time and cultural space in antithesis to another fixed category –'man'. The author argues that, although Yorùbà precolonial society was hierarchically organised from slaves to rulers, the cultural logic was not based on the human body. It was rather based on seniority defined by relative age. Another area of fundamental difference between the Yorùbà and Western social categories lies in the issue of social identity, which is fixed in the West (males and females) but relational in Yorùbà. Oyèrónke Oyěwùmi argues that the concentration of feminist scholars on the status of women as a category that is always powerless, disadvantaged and controlled by men can result in misconceptions when applied to Òyó-Yorùbá society. In conclusion, the author maintains that there were no *women* – defined in strict gendered terms in Yorùbà society. This fact is being verified in today's Britian as gender is being defined more fluidly and flexibly (Jo Warin, 2021; 2018). Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí (1997) critiques the imposition of Western gender categories onto Yoruba society, arguing that colonial epistemology reshaped African social organisation. Her work cautions against universalising Western theoretical categories, including those embedded in educational discourse.

This view is supported by Ifi Amadiume (1987), who opines in her book 'Male Daughter, Female Husbands,' showing the flexibility of Igbo gender roles before its encounter with Britain. For instance, before colonial rule, the Igbo society operated a 'dual sex' political structure, where men and women had parallel institution of governance; men through lineage council, titled societies and village assemblies; while women were governed through women's assemblies, market networks and collective protest mechanisms (Amadiume,1987; Oyěwùmi, 997; Achebe, 2011). Amadiume argues that colonial rule rigidified the patriarchal structures, connecting kinship, power and socialisation. The introduction of the warrant chief

system centralised male authority and women assemblies were undermined. This led to the Aba women's War where women protested against colonial taxation and political exclusion (Van Allen, 1972; Mba, 1982) Western feminists' presentation of African women as without power has been shown to be incorrect. The Igbo women's mass protests of 1925 and 1929, referred to as 'women war' have demonstrated the power of women in Nigeria (Siollun, 2021, p.229).

Theorisation of feminism presents several problems for African women intellectuals, as some see it as another form of cultural imperialism. However, there are some African women who believe that feminism is feminism full stop (Oyèrónke Oyěwùmi, 1997; Amina Mama,1995; Ngozi Chimaanda Amanda, 2007). Atanga, (2013) opines that some black African women resist calling themselves feminists as Western feminism is interpreted as synonymous with lesbianism, anti-male, anti-child and disruptive of the 'natural' state of family (and its hierarchy). Many are pro-heterosexual due to religion (Ibid). This may be an obvious exaggeration as feminism is more than that. In some African countries, it is seen as actions by women against men. Here, there is issue of perspective. African women writers like Bessie Head, Mariama Ba, Buchi Emecheta and others openly disassociate themselves from feminism pointing to amorphous meanings associated therewith (Amaefula, 2021). Euchi Emecheta for example was reported as saying, 'I defend women but do not reject men-the father, the brother, the husband. I call for women's freedom but not without their children' (Amari and Maoui, 2021, p.1). In an interview with Guardian (2017), Buchi made it categorically clear that, though her works point to women's liberation, she is just a woman not a feminist.

Some scholars have tried to distinguish African feminism from Western feminism. Feminism in Africa is said to focuses on the socio-cultural existence of women while Western feminism is loaded with issues of sexuality, lesbianism and homosexuality (Ojukwu and Onuigbo, 2017). I do not agree with Ojukwu and Onuigbo, as Western feminism is much more than the above description. The issues of lesbianism and homosexuality are coming up just as much in Africa. These issues and experiences may be considered by African and Nigerian feminists as not so important to women because of other socio-cultural issues. They may, on the other

hand, be submerged because of cultural values and legislations. In Nigeria for example, a bill was signed in 2014 that criminalised same sex relationship, which could attract a jail term of up to 14 years' imprisonment (Akanle, et al, 2021). These could be some of the reasons for many African women's rejection of the tag as they see it too heavy to bear (Ibid). I believe strongly in the emancipation of women – and, like Buchi, not without our male! In line with the emancipation of women, this research calls on Igbo contemporary society to correct some injustices towards Igbo daughters. Though gender flexibility existed in precolonial Igbo society, women still suffer some degree of injustices. One such injustice is the issue of inheritance. I argue that daughters should have the right of inheritance in their fathers' home, like the sons. Most daughters carry the family's burden on their shoulders like male children, so why will they have only responsibility and no rights? Women's labour, such as taking care of the family, should have monetary value. Equal educational opportunity for girls should be a priority.

4.2 Feminist Research Methodology

Feminist research methodology is used because of its democratic and liberating approach to knowledge creation (Koch & Kralik, 2006). This aligns with my teaching approach, engaging students to generate knowledge. Feminist methodology is of interest to researchers who are engaged in occupations that are mostly dominated by women (Landman, 2007). These occupations are highly gendered, and a good example is early years education (Warin et al, 2021). Feminist methodology is committed to understanding issues from women's perspectives and this is influenced by feminist ethics (e.g. equality, equity, liberty). There might be differences in perspectives among various feminist groups, but the central aims of feminist research are shared, and these include legitimating women's lived experiences as knowledge and seeing women as knowers and producers of knowledges. Key methodological ideas include standpoint, positionality and reflexivity, while foregrounding critical enquiries into gender, gender relations and society (Diane and Melanie, 2005).

Feminist methodology is informed by feminist epistemology, ontology and feminist theory. This gives rise to feminist research, which is distinct from traditional research in social sciences dominated by men's perspectives and voices. A question that spontaneously arises may be: What makes feminist research distinct from traditional research. Feminist research aims to gain a better understanding of social reality by ending the marginalisation of women lived experiences in social science (Landman, 2007). This research aims to collect information from early years lecturers. Early years education workforce from literature is almost exclusively female, and it is marked by oppression in terms of pay and low professional status (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2016; Osgood, 2005; Moss, 2006; Findlay et al, 2009; Kiersey, 2009; Thrope et al, 2011; Strong, 2014).

Feminist research is directed towards searching for multiple 'truths,' rather than one 'Objective Truth,' concerning women's oppression (Ardovini, 2002). The reconstruction of the term epistemology by feminists to include areas of research neglected by traditional epistemologies and research (such as the experiences of early years lecturers) is a feature that distinguishes feminist research, and it is in line with my philosophical positioning. Through the creation of 'gynocentric epistemics', that is knowledge centred on women's realities, a new form of knowledge is born (Ibid). This effort is guided by feminists' desire to have the experiences of women recognised, legitimated and inserted as subjects of research. Feminist research must bring to the centre the lived experiences of women. Women should be considered as the subjects, not merely the objects, of research. There might be differences in perspectives among various feminist groups, but the central aims of feminist research are shared, and these include legitimating women's lived experiences as knowledge and seeing women as knowers and producers of knowledges. This research is, however, underpinned by African feminist methodology

This research is underpinned by African feminist research methodology. African feminist research methodology is not neutral. It is committed to social justice. It challenges oppressive structures, amplifies marginalised voices, supports community empowerment and imagine alternative futures. It analyses colonialism, ethnicity, class, global capitalism etcetera. The application of African feminist methodology in Early Years Education in Nigeria challenges

Western developmental norms and centres the African conception of childhood as communal, capable, relational and spiritually grounded (Fikile, 2020; 2019). African feminist methodology is grounded in the premise that African women's experiences, histories and knowledge systems are legitimate sources of theory and gives voice to women through methods that allow and encourage the articulation of previously unavailable narratives (Mama, 2011; Fricker, 2007). African feminists argue that oral forms of knowledge such as songs, proverbs, rituals, which participants could use to express themselves during research should be recognised as forms of knowledge production. African feminists went further to argue that these oral forms of knowledge creation are missing in literature because they have been silenced by Euro-Western methodologies largely dominated by Alpha male thought. These indigenous forms of knowledge make visible an agency that is present in the life experiences of research participants but unfortunately, they are excluded from academic debate (Ibid).

African feminist research methodology rejects the idea that Western frameworks are the default or superior ones. The features of African feminist research methodology include grounding research in everyday life; privileging oral histories, storytelling and proverbs; and treating African women as co-theorists; but not as the subjects of research. African feminist research methodology is underpinned by African philosophical views such as those of Ubuntu and Igwebuike – 'I am because you are' Goduka, (2000) and ***'strength in number'*** Kanu, (2019) – which contrasts with the Western philosophical view, 'I think, therefore, I am'. The African philosophical view promotes an ethical framework that emphasises the responsibilities of the researcher as a transformative healer who is actively participating in building communities and promoting harmony Chillise and Ntseane, 2010). It demands processes and outcomes aimed at dismantling knowledge hierarchies (Connell, 2007). The epistemological stance in this research is influenced by African Epistemology, which is entrenched in lived experiences, communal interactions and oral traditions. This supports constructionism, which Crotty (2003:42) defines as 'the view that all knowledge and therefore all meaningful reality is contingent upon human practices. Knowledge is constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world (including non-human). It is developed and transmitted within an essentially social context'. This entails that meaning is not discovered but constructed; human behaviour is multi-layered, and it cannot

be determined by pre-defined probabilistic models. It depends on situations and is determined by environmental factors other than the genes.

Story-listening has been proposed as a methodology. It provides a key as for how to listen (Lawless, 2002; Christensen, Cox, and Szabo-Jones, 2018). Attentive listening to stories means not forcing the storyteller to move at pace set by the researcher. The storyteller holds the power of what knowledge is and what meaning it should hold (Archibald et al.2019). The storyteller decides how the story starts and how it ends. This form of storytelling was not used in this research as the issue is not which tools to use, but rather how they were used. In fact, semi-structured interviews are used, which aligns closely with black African feminist research, because they create a relational, dialogic, context-sensitive space, where participants' lived experiences can be centred, theorised and honoured. Semi-structured interviews do not work only as a data-collection tool, but also as a methodological practice that embodies the ethics, politics and epistemologies of African feminist inquiry (Mama, 2011). The participants are allowed to narrate their stories freely and the interview questions are used as prompts so as to balance power relations. Based on the ontology and epistemology on which this research is grounded the researcher goes further to relate and engage with the research participants while exploring ways of joining them and supporting their struggle. The researcher is not an outside observer but occupies the position of insider/outsider. This ethic of solidarity demands a high degree of self-awareness and reflexivity. By centring the voices of the participants, I aimed to ensure that their lived experiences and perspectives are recognised as valid sources of knowledge (Fricker, 2007). The lecturers' voices are crucial for constructing knowledge that challenges colonial legacies and informs transformative practices (Chilisa, 2012).

4.3. My Positionality

This research is located within the feminist paradigm, which may be in the margin of research paradigms. This is because feminist research is committed to challenging hierarchical modes of creation and distribution of knowledge and it draws upon the struggles and insights of

oppressed and disempowered groups (Hesse-Biber et al, 2012; Willsher, and Goel, 2017). This research, like any research, is not an innocent or distant academic exercise, but an activity that has something at stake. This occurs in sites of political and social condition (Smith, 2021). Research is thus political, and production of knowledge is a political endeavour (Ibarra-Colado,2006; Restrepo and Escobar, 2005).

This research is motivated by both my positionality as a black African woman living in Europe and my personal experiences as an EYE lecturer. As a researcher, I choose to study groups marginalised by the society because of commitment to social justice. Thus, the lives of children from poor economic backgrounds who cannot attend early years education in Nigeria matter. My interest in the marginalised unsettles the status quo and questions both implicitly and explicitly dominant approaches to research (hooks, 1989). These children belong to the margin, and I consider the margin as a site of resistance. This realisation of the importance of the margin, in the words of hooks, awakes in me the consciousness of the structure that surrounds my everyday life. It develops a world view that is oppositional, that becomes the force that sustains me and aids my struggle to move away from poverty and despair (Ibid). This strengthens my sense of who I am, and I am not willing to surrender this marginality to move to the centre. It nourishes my capacity to resist, offering me the possibility of radical view from which to see and create, new worlds (hooks, 1989).

The margin is a site to speak up against power, past and present injustices from within. It offers me the opportunity to speak in my own voice, talk about the struggle for self-identification and the self-realisation of marginalised groups like the EYE sector. The margin is a central location to produce a counter hegemonic discourse to identify the space from where to start the revision process (hooks, 1989). That space has been identified; it is EYE in Nigeria. I am not afraid to speak about the injustices in the system. This is what hooks (1989 p.5) calls ‘Talking Back’, as I am ready to speak up and challenge authority. It is an act of risk and daring.

This research therefore calls on Nigerian early years lecturers to arise and produce a counter hegemonic discourse that will confront the oppressive structure preventing some children from accessing early years education, which is crucial for their future success. It is a call to

see education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 2017; hooks, 1994). As Richard Shaull (1973, p.14) writes in the introduction to Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 'Education either functions as an instrument that facilitates the integration of younger generation into the logic of the present system leading to conformity, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world'

Taking both a reflective and a critical stance in this research leads to challenging Western dominance in the production of knowledge (Bhambra et al, 2018; Laakso and Adu, 2023). Freire (2017) stresses the importance of critical reflection and praxis in liberating oppressed groups and dismantling oppressive structures. That critical awaking has created tension in me, between my faith as a Christian and the role of the church as a tool for colonisation. The role of the church during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade has been documented (Willams, 2020; Antwi, 2018; Cannon, 2008). The call on the church to formally apologise to Africa and Africans is ongoing. I am joining those voices to denounce the '*salvation mission'* as evil. Someone should compensate for that.

Another contextual issue relevant to this research is that I could potentially bring certain biases into this research. These mostly derive from my commitment to issues of justice, knowledge creation and freedom. The fact that I am aware of the possibility of bringing my personal biases helps to minimise any potential negative influence. Griffiths (1998) acknowledges the importance of bias in research when he says that having ethical and political positions is inevitable but not acknowledging them is the issue. Thus, acknowledgement helps unmasks any bias implicit in those views and helps to provide a way of responding critically and sensitively in the research. On the issue of neutrality, Griffiths argues that a stance on neutrality can be misleading. It would be almost impossible to achieve as every researcher is approaching the research from a particular perspective. As such, I contend that foregrounding one's personal stance can result in a reduction of the effects of bias. I am confident to state that continuous reflection on my action during this research helped me to maintain a critical stance, which contributed to ensuring a balanced perspective.

In feminist research, the researcher is never 'outside' the research process or separated from the research subjects as an 'objective' observer (Harding,1993). I ensured that my approach was not that of one with authority producing expert knowledge based on my participants. This research was dialogical, in that power was shared and knowledge produced together. This approach is motivated by commitment to the participants and the development of a reciprocal relationship. It redefines the privileged relationship between researchers and knowledge production by putting participants at the centre of their own process of knowledge generation. However, the researchers' assumptions must be declared. This is particularly appropriate in social science inquiry because human society is not governed by fixed natural laws or regularities but mediated through meaning and agency.

4.4 African Feminist Research Methodology and its Influence on Research Design

African feminist research methodology, particularly within African contexts, plays a significant role in shaping the design, data collection and analysis of data. African feminist theory emphasises the importance of centring African women's voices, recognising power relations in knowledge production, and challenging Eurocentric research traditions that have formerly marginalised African perspectives. In this research, these principles informed methodological decisions at multiple stages of the research process. Semi-structure interviews as stated above align closely with black African feminist research. They create a relational, dialogic and context-sensitive space and participants' lived experiences are centred, theorised and honoured. Semi-structured interviews do not work only as a data-collection tool, but as a methodological practice that embodies the ethics, politics and epistemologies of African feminist inquiry. The participants are allowed to narrate their stories freely and the interview questions are used as prompts so as to balance power relations.

African feminist research methodology informed the research design by prioritising participants' lived experiences and positioning them as knowledge producers, rather than as passive subjects. Feminist scholars argue that research in African contexts should challenge hierarchical relationships between researcher and participants and instead promote collaborative, respectful engagement (Mama, 2007; Chilisa, 2012). Consequently, this study adopted a qualitative research design that allowed participants to share their perspectives in depth. The design also acknowledged the researcher's positionality as someone connected to the context under study, recognising that knowledge is socially situated rather than neutral or detached (Harding, 2004). This approach aligns with feminist commitments to reflexivity and the recognition that the researcher's identity and experiences shape the research process.

This research is situated in Nigeria, a country made up of 36 states. However, the participants are drawn from three states: Lagos, Oyo and Imo. This means that the data produced may not adequately represent the views of the target population. The small sample size also makes generalisation of the research outcomes difficult. However, the main purpose of qualitative research is not generalisation of research findings, but understanding of the meanings, experiences and perspectives of individuals or groups of social reality (Landman, 2007).

4.4.1. Research Approach and Research Samples

A qualitative research method is chosen for this research. Qualitative research focuses on understanding phenomena from a contextual and subjective perspective. The use of this approach is motivated by the nature of the research and research questions and allows for the collection of the views and experiences of participants, which are indispensable in research of this nature (Bryman, 2012).

Information sets are discerned with recourse to semi-structured interviews carried out in an open and enquiring manner to gather the views and experiences of EYE lecturers in Nigeria regarding the decolonisation of EYE (Denscombe, 2010). This elicits rich data and allows

real-time checking of information, thereby increasing validity. An interview guide is used to reduce bias by incorporating multiple perspectives, encouraging open-ended response through open-ended questions. The use of a standardised framework ensures consistency and enables questions pertinent to the topic to be asked to all participants.

My participants are Nigerian EYE lecturers holding academic titles such as PhD and professor. They hold varying positions, apart from lecturing in their universities. The sample is a homogeneous sample but still involves unique individuals because the participants belong to the same profession (lecturers). The research aims to investigate how the lecturers are engaging in the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria. The lecturers' views are crucial as they teach the next generation of early years educators. As some of main actors in EYE, they could provide rich data. Their participation was influenced by availability and the internet connection because the interview was online, through WhatsApp.

In this research, 13 lecturers from six universities were interviewed. Purposive sampling was used. This is a form of non-probability sampling that ensures the strategic relevance of the research sample to the main research questions (Bryman, 2012). This supports greater results validity as I aimed to increase data relevance by aligning the research sample to the main research question, which is how Nigerian EYE lecturers perceive the EYE curriculum and how they engage with the decolonisation in EYE. The interviews were in-depth, with an average of 45-60 minutes. The information obtained formed rich data to be used to generate new knowledge about the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria. This could form the pedestal upon which future research could be built. The table below shows the make-up of the participants

Table 1: The make-up of the participants

Participants	Present role	Gender
Lecturer 1	Senior lecturer, University in Southwest Nigeria.	F
Lecturer 2	Lecturer 11and course Advisor, University in Southwest Nigeria	M
Lecturer 3	Lecturer, Researcher Poet, Southwest Nigeria	M
Lecturer 4	Senior lecturer/Reader, University Southwest Nigeria	M
Lecturer 5	Lecturer, Writer, Researcher, University Southeast Nigeria	M
Lecturer 6	Senior lecturer, University Southeast Nigeria	F

Lecturer7	Lecturer in EYE, University Southeast Nigeria	F
Lecturer 8	Professor, University Southwest Nigeria	M
Lecturer 9	Lecturer, University Southeast	F
Lecturer10	Associate Prof., University Southeast Nigeria	F
Lecturer 11	Senior Lecturer, University Southeast Nigeria	F
Lecturer 12	Lecturer, University Southeast Nigeria	M
Lecturer 13	Lecturer, University Southwest Nigeria	F

Gender was considered in this research as early years education is one of the occupations that are highly gendered (Warin et al, 2021). The table above shows an almost insignificant difference between the number of male and female gender (6 to 7). The insignificant difference in ratio between male to female lecturers at university level contradicts the evidence from literature about the sector. There was no declaration of any other gender identity in this research.

4.4.2 Method of Data Collection and Instruments

The data collection method is a semi-structured interview. Literature on structuring and wording interview questions informed these questions. Developing an effective interview protocol requires a clear sense of the purpose behind conducting in-depth interviews. In this research, the intention is to gather rich data from the lecturers as they are the social actors in the field of EYE. Using prompts and probes instead of questions is advised (Jiménez and Orozco, 2021). The golden rule of interviewing is to let the interviewee talk (Seidman,2019). The crafting of the interview protocol was balanced in such a way as to allows the respondents to speak openly and freely. This gives the researcher the possibility to uncover new and important insights without deviating from the research problem.

The use of prompts stirred the conversation and keeps the process on focus. It is differentiated from other interview protocols as it does not foreclose the possibility of hearing something new because the respondent feels free to talk, not being rushed to answer a series of questions posed by the researcher. An example may include something like this: 'What are your thoughts on the current Nigerian EYE curriculum?' The researcher can always use probes to prompt the respondent to say more or expand the concept (Ibid, 2021). Probes can lead down a series of proverbial rungs into the deeper or hidden layers of a participant's narrative that is normally hidden from others. Two examples can suffice: 'Tell me more; how does that make you feel?'

In this research, the Gorden framework influenced the research activity. As advised by Becker (1998), the questions are open-ended, non-leading, assuming no particular view on the part of the respondent; nor invoking a defensive reaction. They should include plenty of short and straightforward follow-ups that invite respondents to go deeper in their narrations (for example, 'Tell me more about that'; 'What has that been like for you?'; 'Can you offer an example?' (Jiménez and Orozco, 2021). An example of the interview question is: 'What is your view of the Nigerian EYE Curriculum and why?' A copy of the interview questions is attached in the appendix.

4.4.3 Research Ethics, Ethical Clearance and Fieldwork Permission

The ethical procedures for this research are informed by the Lancaster University Code of Practice for Research (Lancaster University, 2009), and the university's legal and ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects (FASS- LUMS-REC,2017). To comply with the university's regulations for engaging human subjects in research, I applied for ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee. The application was accompanied by copies of all supporting research materials, including the data generation protocols, research and interview questions, informed consent forms, information sheets and confidentiality considerations for the participants.

Following the ethical principles as contained in the Lancaster University Code of Practice and EU General Data Protection Regulations [GDPR] (2018), steps are taken to observe good practice in research. The ethical principles are ensuring that participants are respected and protected and gaining the trust of the participants. Data is to be handled with integrity and to ensure the credibility of the research (BERA, 2018). The informed consent form and information sheets were sent, and participants had time to read and agree to the contents of the forms by signing and returning them. This is to ensure confidentiality, which is important for building and maintaining trust and balancing power relations between participants and myself and for protecting sensitive information, (Harding, 1993). There was detailed and clear information to the participants on how data would be used, stored and protected. They are informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Copies of the forms could be found in the appendix. With ethical approval obtained, the fieldwork followed.

4. 4.4 Data Collection and Challenges

African feminist methodology influenced the choice of data collection methods by emphasising relational and dialogic forms of knowledge generation. Interviews were used because they provide opportunities for participants to narrate their experiences and

perspectives in their own voices. Feminist researchers highlight the importance of creating conversational spaces where participants feel respected and valued (Oakley, 1981). The interviews are conducted online using WhatsApp. The use of digital communication platforms such as WhatsApp reflects practical and relational considerations within the research context. WhatsApp is widely used in Nigeria and provides an accessible means for participants to engage in the study despite geographical distance between the United Kingdom and Nigeria. This approach enabled flexible and participant-centred engagement while maintaining ongoing communication with participants. African feminist methodology also emphasises ethical sensitivity, care and respect for participants' voices. During data collection, attention was therefore given to creating a supportive interview environment, encouraging open dialogue, and allowing participants the freedom to express their views without imposing rigid structures.

Conducting online interviews with the use of WhatsApp has some advantages including the application's mobile accessibility, voice-note options and familiarity in the Nigerian context. Many participants are already familiar with the app, which reduces the need for technical training and makes participation easier and less intimidating. This is particularly beneficial when working with participants in contexts where digital infrastructure or computer access is limited (Chen & Neo, 2019). The use of WhatsApp interviews can shape both the nature of interaction and the type of data generated. Because WhatsApp operates through internet data, rather than traditional phone services, it significantly reduces the cost of communication for both the researcher and participants. It is convenient and flexible and removes geographical barriers, and is thus cost- and time-effective (Opdenakker, 2006; Deakin and Wakefield 2014; Sullivan, 2012; Salmons, 2015; Lo lacono et al, 2016). This makes it particularly useful for international research or studies involving participants in different regions. In some cases, the relative distance provided by online communication can encourage more open discussion of sensitive topics (Kaufmann & Peil, 2020). Voice notes and chat histories can be automatically saved within the application, creating a record of the interview data. This can support accurate transcription and reduces the risk of losing data. Participants may find it easier to participate in interviews using familiar digital platforms such as WhatsApp. This could reduce barriers to participation, particularly where mobile communication is widely used. This flexibility enables participants to respond at convenient times, particularly when

asynchronous voice notes or text messages are used. Such flexibility can increase participation rates and accommodate participants' work schedules and responsibilities. The participants feel comfortable and less intimidated in speaking from their comfort zone. This may lead to more candid responses. However, there are also some challenges.

When interviews are conducted via voice calls**,** as in this research, researchers cannot observe body language or other non-verbal signals. This can reduce the researcher's ability to interpret emotional nuance or contextual cues (Seitz, 2016). The quality of WhatsApp calls depends heavily on internet connectivity. Poor connections can lead to dropped calls, distorted audio or delays, which may interrupt the flow of conversation and affect the depth of responses. Although WhatsApp uses end-to-end encryption, researchers must still consider ethical issues such as confidentiality, data storage and informed consent. Participants may also access the interview from shared devices or spaces, which may affect privacy. Because WhatsApp is primarily a messaging platform used for everyday communication, participants may receive other notifications during the interview, potentially disrupting concentration and the continuity of discussion.

The use of WhatsApp interviews could shape or constrain the data collection process in some ways, one of which is the communication style. Interviews conducted through voice notes or text messages may encourage participants to provide more reflective responses, as they have time to think before replying. However, this can also reduce spontaneity. This is not the case in this research. Another way is building rapport which may take longer because physical presence and full non-verbal communication are absent. Researchers often need to rely more on verbal prompts and empathetic language to maintain engagement. The use of WhatsApp may expand participation in contexts where smartphones are more common than computers. However, individuals without smartphones or internet access may still be excluded. This actually excluded some participants from this research. Data messages, voice notes and call recordings, collected via WhatsApp require different transcription and data management strategies. Call recordings in this research are transcribed before analysis. Overall, WhatsApp interviews provide a practical and flexible approach to qualitative data collection in contexts where participants rely heavily on mobile communication. However, care must be taken to

address limitations relating to non-verbal communication, ethical considerations, and technological constraints, to ensure the credibility and depth of the data collected.

4.4.5 Conducting Transnational Online Research: Advantages/ Disadvantages

Conducting transnational online research such as this, research between the United Kingdon and Nigeria, presents several methodological advantages and challenges that can shape the data collection process in qualitative studies. Online platforms like WhatsApp has made it increasingly feasible for researchers to conduct interviews across national boundaries, particularly in contexts where travel may be costly or risky – one example being the current security issue in Nigeria. Transnational online research enables researchers based in one country to reach participants in another without the need for physical travel. In this research, transnational online research facilitates involving participants in Nigeria while the researcher is based in the United Kingdom. Through an online communication platform collection of data occurs across significant geographical distances. This expands opportunities for international research and allows researchers to remain connected to participants in their home contexts (Salmons, 2015). Transnational research conducted online significantly reduces costs associated with international travel, accommodation and fieldwork logistics. It also allows interviews to be scheduled more flexibly, enabling researchers to collect data within shorter timeframes (Gray et al., 2020). Online research facilitates continuity of data collection even when researchers are physically located outside the research setting. This is especially useful for scholars conducting research in their countries of origin while residing abroad. Digital communication tools enable sustained engagement with participants and institutions. Participants may find it easier to participate in interviews using familiar digital platforms such as WhatsApp. This may reduce barriers to participation, particularly where mobile communication is widely used.

Although mobile technology is widespread in Nigeria, disparities in internet connectivity, electricity supply and data affordability may affect participation. Interruptions due to unstable internet connections or power outages may disrupt interviews and affect the quality of the

recorded data (Lobe et al., 2020). Although the time difference between the United Kingdom and Nigeria is relatively small, it can still affect scheduling interviews and coordinating communication, particularly when participants have work or family commitments. When researchers conduct interviews remotely, they may miss contextual elements that would normally be observed during in-person fieldwork, such as institutional environments social interactions, or cultural cues. This can reduce opportunities for observational data and contextual understanding (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Building trust and rapport with participants may be more difficult in online settings compared to face-to-face interactions. The absence of physical presence and limited non-verbal communication can influence the depth and openness of participants' responses. In transnational online research, ethical considerations become more complex. Researchers must ensure informed consent, confidentiality and secure storage of digital data while navigating differences in institutional regulations and research governance across countries. Transnational online research can influence participant engagement. While digital platforms may increase accessibility for some participants, they may simultaneously exclude individuals with limited digital access, thereby shaping the composition of the research sample. Overall, while online transnational research provides practical and flexible opportunities for data collection, researchers must carefully address technological, methodological and ethical challenges to ensure the credibility and richness of the data collected.

Other challenges peculiar to this research include difficulty in recruiting participants. I sent out several emails and received only three responses. I came into contact with the president of an association of EYE professionals in Nigeria, and he gave me the contact details of all the members from his university. This was followed by initial phone calls. I also contacted friends at some universities in Nigeria who linked me up with some of their colleagues in EYE. I also used snowballing and eventually got enough participants for the research. The recruitment process affected the timeframe for the fieldwork. As a consideration for future research, in-person visits to the universities would be an option. Another challenge was the unreliable Internet connection. This caused disruptions during one or two interviews in this study. This was overcome by exercising patience and waiting for the line to reconnect. Access to good Internet connection also meant that I missed the contributions of two or more

participants as poor connection made the conversation impossible. The participants never honoured the next appointments.

4.4.6 Research Process and Overview of the Analysis Process

A form of conversation with purpose as discussed earlier was applied in this research. Participants were allowed to express themselves freely and prompts were used to facilitate the interview sessions. I aligned the finalised storyline with the conceptual research framework, to articulate the results of the research as themes and sub-themes. A theme 'captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 82). To gain in-depth information on the research topic, the research question is expanded through auxiliary questions, which include: What is the lecturers' concept of decolonisation; how do Nigerian EY lecturers perceive the EY curriculum (content and practice), as Eurocentric or Indigenous, and why; what is the role of the lecturers in curriculum formulation; what factors affect the lecturers' attempts to decolonise EY in Nigeria; how do the lecturers engage in decolonising the EYE.

There are different types of qualitative data analysis techniques in the constructionist perspective: narrative analysis, conversation analysis, discourse analysis and thematic analysis (Hennink 2014). Any of these techniques could be used for this research, but I preferred Thematic Analysis (TA), which is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. This is because of the importance of presenting the research findings in a way that allows the reader to distinguish between the data, the analytic framework and the interpretation, by producing a convincing account of this data (Mays & Pope 1995). Another reason is that TA is useful in feminist research and it is guided by the feminist epistemological perspective because of the diversity of experiences under investigation.

TA deals with textual data generated from interviews, which are often transcribed verbatim from audio recordings (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). It requires more involvement and interpretation from the researcher, as it moves beyond recounting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data

(Ibid). Codes are developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). Two levels of themes are distinguished: semantic and latent. Sematic themes refer to the surface meaning of what the participant has said, not looking for anything beyond the explicit words of the participant (Ibid). Latent themes, on the other hand, go beyond what has been said and begin to examine the underlying ideas and assumptions that are theorised as shaping or informing the sematic content of the data (Ibid).

Reliability is of greater concern with thematic analysis because more interpretation goes into defining the data items as well as applying the codes to chunks of text. Despite the reliability issue, I feel that a TA is still the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual dataset.

4.4.7 Strengths and Weaknesses of Thematic Analysis and its Mitigations

Thematic analysis is used in this research because its flexibility makes it relatively straightforward (Braun and Clark, 2006). It allowed me to organise data into themes, identifying patterns without losing the richness and depth of participants' experiences (Braun, and Clark, 2012, Nowell et al, 2017). As this research focuses on the lived experiences of Nigerian EYE lecturers, thematic analysis gave voice to the perspectives of these people, whose voices are almost absent in decolonisation literature in Nigeria; thus, making it suitable for the research that prioritises participants lived experiences (Braun, and Clark, 2013). The identification of recurring patterns (themes) across different participants makes the use of thematic analysis effective in generalising findings within qualitative studies (Braun and Clark, 2006).

Thematic analysis is a subjective process as themes are selected and interpreted by the researcher. This gives room to biases influencing themes considered important and how they are analysed (Nowell, et al, 2017). Subjectivity could introduce bias, but it allows the researcher to bring in deep, nuanced understanding of the data. Bias and the fact that I was

continuously reflecting on my role helped me to address this limitation. Qualitative research however values the interpretative role of the researcher; thus, subjectivity could be framed as an asset rather than a flaw (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis is criticised for its lack of any clearly defined theoretical framework, which could make it seem less rigorous compared with methods such as grounded theory. Braun and Clarke (2006), however, argue that the flexibility of thematic analysis is also a strength as it means that it could be used within different frameworks, such as feminist theory, decolonisation and others. The adaptability of thematic analysis allowed me to tailor this research questions to the specific need of the research (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

4.5 Initial Process of Data Analysis

We live in a technological world, and while this is essential for researchers in the modern time, but it could still make our lives miserable when it fails us. As this is the case, I engaged the process of searching for codes and themes manually, rather than using software programme. It is true that computer software is of help in organising and examining large data, but it is not, according to some scholars, capable of the intellectual and conceptualising processes required either to transform data or to make any judgment (Thorne, 2000; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Basit, 2003; Welsh, 2002). However, I agree with Basit's (2003) argument that both the manual and digital approaches are intellectual exercises.

The data analysed was generated from individual interviews. The interviews were audio-recoded and transcribed verbatim, orthographically, onto a large data set with all spoken words, sounds, hesitations etc. However, it was necessary to remove a few words that added no meaning regarding understanding of the data text (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The process was tough and time-consuming, but important because it offered me the opportunity to familiarise myself with the data (Riessman,1993). It allowed me to find connections between participants' voices and data and a sense of emerging phenomena in relation to what codes and themes could be used to explain the phenomena. As a matter of fact, I identified and took note of some of the codes and themes during the transcription process.

As explained above, TA aims to achieve an understanding of patterns of meanings from data on lived experiences (i.e. participants' descriptions of experiences relating to the research questions during interviews). While conducting the analysis, I (the researcher) strived to understand meanings embedded in experiences and describe these meanings textually. Through the process, details and aspects of meaning are explored. This requires reading and reflective writing. Parts of the text need to be understood in terms of the whole and the whole in terms of its parts. However, I had also to alternate between being close to and distant from the data (Sundler et al. 2019).

4.5.1. Data Analysis Process using Braun and Clarke Six-Phase Method

The six-step process to conducting thematic analysis was followed (Braun and Clark 2006). The steps are becoming familiar with data, how initial codes were generated, searching for themes; reviewing of potential themes; defining and naming of themes; and the final report. I worked closely and familiarised myself with the depth and breadth of the transcribed interviews. To get a good idea about what information was of interest, I read the entire data transcript critically several times before coding. I returned to the audio from time to time, to clarify ambiguities and resolve inconsistencies within the data. This brought back memories of the interview scenes and participants' reactions about a particular question that might be considered appropriate or inappropriate. By reading the texts, I think about what sense they made as regards participants' experiences and their assumptions, while I try to interpret their answers. I illustrate this with examples from three of the interview transcripts on the term "decolonisation'.

{…Ifeoma} trying to come out of the domination of foreign rule, psychologically, culturally,

{…Tunde}it is a paradigm shift

{…Obby}: coming up with central idea that will favour everyone

From the above excerpts, one can see three different conceptualisations of the word decolonisation. As good requisites for analysis, these excerpts reveal the richness in the data and participants' understanding of the term. Because of the participants' educational

attainment, almost all of them gave relevant information in line with this research line of inquiry and research context.

The process of coding and generating themes was compressed and adequately presented in tables below. The process of theme development was carried out as contained in the literature (Varpio and Meyer, 2017, Braun & Clark, 2006) and shown as table 1. The original quotations extracted from the interviewees data were categorised and placed with descriptive codes. Letters were used to identify male and female (M1 to M6), and (F1 to F7). Pseudonyms were used for the purpose of respecting the confidentiality and privacy of the participants (Data Protection Act, 2018). After all the data had been coded as required, codes with a related information pattern were grouped jointly into a general category. A combination of two or more categories was then weaved together to form an overarching theme. A few interview excerpts are shown in Table 2 below in a tabular format with the emerging themes and the overall themes.

Table 2 Emerging Themes and Themes

Pseudonym	Questions	Excerpts	Emerging themes	Themes
Obby (F)	Tell me about the curriculum	In Nigeria, we use American system	We use American system of curriculum	Foreign curriculum
Ijeoma (F)	How do you see the EYE curriculum?	I see the curriculum as not representing much of Nigeria	Not Nigerian	Foreign curriculum

The themes were developed on the basis on the frequency of the related perspectives and responses of the interviewees to the question/s posed to them by the researcher. As I used a semi-structured interview format, similar views from different participants on a topic under

consideration, or on related question/s, give a clue to the discerning of a theme. Six main themes were discerned from the data, and they include: Eurocentric curriculum; lecturers are not carried along in curriculum development; parents' preference for the English language; poor policy implementation; lack of funding for research; EYE lecturers engage in decolonising by creating awareness.

4.5.2 Influence of African feminism on Data Analysis

African feminist research methodology principles also informed the analytical process. Feminist analysis seeks to foreground participants' voices and experiences, rather than impose external interpretations that may silence or distort their perspectives (Mama, 2007). In this study, the analysis involved careful attention to how participants described their experiences and how broader structural factors shaped those experiences. The analytical approach also engaged critically with issues of power, colonial legacies and knowledge hierarchies that influence education systems in African contexts. By situating participants' accounts within wider socio-cultural and historical contexts, the analysis aimed to highlight how colonial and Eurocentric influences continue to shape educational practices and policies.

Reflexivity was also an important component of the analytical process. Feminist researchers emphasise the need for researchers to critically reflect on their own positionality and how this may influence data interpretation (Harding, 2004). This reflexive engagement helped ensure that the analysis remained attentive to participants' meanings, while also acknowledging the researcher's interpretive role. Overall, African feminist research methodology informed the research design, data collection and analysis by prioritising participants' voices, emphasising reflexivity and challenging hierarchical and Eurocentric approaches to knowledge production. By adopting these principles, the study sought to produce contextually grounded knowledge that reflects the experiences and perspectives of participants within the Nigerian educational context.

As stated above, my position as a Nigerian lecturer and researcher living in England and exploring the decolonisation of EYE places me in a position of both insider and outsider– but it also creates tension, as being a scholar in a UK university positioned me within global academic hierarchies that could raise questions of epistemic privilege and the reproduction of Eurocentric norms (Rose, 1997). I steered through this tension by consciously drawing on Ubuntu and Igwebuike epistemologies and decolonial scholarship, thus ensuring that my analysis is grounded in the Nigerian context.

I am familiar with the curriculum, institutional structures and policy discourses that shape teaching practices in Nigeria due to my professional experiences. This status offers me access and rapport when engaging with participants, some of whom share similar experiences, but then I need to be careful not to assume shared understanding or overlook critical reflections that might challenge my own perspectives (Berger, 2015).

Feminist research shaped my methodology by centring the voices of participants and their lived experiences in a context in which power relations within education are hierarchical and Eurocentric (England, 1994; Pillow, 2003). I am aware that my advocacy for decolonial practices may have influenced the way in which I framed questions; therefore, I needed to maintain a reflective attitude throughout the entire research process, being mindful of my emotional and intellectual responses to participants' accounts (Finlay, 2002). Thus, reflexivity involves questioning the understanding of data and themes derived, rather than taking them for granted. This is synonymous with the feminist research process, in which analysis is an ongoing process (Baum et al. 2006; MacDonald 2012). Another way in which reflexivity is maintained is by comparing the original data with the descriptive text of themes derived. Moreover, findings need to be illustrated with original data to demonstrate how the derived descriptions are grounded in the data rather than in the researcher's understanding (Sundler et al. 2019).

Conclusion

This chapter presented a detailed account of the research design and procedures. By outlining the method of data collection, analysis and the rationale behind these choices, the chapter

ensures the credibility of the study and allows for the replication of the research. The ethical considerations and challenges discussed further contextualise the findings and underline the commitment to conducting robust and responsible research. This methodological chapter sets the foundation for subsequent chapters, where the themes that were discerned will be analysed and interpreted in depth in relation to the theoretical frameworks. Notwithstanding my achievement in reaching this research milestone, the process has not been without its limitations. These will be discussed below in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussions

Introduction

This chapter is the first of the three chapters on the research findings. These findings are divided into three parts, following the research questions and themes. The main research question is how Nigerian EYE lecturers perceive the EYE curriculum and how they engage with decolonisation of EYE. To gain in-depth information on the above issues, the research question is expanded through some auxiliary questions, which include:

How do the lecturers conceptualise decolonisation?

How do the lecturers consider the EY curriculum (content and practice), as Eurocentric or indigenous, and why?

What is the role of EY lecturers in curriculum development?

What factors affect lecturers' attempts to decolonise EY in Nigeria?

How do EY lecturers engage in decolonising EYE?

The research focused on collecting in-depth information from early years lecturers. Semi-structured interviews were utilised to highlight the complex dynamics shaping Early Years Education in Nigeria. Six main themes were discerned from the data. This chapter focuses on certain themes, while others will be discussed in subsequent chapters. The discussion delves into interpretation of the key findings, considering how they align with or diverge from previous research. It involves interrogating the power dynamics, underlying assumptions and social structures that are contained in the data. The implications of the findings are discussed; as is their relevance to the field and potential applications. By integrating the findings with the existing body of literature, the chapters provide an understanding of the study's contribution to knowledge.

The theme of this study is the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria, so EYE lecturers' views matter in the transformation of teaching and learning. Their individual views may derive from lived experiences. An example is their construction of decolonisation which may stem from living in an ex-colonised nation. From a feminist research methodology, participants' lived experiences form a valuable source of knowledge production (Landman, 2007). The themes will be discussed in connection with the research questions. In this chapter, the first two themes from the research data were discussed. The table below represents the characteristics of the participants, using pseudonyms.

Table 3. Descriptive Characteristics of Participants.

Pseudonym	Education/Role/location	Gender
Obby	PhD, (EYE), Lecturer, Southeast Nigeria	F
Ada	Masters, English Lecturer, Southeast Nigeria	F
Ifeoma	PhD (EYE), Senior Lecturer, Southeast Nigeria	F
Ijeoma	PhD (EYE), Lecturer, Southeast Nigeria	F
Adiodu	PhD (Child Psychology) Senior Lecturer, Southeast Nigeria	M
Adamma	PhD (EYE), Senior Lecturer, Southwest Nigeria	F
Chijioke	PhD (EYE), Senior Lecturer, Southwest Nigeria	F

Tunde	PhD (Public Admi &Political Science), Lecturer and Researcher, Southeast Nigeria	M
Abiola	Professor EYE (Curriculum and Instructional Strategy), Southwest Nigeria	M
Nnenna	PhD (Education Admi & Planning) Lecturer Southeast Nigeria	F
Sule	PhD (English Education and Evaluation) Senior Lecturer Southeast Nigeria	M
Lola	Masters (EYE) Assistant Lecturer Southwest Nigeria	F
Kayende	Masters (EYE) Assistant Lecturer Southwest Nigeria	M

To gather the views of the participants on decolonisation, the researcher posed this question: What do you understand by the word decolonisation? As the interview process was a conversation with a purpose (Kahn and Cannell, 1957); Burgess, 1984), prompts, probes and discussion followed. To make sense of their responses, the bits and pieces of the answers were joined together to give the patterns of their views on four different levels that have significant implications in this research.

5.1 Table: 4 Patterns of views of the word decolonisation

Language Hierarchy and Colonisation (2 interviewees)	English is a colonial language It is a unifying language We speak in the Western language because it is a medium of communication Our children are forced; it is important for them to pass WAEC
Freedom view (3 interviewees)	Decolonisation is freeing oneself from bondage. Not been subservient. Rediscovery of lost heritage. When someone who has been colonised is set free
Equality view (4) interviewee)	Decolonisation means equality Not marginalising Being inclusive Integration of the traditional and Western education system
Radical view (5 interviewees)	Decolonisation means escaping from foreign domination. undoing colonial legacies

	a process of regaining independence transforming the dominant Western way a critical movement aimed at dismantling the persistent colonial legacies in the educational paradigm shift.

The views and constructions might have come from experiences, exposure and so on. Based on my analysis and recognition of how the participants talked about decolonisation, they were divided into four groups. These groups are assigned the following themes: language hierarchy, freedom, equality and radical.

5.1.1. Theme 1 Language Hierarchy

The first group is termed language hierarchy. Adamma began with language and then went back to decolonisation. She says, *'We speak in the Western language because it is a medium of communication. Our children are forced to speak it, so they don't feel ashamed. It is important for them to pass WAEC'.* She adds they must get the minimum standard credit level in the English language. Adamma was asked for her view on the use of English as language of instruction rather than the indigenous languages. She retorted, *'Although English is not bad, it is not our language: we got it from the colonial masters'.* Going back to decolonisation, Adamma says, '*It is trying to find out some of the positive things that are embedded in our indigenous ways of living and bring these back and allow our children to see, know them.'*

Sule joins in; 'The use of English as a national language in Nigeria is something that is vital,' he says. *'We have many languages and English is the language of the colonial master,'* he continues. However, it is a unifying force, a language that binds the country. *'It is not bad because of multilingual nation of Nigeria'*. Sule's sentences seem to be in favour of the English language because of an existential problem involving the multilingual nature of Nigeria. But here comes the point: '*Before the coming of white men into the territory known as Nigeria,'* Sule continues, *'all the kingdoms that make up Nigeria were communicating with one another without English. Amalgamation and colonisation gave rise to the problem of language*'. This is a critique of amalgamation and colonisation, bringing different nations with different languages and culture into what is now known as Nigeria. The amalgamation and colonisation are, according to Sule, the original sins. To drive his point home, Sule asks a question: *'In a situation where there are about four children with four different language backgrounds, as in some states in Nigeria, which of the languages is the mother tongue?'* Well, this problem should not have arisen without the forceful bonding of different nations into one and the marginalisation of their different languages. Sule was so carried away with the issue of language that he did not give his definition of decolonisation.

Sule and Adamma raise the issue of the low status of indigenous languages in Nigeria and ask, *'Why must students have credit in the English language before gaining admission into the university and not their mother tongue?'* Sule points out another problem, which is a lack of student interest in the mother tongue. He gave an example of a department where about 100 students are studying English education, 12-15 the French language and only 3 or 4 students in the Igbo language. This university is, Sule claims in the heart of Igbo land.

Discussion

The first level of the conceptualisation of decolonisation is painted from language hierarchy; a condemnation of both amalgamation and colonisation, which gave rise to the marginalisation of indigenous languages. This feeling was clear from analysis of Adamma and Sule's comments above. Decolonisation is defined as trying to find positive values that are embedded in the indigenous ways of living, bringing some of them back and allowing

children to see and know them. It is likened to a process of reclaiming and reviving the indigenous heritage, making children appreciate the positive values in their environment.

Who is to be blamed for making the English language compulsory in Nigerian schools? Why are children forced to speak this language? Why should they feel ashamed if they don't speak English? The question could go on. These questions are tied to colonial history, post-colonial policy choices and societal attitudes towards languages. Through the missionaries, British colonists, introduced the English language as a tool for producing clerks and interpreters, thus marginalising and stigmatising indigenous languages (Bamgbose, 1991). After gaining independence, Nigeria retained English as its official language, regarding it as a neutral language (which it is not) in a country with more than 500 languages (National Policy on Education, 2014). English is perceived by many parents in Nigeria as a symbol of modernity, linked to globalisation, capitalism and global opportunities (Igboanusi, and Peter, 2005). It is linked to international business, technology and higher education. The domination of English in Nigerian universities is consolidated as publishing in English is prioritised (Phillipson, 1992).

Some of these situations above are signs of the failure of postcolonial Nigeria. Considering the multilinguistic nature of Nigeria as found in this research, Nigeria is not the only country that is multilinguistic; therefore, that cannot be an excuse for the marginalisation of local languages in the education of children. Scholars like Spolsky (2004) and Fishman (1991) have focused on how some countries are managing linguistic diversity. Phillipson (1992) critiqued the global dominance of English, while Pennycook (2010) emphasises the importance of local languages.

5.1.2 Theme 2 Freedom

The next theme is designated as that of freedom. The group conceptualises decolonisation as freedom. Ada defines decolonisation as *'when someone who has been colonised has been set free'*. She constructs decolonisation poetically: *'I can feel it. I can't see it. I can't feel it*'. She adds, '*Most countries that were colonised have influences of the colonial master even at the institutional level; Nigeria has recently tried to be independent by putting some alterations*

into the curriculum'. Colonisation is, according to Chijioke, *'taking over one's life by superior power or controlling one's life'*. Decolonisation, therefore, means to *'cut off or remove or get freedom from one that was controlling your life'*. Colonisation, on the other hand, is described by Kayende as: *'White man taking over your land and guiding you, telling you what to do'*. It is equal to *'taking over one's life by superior power or controlling one's way of life'*. When you are colonised, he says '*the coloniser controls all your being'*. Decolonisation, on the other hand, is gaining freedom. It is *'trying to get their hook, the hook of the white men off your neck, of not being subservient to them', 'to cut off or remove or get freedom from one that was controlling your life'*. This view is more than mere physical control. It goes deeper to the essence of life

Discussion

The definition of decolonisation by one of the participants is a play on words. It is there and it is not there. I can feel it, but I can't see it. It was gathered that Nigeria has recently tried to be a little independent by putting some alteration into the curriculum, but, it seems, not enough. Nigeria is politically independent; but it is still under foreign influence even at the institutional level (Ndlovu- Gatsheni 2018; Mbembe, 2016, Arowolo, 2010). One participant showed a sign of frustration and failure in the system as she decried the use of English as the language of instruction, rather than indigenous languages. The English language is a colonial language and a symbol of colonisation, which led to the marginalisation of indigenous languages. Languages are carriers of culture, norms and values (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986).

Another concept of decolonisation to emerge from this group involves getting the hook of white men off your neck. This aligns with the view of decolonisation as a process of undoing the impact of colonialism and becoming free from the domination of foreign rule (Shahjahan et al, 2022): probably free from being a colony. The hook of the colonists goes deeper than meets the eye. Decolonisation involves not just political, but also economical, spiritual, educational, cultural and psychological disentanglement, because these were all displaced by colonial logic. Education (curriculum and pedagogy) is, for example, affected by grounding,

validating and / or marginalising systems of knowledge production (Shahjahan et al, 2021, p.2). This is why education has, in recent times, become an arena in the decolonisation project. If colonisation means the domination of foreign rule, in education, it means the domination of the foreign curriculum and pedagogy.

Another construction of decolonisation fto deriverom this group is no longer being subservient. Colonisation was referred to as physical occupation of other people's land by the West and ruling over them (Nasrullah, 2017). Most colonised nations have got rid of the physical occupation by white people but are still not free from the hook of the white man or from being subservient. Decolonisation aims to reduce the influence of the colonist in the life of the ex-colonised people. Getting freedom from the one who was controlling your life was given as a definition by another participant. This aligns with the idea of mental colonisation, which Ngúgì (1986) describes as the worst form of colonisation. Colonisation does not stop at the superficial level but enters all the fabrics of the 'Essere'. It is the 'Being' that is colonised. This group believes in total liberation from the colonial masters.

5.1.3 Theme 3 Equality

The next theme is termed equality. Obby defines decolonisation as *'the opposite of colonisation. It is coming up with central idea that favours everyone'.* She affirms that team teaching is performed in her university and that they do not colonise. Obby adds, *'We move as a team and carry our university management on with whatever we do.*' Nnenna comes in, saying, '*Decolonisation has given Nigeria the opportunity to look at our way of life, what makes meaning to Nigeria'*. She cries out for more funding for education and says, '*These children have the right to education; these are things that create gaps that result in the creation of armed robbers, hoodlums etc*'.

Abiola defines decolonisation as *'blending our traditional education with Western education'*. Abiola dives into history a little and traces the coming of the missionaries with

the idea of '*civilisation'* in quotes. This led to relegation of the natives' norms, values, tradition, respect, morals and beliefs to the margins and imposing their values on the natives. This encounter brought in some negative things with it, such as pornography, drug abuse, Internet fraud, decay in morals and so on. Abiola says that education in Nigeria is now seen as a scam because of the negative impacts of technology. '*We need to decolonise our system of education. We need to merge our traditional system of education with the Western*; *our local language should be upgraded; the curriculum should be tilted to reflect our identity, culture and tradition,'* he says.

The disapproval of the present Nigerian education system could be felt through the weight of Abiola's words. To clarify civilisation in quote, Abiola says, '*The missionaries hid under evangelisation that our religion is paganism and idolatry, that the best religion in the world is Christianity, eventually other things were introduced; then they brought in the 3R's (reading, writing, arithmetic, etc) as if we had not been reading and writing before. Eventually all our natural resources and cultural artefacts were carted away'*. Abiola accuses the British of double standards: '*African traditions were turned upside down in the name of civilisation, while they kept their traditions as showcased during the burial of Queen Elizabeth II'*. Abiola had spent over 8 years as a lecturer in South Africa, which is a decolonisation hub in Africa.

Discussion

Data from this group depicts decolonisation as coming up with an idea that favours everyone. This is equality. While colonisation is depicted as accumulation, decolonisation is conceived as sharing. Decolonisation and equality are connected in this definition. While colonial systems reinforce inequalities – economic, cultural, linguistic and political – decolonisation aims to reduce these inequalities by seeking to dismantle the colonial legacies and creating a more just and inclusive society (Walsh, 2015; Parker et al, 2017). Linking decolonisation to equality takes us to Fraser's theory and Ubuntu/Igwebuike philosophies, which offered ways of dealing with systemic inequalities in EYE in Nigeria. This finding distinguishes this research from existing literature.

Another view considers looking at our way of life, blending, transforming and so on. This aligns with Shahjahan et al (2022) and means the creation of alternatives. It is associated with recognising the constraints placed by monocultural perspectives or hierarchies in one's discipline, institution, profession, policies and /or broader society. Some participants from this group call for blending the traditional system of education with that of the West; upgrading the indigenous languages and tilting the curriculum to reflect the identity, culture and tradition of Nigeria. This implies that decolonisation should not stop at disrupting and dismantling the Euro-American viewpoint: it entails building the capacities for alternatives (Shahjahan et al, 2022).

5.1.4. Theme 4 Radical

For the radical group, decolonisation is described thus: for Ifeoma it is '*coming out of the domination of foreign rule, psychologically, culturally, economically and institutionally; I will say we are free but not free'* For Ijeoma, '*It is undoing or reversing cultural, social, economic or political legacies of colonisation which had been imposed on people'*. Ijeoma adds that it is the process of regaining independence in certain areas as well as downplaying Western ideas. Continuing, Ijeoma says that decolonisation means *'converting what you have in the environment into learning resources for children'*. She says that she encourages her students to do so. Abiodu describes decolonisation as '*a process of transforming the dominant Western way and their curriculum in our educational system'*. Lola adds that decolonisation is '*a critical movement aimed at dismantling the persistent colonial legacies in the educational systems, particularly those that marginalised indigenous knowledge, culture, languages and histories'*. Tunde constructs decolonisation as '*a paradigm shift, a new mind-set that will lead to nation building'*. Tunde goes on to explain, participation is important, '*the existing curriculum is imposed because stakeholders are not carried along'*. Tunde opines that, if the idea of a paradigm shift – where children are given good foundation that can lead to development of critical thinking – is given a chance, then it will '*revolutionise the children to contribute to nation building and children's future engagement'*.

Discussion

The last view of decolonisation is termed radical. Decolonisation is linked to praxis: for example, converting local materials into teaching aids. A participant claims that student-teachers are encouraged to do so. This means active decolonisation of the pedagogy, and it aligns with insurgent curriculum according to Walsh (2010), moving beyond theoretical critique to emphasise action-oriented teaching-learning. It is also making use of the hidden curriculum which refers to those implicit rather than explicit values, norms and behaviours students learn in the classroom through interactions and everyday practices (Giroux and Penna, 1979; Apple, 2004).

A shift in the philosophical paradigm was used to describe decolonisation. This view connects to decolonisation as an emancipatory process that aims for nation-building, where children will be given opportunities to actively explore education activities without restrictions imposed by a rigid curriculum. The view is in line with the progressive school, which requires a shift from the traditional, authoritative model of education to one that empowers young children, teachers and communities. This view resonates with Freire's (2017) Pedagogy of the Oppressed, where the 'banking model' of education was criticised. The banking model of education is a model where the teacher deposits knowledge into passive learners.

The view of decolonisation as a paradigm shift from this group aligns with the theoretical base of this research. Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies provided the base for rethinking educational structures, curricula and pedagogies. This means a shift from Eurocentrism to indigenous systems and a shift in the language of instruction from English to indigenous languages (Nyoni, 2019; Garba, 2012). It links to the process of delinking and relinking (Mignolo, 2009), where the students and teachers should become decolonial thinkers and the classroom the theatre for acting and doing decolonisation.

Ubuntu will challenge the competitive nature of Western education and conceives learning as a shared experience. This is in line with the spirit of equality. Igwebuike, on the other hand, will promote collective models of learning, rather than Eurocentric classroom hierarchies

(Kanu, 2015). Ubuntu and Igwebuike will foster cooperative learning, inclusivity, respect for every learner, shared responsibility and cultural values in the classroom (Letseka, 2012; Kanu, 2016; Kanu, 2015; Uzonwanne, 2020). Oral traditions that reflect the African way of transmitting knowledge will be promoted (Waghid, 2014). EYE will not only be accessible to all, but also culturally relevant.

Decolonisation was constructed as a critical movement aimed to dismantle the persistent colonial legacy. This is a radical view of decolonisation linking to the idea of disrupting. It is related to recognising constraints in the curriculum and pedagogy and addressing them. This aligns with some scholars' views of decentring, resisting, challenging, etcetera (Walsh, 2018; Fataar, 2018; Le Grange, 2016). This group seeks to dismantle Eurocentric dominance and promote an indigenous knowledge system. Fanon (1963, p.35) conceives decolonisation as a violent process because it involves the overthrowing of an oppressive system. Fanon believes that dismantling colonial power cannot be achieved through negotiation but through direct resistance. Scholars like Mignolo (2009) and Ngũgĩ (2009; 1986) call for epistemic disobedience and argue for the rejection of Eurocentric knowledge systems and the embracing of indigenous epistemologies.

5.2. Practical Implications

The participants' views on decolonisation have practical implications, especially where the lecturers have some agency, as certain participants have shown in this research. This will reflect in their approach to teaching. They will employ teaching methods which empower students to develop critical thinking that could lead to questioning social and cultural realities (Freire, 2017). The hidden curriculum is sometimes more powerful than the official one.

The participants' view of decolonisation were denoted as language hierarchy, freedom, equality and radical. However, they all expressed the view that decolonisation is much more than the removal of colonial power. It is to be free from the European language hegemony; the mental, cultural and structural shackles of colonialism. When it comes to education, almost all participants agree that the Nigerian education systems must be freed from the colonial legacy (British and American legacies). Tunde's construction has direct significance

for this research. The research proposes a shift in paradigm which connects to Ubuntu and Igwebuike. Also, the equality theme is linked to Fraser and issues of justice, which are fundamental in this research.

Decolonisation as a contested word is given a variety of definitions in this research. Some participants recognised the constraints placed by monocultural perspectives or language hierarchies. Some described it as a lack of freedom from colonial legacy. The conclusion is that Nigeria is free but still not free. The second part of Chapter Five deals with how Nigerian EY lecturers consider the EY curriculum. The research data reveals four perspectives which are categorised into the following themes: context/texts, theory, desire/need for local knowledge and staff agency. Below is the representation of their views

5.3. The perception of the Nigerian EYE curriculum by the participants

Table 5

Context/texts (8)	Theory (4)	Desire/Need for local knowledge (2)	Staff Agency (2
British/ American or not representing Nigeria What we teach children are always foreign concepts	The theory/ models are foreign We use foreign theories and models We still fall back to colonial theories	Contains Nigerian culture and way of life Many things are now being captured in the curriculum to suit what will make	Lecturers manage to bring in the local context We do it by ourselves

The curriculum is tailored to what other countries other than Nigeria wants	We don't use any local theory/ Model. We don't even have any African pronounced theory that forms a framework'	meaning in our life as Nigerians Nigeria has tried to be a little independent by putting some alterations in the. curriculum	We are trying to downplay Western ideas

5.3.1 Findings

Theme 1: Content/Texts

The first theme from the table above shows that most of the participants believed the curriculum is foreign, British/American, and not representing Nigeria. Obby says we use '*American system*'; Adamma, '*we have British, American and West African* curricula'; For Abiola, the curriculum is '*completely Eurocentric';* Ijeoma says *'the curriculum is tailored to what other countries other than Nigeria want.* Abiodu defines the curriculum as '*British dominant curriculum*' because they just write out things for us to follow. Abiodu continues, *'there is no innovation, no creativity that suits our environment'.* Abiodu also calls the curriculum '*dormant', curriculum'* because it does not consider the age of children or the specialisms of those developing the curriculum. Tunde accuses the system of replicating the colonists' system of education. '*We lack a curriculum that emphasises our local values, environmental and ecological variables.'* Tunde says that the curriculum contents disregard

indigenous knowledge systems and culturally relevant practices that could better serve Nigerian children. Obby says that the textbooks are '*all foreign'*. Chijioke talks about indigenous authors who are springing up, especially in EYE. They include scholars like Professor Pius Obanya, Dr Peter Olowe and others. Some even wrote in local languages, he says. Ada agrees with Chijioke but adds that some textbooks are still foreign-authored.

Discussion

The dominance of a Eurocentric curriculum in the Nigeria education system shows the profound influence of colonialism on Nigeria's education system. Falola (2022) argues that colonialism is not a past event, but a living historical one that shapes institutions, ideologies and human knowledge. The notion of anything Western as good and superior, and anything Non-Western as bad and inferior, is deeply rooted in post-colonial nations like Nigeria. This is attributed to colonial discourses which create 'otherness…. legitimising the coloniser's position of authority' (Falola, 2022; Said, 2019; Césaire, 2000). The context from participants' perspectives shows the persistence of colonial legacies in the education system. The dominance of a Euro/American centric curriculum in Nigerian EYE reflects a context that prioritises Western knowledge systems, while marginalising indigenous ways of knowing. This finding supports Fanon's (2001) critique of colonial education for prioritising Western knowledge over indigenous knowledge systems. Despite growing calls for decolonisation globally, the education sector appears slow to reform, reflecting the enduring power of Western ideologies; a resultant effect of colonial narrative and coloniality of power in which knowledge and generation of knowledge are globalised according to Euro/American epistemologies. This aligns with existing literature, which emphasises the global pervasiveness of colonial structures in educational institutions (Smith, 2022; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Wa Thiong'o, 1986). Ndlovu-Gatsheni, citing Grofoguel, noted that the Euro/American colonial expansion was able to construct a 'hierarchy of superior and inferior knowledge and thus, of superior and inferior people around the world (Grofoguel, 2007: 214). Okeke (2023) notes that, although decolonisation does not mean rejecting good values from Europe, it focuses on eroding components of Western education that embed Eurocentric ideas over African ways of reasoning and culture. The aim of the colonial masters was not to

inculcate and develop Nigerian indigenous knowledge and cultural values, but to relegate them (history and ingenuity), Okeke argues. Uzoma (2018) attributes the Nigerian education system's failure in offering solutions to the political, social, economic and technological challenges to Eurocentrism.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) states how epistemic hegemony privileges Western over non-Western knowledges. This research concurs with Uzoma (2018) but extends this denunciation of Western epistemic superiority a step forward, to engage in formulating a curriculum framework that is inspired by Ubuntu/Igwebuike philosophies and integrates non-Western knowledges. With this, this research substantially deviates from existing literature on decolonisation in Nigeria. Decolonisation as a process must start somewhere. It could be argued that the curriculum alone cannot decolonise education, but it is a fundamental starting point (Andreotti, 2011; Mbembe, 2016; Le Grange, 2016).

The curriculum is also referred to as dominantly Western and as the dormant curriculum, because there is no innovation or creativity, and it was developed without considering the age of the children, the specialism of those developing the curriculum or even their appointment. Almost all the participants opined that the curriculum needs review because its contents disregard indigenous knowledge systems and culturally relevant practices that could improve outcomes for learners. The importance of a local content-based curriculum in achieving the decolonisation in early year education cannot be overstressed. It is the stage in which the child's world view could be shaped. Children internalise the cultural, linguistic and social frameworks around them (Pence and Nsamenang, 2008; Serpell, 1993; Bamgbose, 2000; Brock-Utne, 2000).

When it comes to textbooks, the problem has never been that Nigerians/Africans are not writing. Africans and Nigerians have been producing intellectual works, but how many of these are enjoying the heights of those written by their Western counterparts? Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2013) opines in education, African intellectual works have not gained dominance in either local or global knowledge. Examples are works of Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda and Fafunwa in comparison to those of Skinner, Piaget, Maria Montessori and others.

Another problem is whether these books written by Nigerian intellectuals are included as course textbooks and in the reading list and at what level. The use of textbooks in EYE classrooms depends on approval from the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC). A quick search on The Extension Publications Ltd, which produce textbooks for EYE in Nigeria, yielded no useful result; I was unable to find the reading list. Thus, researching the EYE reading list in Nigeria could form part of another research work.

5.3.2. Theory and Models

The next theme is the theory/model of learning. Both Ijeoma and Obby argue that the facilities or conducive environment to teach the foreign curriculum are not in place; therefore, we end up teaching theoretically. Ijeoma adds, '*What we teach children are always foreign concepts'*. This means that students are taught abstract concepts that have no relevance to their realities (Higgs and Le-Grange, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ifeoma opines, '*I will say we are free but not free'*. This links to educational theories and models. Obby observes, *'We use foreign theories and models such as Maria Montessori, Piaget, Pestalozzi';* Ifeoma concurs: *'We adopt the Regi-Milla approach, we still fall back to colonial theories, we don't even have any African pronounced theory that forms a framework'*. Obby continues, '*We don't use any local theory/ model, Fafunwa's theory was not diffused and is not in used. Fafunwa was the best, but we don't use it anymore,'* she laments.

The weight of the above statements cannot be overemphasised. They also bear some elements of frustration. We are free but not free. Nigeria is still under the snare of coloniality of power according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013). Ijeoma and Chijioke pointed out that the National Policy on Education (NPE) prescribes the use of the local language in EYE. Ijeoma affirms that, in her university, not one single course from year one to final year reflects that. This is a gap between policy and implementation. Ijeoma attributes the tension between NPE and policy implementation regarding the mother tongue to parents' preference for the English

language: '*Everybody wants their child to speak English, behave like the whites, our languages are seen as inferior,'* she concludes. Chijioke adds: '*If a school emphasises the local language, the parents will take their children away and the school population will fall, and the school may close'*.

Discussion

In Nigeria, according to most participants, the theories and the content of the curriculum are predominantly foreign. Some scholars have reported that efforts to modify the curriculum have been met with a brick wall, due to poor political commitment and unwillingness to translate policy into practice (Ogunode and Ojo, 2021). This is seen as a direct effect of the colonial legacy on education (Cannella and Viruru, 2004; Pence and Marfo, 2008). Eurocentric knowledge production is viewed as an impediment towards indigenising efforts/teaching in Nigeria (Onwuzuruigbo, 2018; Uzomah (2018) citing Pratt et al (2018)). Rahman, (2013) talks about other challenges inherited from colonialism. These include unwritten rules, regulations, standards and expectations that form part of the learning process.

This view is supported by some participants, who talked about the models and theories that guide teaching in Nigeria. They opined that the pedagogical and philosophical theories are foreign (Maria Montessori, Pestalozzi, Piaget); as are the textbooks. This aligns with Ogunyemi and Ragpot (2015), who report that EYE in Nigeria is dominated by Western psychological theories such as Piaget's cognitive developmental theory, Maria Montessori, Bruner and others. These theories do not, according to Ragpot, reflect the reality of Nigeria; nor do they reflect Nigerian traditions, such as communal or oral-based learning. One of the participants talks about Fafunwa's theory. Fafunwa is a Nigerian theorist who advocates for mother-tongue education. Fafunwa postulates that children learn best in their first language as it allows them to grasp concepts easily, relate education to their cultural context and develop critical thinking (Fafunwa, 1974; 1982;1990). This position is similar to that of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o as both believe that mother tongue education is important for meaningful learning. However, Fafunwa sees mother tongue education as a necessity; Ngũgĩ advocates it as a political-cultural struggle against colonial domination (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). A rhetorical question comes to mind: Why was Fafunwa's model of learning/teaching not

diffused and why was its use stopped? What could be contributing to lack of Nigerian/ African models and theories of teaching in Nigeria? Your guess is as good as mine!

There is no shortage of Nigerian or African learning models. Models grounded in African reality include Ubuntu, which is rooted in African philosophy. This model emphasises collectivism as opposed to individualism (Letseka, 2012). There is also the Igwebuike model of learning, which encourages group-based learning, where students support and engage in shared problem-solving. The model challenges Eurocentric individualism (Kanu, 2016). Another one is the Ifa Epistemology (Yoruba Knowledge System), which is based on divination, wisdom literature and philosophical reflections. This model promotes inquiry-based learning, critical thinking and deep reflection (Abimbola, 1975). The issue is not to move from Eurocentrism to Afrocentrism but to have a balance. Fraser's theory (Global North) is employed in this research because of the value it adds to it.

5.3.3. Desire for local content

The next theme is desire/need for a curriculum that contains Nigerian local knowledges and culture. Ifeoma says that Nigeria has taken some steps towards becoming independent. She claims that *'some alterations, indigenous concepts, our values, artistic works such as broom, pot and basket making have been incorporated into the curriculum. The colonial masters made us relegate these things to the margin,'* she concludes. Nnenna adds, '*The curriculum is wonderful, and contains a bit of Nigerian culture and way of life, but the problem is poor implementation'*. The desire for more local knowledge and culture in the curriculum is expressed by Chijioke. He opines, '*Africa frowned at Eurocentric education historically'*. This is because, he continues, *'It undermines indigenous knowledge system, disrupts cultural continuity and serves colonial interests*. He adds, '*Our curriculum is Eurocentric; our education needs to be decolonised'*.

Discussion

Decolonial theorists like Bailon and Lissovoy (2019) argue that education in the post-colonial nations is tied to the past and in the present to the project of reproducing the matrix of coloniality. The perpetuation of certain assumptions that favour a particular epistemological perspective has been denounced and universities have been criticised for the content of their curricula (Morreira et al, 2020). The importance of local content-based curriculum in achieving decolonisation in early year education cannot be overstressed. EYE is the stage at which the child's world view could be shaped. Children internalise the cultural, linguistic and social frameworks around them (Pence and Nsamenang, 2008; Serpell, 1993; Bamgbose, 2000; Brock-Utne, 2000).

5.3.4. Staff Agency

Staff agency is crucial as a theme in decolonising. Ijeoma states that some lecturers like herself are downplaying Western ideas. *'We do it by ourselves by bringing in the local context into the classroom'*. Curriculum is a structural issue and bringing in context outside the curriculum is an act of courage. Staff agency is necessary for finding ways to work around systemic barriers. This is insurgency. It is the spirit of decolonisation. It is not enough to recognise loopholes in the curriculum, but we must find ways of filling up those holes. Ijeoma continues, *'The idea is to make use of the local materials in the environment'*. This is active decolonisation, theory to praxis. Joining the conversation, Adamma, echoes, '*We have British, American and West African curricula;'* '*I try to find some positive values in our indigenous ways of living, bring them into the class for learners to know and this is where I find myself trying to teach most of what I do the indigenous way'*. The agency of Ijeoma and Adamma is formidable; it is active, not passive, acceptance (Tikly, 2016). It links back to their views of decolonisation. Ijeoma, for instance, believes that decolonisation is connected to regaining independence in the traditional ways of living, while Adamma is of the view that you must do what you can instead of waiting for formal decolonisation.

Decolonisation requires lecturers to critically interrogate the content of the curriculum and then create space for indigenous ways of teaching and learning, without which policies may remain symbolic rather than transformative (Andreotti, 2011). Two of the participants, aganist all odds, find ways of decolonising their classroom through ideas and the integration of local values. This is part of the indigenisation process in education, aiming to restore cultural identities and centring epistemologies that have been marginalised (Dei, 2011). It is, according to Odora Hoppers (2002), a process of creating educational contents and practices that reflect the cultural values and local needs in each context. It is a pedagogical design that is rooted in local realities, rather than using imposed foreign models of teaching. This is active decolonisation.

These lecturers are in effect subverting the official policy, going an extra mile. This form of decolonisation happens in the individual lecturers' classroom. It offers a powerful opportunity to the lecturers because it is in the unofficial curriculum that real teaching takes place (Laakso and Hallberg Adu, 2023). What happens in the class matters. Unfortunately, this may be a lost opportunity as, out of the thirteen lecturers who participated in this research, only two of them declared they were subverting the curriculum. However, it is hard to conclude that only the two participants are using lecturers' agency considering their definitions of decolonisation.

5. 4. Linking findings to Fraser's theory

Linking the themes discerned in this chapter to Fraser (context/texts, theories/models, desire/need for local materials and staff agency), we can say the following: the context is Eurocentric, and the texts are mostly foreign with the symbolic addition of a few indigenous authors. The model and theories of teaching and learning are predominately foreign. Desire and need for local knowledge and staff agency are expressed. Fraser' three-dimensional theory of justice consists of redistribution, recognition and representation. Redistribution is

concerned with economic justice and thus requires a fair distribution of resources and opportunities to address socio-economic inequalities. Recognition centres on the respect and validation of diverse identities, cultures and epistemologies, while representation guarantees an equal voice in decision-making processes (Fraser, 1995; 2008).

Beginning with recognition, Fraser conceives of this as a matter of justice. Fraser moves recognition to what she calls a status model in which misrecognition is neither a psychical deformation nor an impediment to ethical self-realisation as Taylor and Honneth might describe it (Fraser and Honneth, 2003). Misrecognition is equated to an institutionalised relation of subordination and a violation of justice. In the status model, misrecognition is not, according to Fraser, conveyed through deprecatory attitudes or free-standing discourses, but through social institutions as a phenomenon of status subordination and it is located at a macro-level of society in concrete form (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p. 30). Misrecognition is not a psychological dynamic, but 'an institutionalised cultural value patterns that have discriminatory effects on equal standing of social actors' McNay, 2008, p. 284).

Looking at the first three themes – Eurocentric curriculum, foreign models and theories and exclusion of local knowledges – these phenomena amount to maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentation. Taking the Eurocentric curriculum for example, this apparently gives rise to triple injustice with redistribution, recognition and misrepresentation, and they reinforce each other (Fraser, 2000, 2009). In terms of redistribution, the curriculum design, for example, prioritises Western theories and epistemologies, leaving indigenous knowledges materially unfunded and structurally disadvantaged (Tikly, 2011). Misrecognising the indigenous knowledges, commonly regarding the indigenous languages as inferior and underrepresented them in formal educational and academic discourse Mbembe, (2016) amounts to cultural and intellectual marginalisation. This comprises of epistemicide and linguicides (Ndlovu-Gatseni 2018; Thiongo, 2009). Epistemicide (the killing of indigenous people's knowledge) is, according to Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014), the systematic destruction of certain knowledge systems by dominant epistemologies of mainly Western/Eurocentric knowledge – while linguicides is the killing of indigenous languages. As participants argue in this research, Eurocentric education not only redistributes resources

unjustly, but also sustains symbolic misrecognition (Fraser, 2000; 2009). Furthermore, it gives rise to misrepresentation by excluding indigenous scholars and communities from curriculum design and decision-making processes (Fraser, 2009). This political epistemic exclusion silences local voices in determining what counts as knowledge, leading to the erasure of intellectual traditions, as participants lamented. The imposition of Western knowledge in the curriculum through the colonial education system makes indigenous ways of knowing irrelevant and impedes local traditions from being transmitted to younger generations.

Epistemicide is not only about knowledge loss: it is also an act of power-relation and domination that enforces intellectual dependency on Western paradigms (Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 2014). The marginalisation of indigenous ways of knowing is no longer acceptable, and this was clearly expressed by the participants. This is where staff agency is crucial. There can be no true freedom without epistemic freedom. Epistemic freedom is fundamental in the wider context of decolonisation because it enables the emergence of the necessary critical / decolonial consciousness, which is a pre-requisite for both political and economic freedom. Hountondji, (2002) opines that the task of epistemic freedom is to organise in Africa an autonomous debate that will no longer be an appendix to European debates. In line with this intellectual challenge, this research calls on educators in Nigeria/Africa to rise to the challenge of stopping epistemicide and linguicides by making use of staff agency in their classrooms.

5.5. Linking to Ubuntu and Igwebuike

This research proposes education that is rooted in Ubuntu and Igwebuike paradigms as part of the responses to epistemicide, thus challenging and reaffirming the values in Indigenous African Knowledges. Ubuntu will promote relational ethics in knowledge production, thereby rejecting the Western individualistic approach, which marginalises collective wisdom (Letseka, 2013). Igwebuike will on the other hand, critique Western epistemologies for their fragmentation of knowledge, while advocating rather for holistic, relational and

interdisciplinary learning (Kanu, 2016). The philosophies of Ubuntu and Igwebuike offer the inverse of European philosophy. While European philosophy is underpinned by individualism *cogito ergo sum*, I think therefore I am (Descartes) – Ubuntu philosophy is founded on the principle of shared humanity (Mbigi,1997; Mangena, 2020). What is the implication of this? A call for an educational system that honours and incorporates diverse cultural identities and ways of knowing. This research is an attempt to answer this call by proposing EYE that is underpinned in local contexts.

In an Ubuntu-inspired system, as proposed in this research, indigenous knowledges and local languages would be celebrated, not marginalised, fostering a sense of belonging and cultural pride in children. This also applies for a system rooted in Igwebuike, which, according to Kanu (2019), emphasises the interconnectedness of community and identity, urging for a return to education that reflects and sustains the values, languages and practices of local communities. The education system proposed in this research would therefore not only prioritise the recognition of indigenous knowledge systems but also teach togetherness and diversity; care and love for one another. This will also ensure that children are not disconnected from their cultural environments. Adults, for example, could use storytelling to guide children on society norms, values and traditions. A child could be corrected by any adult in the traditional Igbo community. It is said that a child belongs to all (Nwa bu nwa ora). This reflects the deep-seated Igbo belief that raising a child is the responsibility of all, not just that of the biological parents (Uchendu, 1965; Achebe, 1958). This connects to the spirits of Ubuntu and Igwebuike.

Conclusion

The participants' conceptualisations of the word decolonisation and decolonisation of education were highlighted in this chapter, some of which linked to wider debate on the decolonisation of education. The perception of the EYE curriculum according to the participants is equally presented. The failure of the Nigerian Education System to challenge the curriculum that was used to dominate and colonised the country reveals a deep-rooted

structural issue in the educational system (Okeke, 2023). Lecturers feel constrained by a curriculum that fails to promote local histories, languages and ways of knowing, which they believe could enrich students' learning experiences. The issue of epistemicide was raised through the application of Fraser's theoretical lenses. The need to decolonise the EYE curriculum necessitated a shift in philosophical principles underpinning a curriculum that empowers educators and validates culturally relevant pedagogies (Amadiume, 1987). The application of Ubuntu and Igwebuike paradigms shows how Eurocentrism would be challenged and the importance of Indigenous Knowledge Systems reaffirmed.

Chapter 6: The Role of Lecturers in Curriculum Development

Introduction

This research focuses on decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria and EYE lecturers are the research participants. The identities of the participants are presented in Chapter Five. In this chapter the focus is on two of the research questions, which are: (a) the role of the lecturers in curriculum development; (b) factors affecting decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria. The chapter begins with the role of the lecturers in curriculum development and concludes with factors affecting lecturers' efforts to decolonise EYE in Nigeria.

Lecturers are considered one of the key stakeholders in education and therefore their input in curriculum formation matters. Lecturers play an important role in embedding transformative pedagogies in education systems (Nkoane, 2006). The information gathered from this research indicates that lecturers are disempowered in both policy formulation and implementation. The following themes are decerned from research data:

lecturers are not carried along in curriculum development; thus their voices are marginalised.

godfatherism is affecting curriculum development as curriculum is developed by people with less knowledge of education.

Lecturers are said not to participate in curriculum development.

6. Table 6: Participants' Views on their role in Curriculum Development

Theme: Lecturers are not carried along in curriculum development (11participants)	major stakeholders (lecturers, students, parents and communities) are not involved in curriculum formation lecturers are not major stakeholders in curriculum formation education and curriculum are made in Abuja by the Federal Government and handed to schools for implementation
Godfatherism, ethnicity (2)	they will form a committee, take them to Abuja, whether they are knowledgeable or not to write the curriculum if the government wants to review curriculum, it simply brings their brothers, who do not know anything about education, from the village

6. 1. Research Findings

It was reported that stakeholders are not involved in curriculum reforms and that godfatherism is impacting on reformation of the curriculum.

There was consensus in participants' response regarding the development of the curriculum. Almost all the 13 lecturers affirmed that the lecturers are not involved in this. Starting from Obby, '*lecturers are not carried along in curriculum or policy development*. The *government*

reviews at Abuja without considering the voice of the lecturers'. She adds that lecturers are not major stakeholders in curriculum formation. Joining in, Ifeoma agrees with Obby, in that the curriculum is designed by the National Universities Commission (NUC). She emphasises, '*Lecturers are not involved, and lecturers are not happy about it*'. Abiodu comes in, adding, '*They will form a committee, take them to Abuja*, *and they write the curriculum without considering the learners.* In other words, the curriculum is imposed because stakeholders are not involved in developing it.

Joining the conversation, Tunde points out the weakness of the curriculum reforms. He says, '*Because stakeholders are not carried along in making the reforms*, *the reformed curriculum is always a replica of the old one'*. Nnenna and Abiola accused the government of '*godfatherism*' because government officials, they claim, government officials bring their brothers who may not know anything about education to reform the curriculum from the village. It is their view that the government should stop politicising curriculum reform and include stakeholders in the process.

Discussion

Two major themes were discerned from the data above: the marginalisation of lecturers and godfatherism. Marginalising the lecturers in curriculum reforms aligns with Odora Hoppers (2001), who argues that most African curricula fail to incorporate local knowledge systems, leading to Eurocentrism. Jansen (2009) suggests that the exclusion leads to having an outdated curriculum, thus failing to meet the contemporary challenges of education. This is the view expressed by some participants in this research as the curriculum is said to be a replica of the old one. It is like putting a new wine in the same old calabash. The exclusion of lecturers in curriculum development could lead to lack of ownership, which is the agency principle of the curriculum reform. Lecturers may feel alienated from the course content, which may – according to Owuor (2008); Voogt et al (2016) – result in less engagement, thus impacting negatively on the effectiveness of the curriculum implementation. However, inadequacy of the curriculum could offer some lecturers an opportunity to develop agency and capability to subvert the curriculum. Some lecturers could identify Eurocentric biases in the curriculum and use the hidden curriculum to introduce local knowledges, histories and

languages and local ways of doing things. In fact, some of the participants mentioned that teaching is dynamic. Some could take steps to create more relevant experiences for students within the constraints of institutional guidelines, just as some participants claimed to be doing. They could include local reading texts, design activities to encourage students to question dominant narratives, et cetera. Lecturers own their classroom, and they could use this authority, as was highlighted in Chapter Five.

Lecturers are major stakeholders in the education process and their voices matter. Unfortunately, in this research, it was found that their voices are marginalised. This is a form of professional marginalisation and epistemic exclusion privileging Eurocentric frameworks that weakens the quality and cultural relevance of education (Fricker, 2007). Decolonising education, Bhambra (2014) demands dismantling epistemic hierarchies that privilege Eurocentric knowledge systems. Lecturers are treated as implementers of the curriculum rather than as co-creators of knowledge (Bernstein, 2000). The participation of lecturers in curriculum development leads to professional development and updating of knowledge as well as the development of practical skills (Voogt et al 2016). The process provides the lecturers with practical experiences of different digital tools that can promote adapted teaching with better outcomes for learners.

It was alleged that godfatherism is affecting different sectors of Nigerian society. The government and the politicians are accused of appointing their kin and kith who may have nothing to do with education, to review and print the curriculum and then distribute to the teachers. This is in line with Aguh and Olutola (2023), who report that, in Nigeria, favouritism, godfatherism, nepotism and corruption are the order of the day, and this has permeated every nook and cranny of life, including education. This phenomenon could lead to content that is either too advanced or too simplistic, or not even suitable from a pedagogical perspective (Shulman, 1987). The reform is bound to fail when the practitioners' perspective is neglected and when political or economic goals are prioritised due to lack of knowledge of the educational/developmental needs of learners (Fullan, 2007).

Azuka (2014) opines that curriculum development is a challenge due to lack of awareness on the part of policymakers at the three levels of government. This supports the view expressed

by some participants in this research. This is because of nepotism, lack of expertise and so on. The curriculum is to serve all students and therefore its development should not be based on personal networks but rather on merit, inclusivity and diverse perspectives. Oluwadare et al (2022) opine that, since the curriculum development process includes what teachers are expected to teach and what each student is to learn, teachers should be involved in its development. This is where the principles of Ubuntu and Igwebuike will play a significant role.

6.1.1 Linking to Decolonisation

Interpreting the marginalisation of lecturers in the curriculum development and silencing their voices amounts to a diminishing of their professional status and autonomy (Apple, 1986). Appointing those who lack necessary expertise and are Eurocentric in their thinking is reinforcing a hierarchy of knowledge that privileges Western epistemologies. This affects the quality of education, teacher motivation and student outcomes (Darling Hammond, 2000). Decolonisation in education stresses the dismantling of colonial structures in education. It entails centring local knowledge systems and voices that have been marginalised by Eurocentric educational models (Moosavi, 2020). Thiong'o (1986) maintains that curriculum reform must include local educators in dismantling what he refers to as a 'cultural bomb' that suppresses indigenous knowledge and promotes Western ways of knowing.

The top-down systems of power that silence those who are most affected by educational policies and practices such as EYE lecturers has been criticised (Connell, 2009; Smith, 2022). Nigerian EYE lecturers/teachers are made mostly made up of women (89% to 11%;) (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The ratio female-male in this research is 7-6, which may not represent the reality. The exclusion of lecturers devalues women's contribution to knowledge production and decision-making processes, thereby perpetuating gendered power imbalances (Mama,1995). It undermines the inclusivity and contextual relevance of curriculum; women are more aware of the cultural and social realities of children (Fafunwa, 1974; Amadiume, 1987; Opata, 2020).

Smith (2022), on the other hand, argues that excluding local educators from curriculum development reproduces colonial power dynamics, where decision-making is left in the hands of elites who are external to the context, thus replacing colonial with Nigerian hegemony. What changes? Not much in reality. It is the domination of Nigerians by new elites raised by the colonists. The dynamics and legacies may be the same with those of the colonist, but different because they are perpetuated by Nigerians, albeit with the same impact. According to Mazrui (1990), post-colonial education systems must integrate local knowledges, languages and pedagogies to reflect the realities of African students' actual experiences. Excluding lecturers from curriculum development prevents this integration.

Omodan and Diko (2021) state that decoloniality theories, which challenge how knowledge is produced, have unveiled the ways in which Eurocentrism has distorted the original meaning of the curriculum. To serve the interests of the West, the curriculum has been presented as a finished product in the form of syllabus. Curriculum was they argue, originally known as a way of knowing, learning and passing down knowledge from generation to generation (Ibid). Thus, the exclusion of lecturers from the curriculum development process disempowers them and perpetuates colonial power structures. The result is a failure to challenge the Eurocentric hegemony that lies within the educational system. It is therefore necessary for the curriculum to go back, from product to practices, processes and experiences between teachers, students and institutional policies.

6. 1.2 Linking to Fraser

Analysing the lecturers' exclusion through Fraser' theory of social justice amounts to injustice as it violates the three principles of justice, which are: recognition, representation and distribution (Fraser, 1995; 2003; 2005). From recognition perspectives, the lecturers suffered status subordination. When individuals or groups are denied the status of full partners in social interaction because of institutionalised patterns of cultural values, this amounts to injustice (Fraser, and Honneth, 2003, p.28). Fraser refers to this form injustice as misrecognition and argues that, in a post-colonial country like Nigeria, where indigenous knowledge systems have been marginalised by colonial power, the exclusion of lecturers

devalues their cultural capital and expertise. Justice requires the recognition of cultural contributions. The exclusion perpetuates the misrecognition of their professional and cultural identities (Ibid). When, on the other hand, these patterns establish social actors as peers, capable of participating with one another in social life, Fraser affirms that as reciprocal recognition and status equality (Ibid, p.29).

From the representation dimension, the exclusion is conceptualised across three inter-connected levels, which Fraser identifies as misframing (Global level); maldistribution (Institutional level) and misrecognition (Cultural level). The exclusion of the lecturers from curriculum development is well depicted at levels two and three. At level two, Fraser links maldistribution to structural inequalities that deny certain groups equal access to resources and opportunities necessary for representation. This links to the redistribution dimension of the theory, forms of economic and institutional disparities that subvert political equality (Fraser, 1997). The exclusion leaves some of the needs of teachers, such as capacity building, training and others, unsatisfied. Fraser argues that justice demands not only recognition and representation but also redistribution of resources to ensure that all groups have the resources necessary to participate in the decision-making process (Ibid). Fraser contends that representation in the democratic process is essential for participatory parity. The exclusion of the lecturers in curriculum decisions limits their ability to contribute to an education system that meets the local needs of their students. It also denies their representation in a key decision-making process that directly affects their work and their students' learning experiences (Fraser, 2005). This form of misrepresentation reinforces structural inequalities and limits lecturers' agency in curriculum development (Ibid). On the third level, misrecognition entails cultural biases or institutionalised value systems that deny some groups respect or equal status. It shows how identity and cultural assumptions can marginalise groups, thereby affecting their political representation (Fraser and Honneth, 2003).

To redress this situation, this research proposes the application of Fraser's theory, where a clear and fair selection criteria for curriculum developers based on expertise, experience and qualification must be established. It must involve stakeholders such as lecturers/teachers, students, parents and community leaders, and others. Teachers know what works in the class. Parents and community leaders are sources of cultural and societal needs. Input from policy

makers and employers will ensure that the curriculum meets the country's developmental goals and job market demands. The curriculum will be underpinned by Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies. This could contribute to social justice and a more equitable educational system in Nigeria. Having said this, we now turn to the second part of the chapter: factors affecting decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria.

6. 2. Factors affecting lecturers' attempt to decolonise EYE in Nigeria

The second part of this chapter deals with factors affecting lecturers' efforts to decolonise EYE in Nigeria. This research highlights some factors such as poor policy implementation, lack of research funding, parents' preference of English language, etcetera as some of the factors affecting the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria. Below are the themes decerned from research data.

poor policy implementation.

lack of funds for research.

parents' preference for the English language.

6.2.1 Findings: Poor Policy Implementation and Lack of Government Support

Poor policy implementation was highlighted by some participants as an obstacle to decolonisation effort. Starting from Obby, she notes, *'The implementation of decolonisation policies is hindered by a lack of political will and inadequate infrastructure'*. Chijioke adds, '*The problem is poor implementation by governments.'*

Lack of government support is said to be a major barrier against decolonisation. Ijeoma complains of the government's '*not giving education a priority'* and adds that *'education is*

turned into a private business venture in Nigeria'. Tunde says that the government '*is paying lip service to education,*' citing examples of policies promoting the inclusion of indigenous languages and culturally relevant materials that remain on paper and are not effectively translated into practice. Nnenna, Ifeoma and Ada explain that *'the problem is poor implementation by Nigeria's government. No money or facilities or government will, lack of training of personnel; the truth is that government budget for education in Nigeria is always on shortfall'*. Ada says, *If I see the Minister of Education, I will tell him to build capacity in the teaching personnel; they should increase the funding for education, put regular training for teachers in their budget'*. Ada argues that children have the right to education. She opines that lack of education *'creates the gap that results in creation of armed robbers, hoodlums etc'*. Nnenna accuses the government of insincerity: *'What they say is not what they do; that is why the Academic Staff of the University Union is always on strike'*. Bureaucracy, corruption and administrative bottlenecks are also highlighted as challenges confronting the decolonisation of education in Nigeria. Tunde alleges that *'those who design the policy do it secretly and this poses threat to decolonising during implementation'*.

Discussion

The majority (7 out of 13) of participants highlighted poor policy implementation as an obstacle to the decolonisation effort. There is tension between policy rhetoric and classroom practice, and this complicates decolonisation efforts within early years education. While there have been some policy shifts towards integrating local content and languages, some lecturers described these changes as superficial. This is due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and oversight making it difficult for meaningful reform to take root. While policy frameworks may exist, they often fail to materialise in practice due to lack of institutional support. Research findings have reported that, despite policy recognition, disparities persist, especially in rural and underserved areas (Salami, 2016; Sooter, 2013; Odukoya, et al, 2018; Owojecho, 2020 Mamman et al, 2025; Okeke and Chukwudebelu, 2024). On the other hand, Jacob et al (2021) identified inadequate funding, poor formulation of policies, lack of political will, etcetera as major setbacks in education. However, the government pushes money into higher education because it has a more direct and tangible outcome for international competition and status.

EYE should be given attention but unfortunately it is not. Early childhood education improves school readiness, reduces achievement gaps and enhances long-term outcomes in terms of employability, health and social integration (Adewusi et al. 2024). This means that addressing disparities in policy implementation and striving for cultural sensitivity should be a priority.

6.2. 1.1 Linking to Decolonisation

The Nigerian National Policy on Education emphasises the use of the mother tongue in EYE. This aligns with decolonial goals, by recognising indigenous languages and knowledge systems. This, unfortunately, is only in theory. The implementation is poor due to lack of teaching resources, insufficient teacher training, low political will and inconsistent monitoring. The ineffective implementation of policies perpetuates colonial legacies as teachers depend on Eurocentric curricula, policies treated as symbolic (Obioma, 2010; Ukeje, 2002).

Decolonisation demands the effective implementation of policies rather than mere policy rhetoric. This means provision of adequate human and material resources necessary for achieving the goals of the policy.

6.2.1.2. *Linking to Fraser, Ubuntu and Igwebuike*

Poor policy implementation, from Fraser's theory, amounts to a lack of recognition of the cultural, social and gendered dynamics that shape education in Nigeria. Fraser stresses valuing the specific needs of women educators, children and marginalised communities (Fraser, 2009). As long as the policies remain detached from local realities, they fail to address systemic inequalities. Recognition cannot be achieved without redistribution; otherwise, it risks becoming merely symbolic. Poor policy implementation due to lack of resources in many EYE centres leads to reproducing inequalities, as only those who can

afford private EYE can access quality EYE. Therefore, redistribution of resources (human and material) is crucial to allow marginalised groups to participate on fair terms (Fraser, 1995). Looking at the issue from the representation dimension, the absence of lecturers and grassroots educators in decision-making processes mirrors a failure in representation. According to Fraser (2009) marginalised groups must participate as peers in policy design and implementation. Otherwise, there will be a perpetuation of policy lacking in relevance and efficacy.

Analysing poor policy implementation, from Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies, reveals a breakdown of communal ethics and lack of coordination and shared vision among stakeholders (Mbiti, 1969; Kanu, 2017). Policies should emerge from collaborative efforts that have the collective good in the centre. This strengthens communal bonds and fosters unity among policymakers, educators and the wider community. This is essential to improve outcomes.

6.3. Lack of Funding for Research

The issue of underfunding was a key concern for lecturers, who emphasised the critical role that research plays in driving decolonisation efforts. Many participants lamented a lack of financial support for research initiatives that focus on local knowledge systems, early childhood pedagogy and the development of indigenous languages in education. Chijioke says that '*the government budget for education is always on the shortfall list'*. Most participants point out the economic side of the problem. Sule opines that, *'Unless we have a visionary leader, with foresight who knows that yes Nigeria needs to decolonise especially in the area of language policy and ready to fund it'.* Ada suggests training teachers to teach the local language.

'We don't have enough grants to conduct research; we need researchers to go to the field', Adamma and Ifeoma say. '*Lecturers fund their research,'* Obby concurs. She opines that cross-cultural research is not given adequate attention. Adamma adds that it means funding research. '*Research is capital-intensive,'* Adamma concludes. The central point is that decolonisation is not a one-man dream. It requires the financial support of the government.

Also, a curriculum that encourages decolonisation is said to be unavailable. According to Ijeoma, Ifeoma and Adamma, efforts to decolonise *'have been slowed down or made ineffective*'. They mentioned that their attempts to supplement the formal curriculum with local content are often *'unsupported institutionally and lack of the necessary resources for meaningful integration also hinders their efforts'*. Abiola alleges *that 'EYE Department has no child laboratory while the other departments have'.* This is evidence of unequal distribution of resources. This impacts on professional development and innovation and perpetuates inequality.

In fact, almost all the participants laid the blame on the government for its lack of interest in developing a curriculum that would enhance decolonisation. There is also no continuity in government programmes, making it impossible to achieve a useful programme initiated by the former government, as its focus is not always the same.

Discussion

Lack of funding was highlighted as one of the hindrances towards research in the universities. Apart from teaching, the major duties of universities include the creation and dissemination of knowledge, and this may not be achieved without adequate funding. Attention has been given to teaching, but not much effort is directed towards research in Nigerian Universities. This is why Donwa (2006) described the universities as teaching centres, because of their focus on knowledge dissemination, with little contribution to knowledge creation through research.

It has been found that funding for research is on shortfall, especially after the government takes over the universities (Donwa, 2006; Amadi and Nwogu, 2023; Enyiazu, 2022; Mamman et al, 2025; Okeke and Chukwudebelu, 2024). Halidu (2015) observes that the Nigerian Public Universities have in recent years been in chaos due to neglect from the Federal Government. The budgetary allocation to the sector is reported to be below the minimum standard of 26 percent as recommended by UNESCO (Okebukola, 2002). Oladipo (2024) gave a breakdown of government funding for education, which was about 7.1% of the national annual budget – far below the 26% recommended by UNESCO (2002) – with 11.5%

going to Universal Basic Education, 32.1% to TETFUND (Tertiary Education Trust Fund) and 56.24% going to other departments and agencies within education. TETFUND is dedicated to research in the universities. An allocation of funding of 32.1% against 11.5% to HE and Basic Education respectively shows the institutional hierarchies.

Politics also appears in the selection of research proposals. In 2023, a total of 4.7 billion Naria was distributed among 219 universities. By researching the University of Nigerian Nuskka (UNN) website, I found how the fund was distributed among the different disciples within the UNN. Out of the 21 research projects recommended for funding, not one was for EYE or decolonisation, with engineering taking 15 out of the 21 projects. According to Statista (2022), the Engineering Department, mostly dominated by males (a ratio of 5.6 to 1 as at 2019), receives more funding for research, followed by other sciences. This means that 15 out of 21 projects funded at the UNN belong to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), where underrepresentation of women has been reported (Oyewole, 2025; Akintoye, et al 2024). The resultant effect is gender imbalance in the leadership role in Nigeria universities as this role is assigned to those with accrued academic capital: mostly male academics (Olaogun, et al, 2015; Aina, 2013; Goodall, 2009).

This finding reflects broader challenges within the Nigerian Educational System, where research funding is influenced by government allocations, institutional practices and external collaborations. This is often undermined by a lack of political will and systemic inefficiencies (Obanya, 2007). Without adequate funding, lecturers find it difficult to produce and disseminate the knowledge necessary for driving changes in curriculum reforms and teaching practices. It limits opportunities for collaborative research with communities, which are essential for integrating indigenous knowledge into EYE. It was reported that only a few numbers of the academic staff in Nigerian Universities have received research grants (Halidu, 2015; Obanya, 2007). Most research works carried out by academic staff are self-funded. Limited research funding is a general phenomenon in Nigerian Universities; however, evidence from this research shows that STEM receives more funding for research than other departments.

6.3.1 *Linking to Fraser, Ubuntu and Igwebuike*

From Fraser's theory, a lack of research funding reflects economic inequalities whereby resources are disproportionately allocated to sectors considered more profitable or politically important (Fraser, 2009). Limited funding for EYE shows that issues affecting children and women are not prioritised (Cannella and Radhika, 2004). This indicates a lack of status, a reflection of misrecognition. This reflects a cultural historical context where women are embedded in a patriarchal and capitalist society and where care work is undervalued (Lynch and Crean, 2019). Fraser advocates for the reallocation of resources to marginalised sectors like EYE (Fraser, 2009). Justice demands equitable distribution of resources (Fraser, 2008). Thus, TET Funds should be distributed in fairness to include EYE research projects that could enable EYE lecturers to research and publish their works. This leads to an elevation of lecturers' agency and also their working conditions.

From an Ubuntu and Igwebuike perspective, a lack of funding could be seen as a disconnection from the communal ethos, where individual or elite interests and disciplinary hierarchies mitigate against collective societal growth. It undermines the shared responsibility of fostering a learning environment where every child, irrespective of their background, can thrive. Increased research funding for EYE would allow studies on integrating language policies and indigenous knowledge systems into EYE. This will foster a culturally responsive and equitable educational framework (Soto and Swadener, 2005). Ubuntu and Igwebuike call for justice, solidarity and shared responsibility, necessary in overcoming this challenge.

6.3.2. *Linking to Wider EYE Debate*

As this research is situated within the wider context of EYE, it is important to highlight some salient points that are not directly covered by the research questions as they fall outside the focus of this research. Existing literature shows that EYE is a sector with a poor salary and low professional status, to which and some factors have been highlighted as contributors

(Osgood, 2005; Moss, 2006; Findlay et al, 2009; and others). They include the female-gendered and undervalued nature of care professions, a dichotomy between care and education, lack of professional identity etcetera. Although it was reported in this research that EYE lecturers in Nigeria receive the same salary as other lecturers – meaning no disparity in pay – issues of publication and funding were however highlighted as impediments to progression, probably due to academic regulation. This is connected to status because less funding means less publication, and this slows down promotion, thus creating an imbalance in academic leadership. Gender was not a major concern in this research; however, gender imbalance still exists in Nigerian HE.

Persistence of gender imbalance in academic leadership in Nigerian universities has been reported by some scholars. Aina (2013) reports that women are hardly ever appointed to the position of Vice Chancellors. In fact, only 16 female Vice Chancellors out of 128 universities had been recorded (Ibid). This is despite the establishment of equity polices and Gender Centres (Igiebor 2020; 2022; Olaogun, et al, 2015). These policies have been categorised as rhetoric and policies with no enforcement (Igiebor, 2020). Igiebor opines that symbolic policies are harmful and like placebo giving only the pretence of treatment (Marshall, 1999, p.62). There were areas of silence/absence and a lack of sanctions for non-compliance to gender equity in sample universities. In some universities, gender centres are created without gender policy in place, leading to dismissal or resistance to gender change (Igiebor, 2022). Olaogun, et al (2015) define Nigeria as a patriarchal society where men dominate all spheres of women's lives.

Olaleye and Omotayo (2009) report that, within the university, EYE scholars are perceived as less rigorous in contrast to colleagues from other education departments. This perception places EYE in a subordinate position. Justice requires all social groups to be symbolically valorised. Ubuntu affirms one's dignity through communal acknowledgement (Letseka, 2012). EYE lecturers could therefore be invited to public lectures organised in the university, to talk about recent research breakthroughs. This adds respect to the field. The makeup of this research participants is almost balanced 7-6 (Female-male). This is contrary to some literature

that considered the sector as a female-gendered workforce (Ossai and Ramsaroop, 2022; Bonetti, 2019; Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

6.4. Parents' Preference for the English Language

Findings

Obby and Ijeoma affirm that '*every parent wants their child to speak English; everyone wants to imitate English people'*. Ijeoma adds, *'they see our language as inferior'*. Adamma concurs: '*It is a medium of communication. Our children are forced to speak English, because it is important for them to pass WAEC, the minimum standard credit level in English language,'* Adamma concludes. In terms of support for decolonisation, she adds, '*We do not get any, we do it by ourselves.'* Ijeoma says that some trainee teachers who tried to teach children the Nigerian National Anthem in Igbo language were confronted by parents. The parents expressed anger and threatened to take away their children if the school emphasised the local language. '*They don't want their children to learn the local language, the report claims'.* This report was confirmed by Chijioke.

Tunde argues that, at places where there is insistence on the use of the mother tongue at the rudimental stage as contained in the NNPE, it is being followed, and the country is trying to improve on it. He explains that there is time for the local language in the timetable and all the languages Igbo, Fulani, Hausa, Yoruba are being taught, and parents are not complaining because it is in the curriculum.

Well, Tunde is a lone voice in this regard. Again, teaching a language is not the same as the use of the language as a medium of instruction. Ada and Sule defend the use of English due

to *'the multilingual nature of the country; lack of qualified personnel and children's books in local language'*. Ada and Chijioke add, *'There are limited publications in local languages*. This, they say, complicates native language implementation. This is one of the influences of colonisation. Sule however, while justifying the use of English, contradicts his position by saying, '*Before the creation of what is known today as Nigeria, people were communicating without English'*. Abiola, on the other hand, argues that there are other countries, like South Africa, where many languages are used contemporaneously. Ifeoma joins Tunde by commenting on the little progress being made with the introduction of some local words into the curriculum. Some examples include words such as 'ugbo ala' for 'car', 'daalu' for 'thank you' and others.

Discussion

This finding reveals tension between decolonisation efforts and the parents' preference for English as the medium of instruction. Many parents resist the introduction of indigenous languages in the classroom, fearing it would hinder their child's academic success and prospects. This finding captures the complexity of cultural hegemony as English has a status that none of the indigenous languages has and this is an impediment to the development of Nigerian languages (Taiwo, 1976). English is perceived as a language of upward mobility, often associated with social and economic advancement. This contributes to maintaining a Eurocentric educational framework (Phillipson, 1992). The preference for English among parents stresses the tension between globalisation and local knowledge systems, leading to the exclusion of community and local educators' input, thus perpetuating Eurocentric biases.

This finding aligns with Ayling (2015), who reports that a large percentage of elite Nigerian parents prefers UK-based private boarding schools, believing such schools give their children the needed features of excellence through exposure to elite White British lifestyles and practices. The belief is that it will help them gain the right dispositions and comportment that are needed to achieve a unique elite identity in modern-day Nigeria. This phenomenon alienates the students from their roots, leading to erasure of culture, tradition and language (Thiong'o, 1986; Taiwo, 1976; Owojecho, 2020).

The policy of the adoption of an indigenous language as the medium of instruction in the lower primary school is, according to Adepoju (2019), at variance with the desires of some parents to make their children speak English as their first language. Adding insult to injury is the fact that English is compulsory for every child in Nigeria to gain admission into the university or get a job elsewhere. No local language is compulsory; nor is it serving such a purpose. Adepoju opines that uniformity of policy implementation will reduce conflicts as the schools of the rich/elites and non-fee-paying government schools are made to employ the same medium to instruct the pupils. This finding echoes similar studies that have found linguistic hegemony to be one of the most difficult aspects to decolonise (Canagarajah, 1999).

Talking about the multilinguistic nature of Nigeria as mentioned by some of the participants, Nigeria is not the only country that is multilinguistic. Scholars like Spolsky (2004) and Fishman (1991) have focused on how some countries are managing linguistic diversity. Abiola cited the case of South Africa. Phillipson (1992) critiqued the global dominance of English, while Pennycook (2010) emphasises the importance of local languages. However, a question that comes to mind is, if one publishes a book in the local language, how many people will read it? Thiong'o for example will first publish in his native language *Kikuyu* and then translate it into the English language.

6.4. 1. Linking to Decolonisation

Decolonisation theories argue that language is central to the struggle for cultural independence and identity (Phillipson, 1992; Thiong'o, 1986; 1993); thus, they advocate for the inclusion of indigenous languages as part of the struggle. Yet the global dominance of English creates a paradox where decolonisation is perceived as a threat to social mobility. The internalisation of colonial values that positions European languages such as English over indigenous languages reflects a colonial legacy that shapes status, opportunity and social mobility; thus, leading to a preference of English over Igbo language by many Igbo parents to be precise. This is what Phillipson (1992) refers to as linguistic imperialism; the colonial

processes worked to undermine indigenous languages that serve as the roots of education for indigenous communities and to promote the colonial language as the language of power, prestige and modernity.

Therefore, making children speak the colonial language was a powerful form of ontological and epistemological domination. According to Thiong'o (1986; 1993), choosing the colonialists' language over the indigenous one reflects erosion of indigenous knowledge systems. This wipes away cultural practices and identities and perpetuates social inequalities, particularly affecting women as custodians of cultural transmission. Feminist scholars like Mohanty (2003) advocate for linguistic justice to challenge these hierarchies, as many children grow up without learning and valuing their mother tongue. Without societal shifts in how language is valued, efforts to integrate indigenous languages in the Early Years classroom may continue to face resistance.

6.4.2. Linking to Fraser, Ubuntu and Igwebuike

Interpreting this finding from Fraser's theory, it mirrors Fraser's concern about recognition, where cultural justice is denied through the marginalisation of non-Western knowledge systems, languages and values. This amounts to misrecognition, which is status subordination of the indigenous languages. Children in Nigeria are forced to learn the English language in schools, leading to marginalisation of their mother tongue. Some children may not speak English fluently or comprehend fully the curriculum content. This creates barriers to learning and contributes to poor educational outcomes which reduce employability, thereby reinforcing long-term material inequality (Young, 1990; Fraser, 2000). This is harmful because it is linked to cultural, economic and political injustices (Fraser, 1995). In Nigeria, those who speak the English language fluently are valued by employers over native language speakers and they are employed in higher-paying jobs (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

The dominance of English and Western norms in Nigerian schools is a form of cultural erasure that stands in stark contrast to the inclusivity promoted by both Ubuntu and Igwebuike. The devaluation of indigenous languages reinforces the belief that these languages are not fit for education and social advancement. This, according to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong`o (1986), creates a stigma around local languages, thereby discouraging its use in formal settings. This is a form of linguicides (the killing of indigenous language) (Ndlovu-Gatseni 2018; Thiongo, 2009; Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 2014). In Nigeria, for example, the English language has a status which the indigenous languages do not have. Students must obtain a minimum standard credit in the English language to pass the West African Examination or gain admission to the university. This is a form of neocolonialism and coloniality of power, an indirect control of Nigerians' affairs through linguistic pressure. It is a cultural domination at the expense of indigenous traditions and knowledge systems (Nkrumah, 1965; Rodney, 1972; Smith, 2022). To truly engage with the decolonisation of EYE, it is crucial to recognise and integrate indigenous languages and worldviews into the curriculum, a shift that aligns with the cultural justice which Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies stand for.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the role of lecturers in curriculum formulation and factors that are affecting decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria. The themes that were decerned highlighted the complexities surrounding the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria. The findings revealed a multifaceted challenge influenced by colonial legacies, institutional barriers and societal expectations. Lecturers' voices are marginalised in curriculum development. Policy reforms targeted at decolonisation do not yield fruits due to poor implementation. Addressing these issues demands efforts from policymakers, educators and researchers.

Limited funding for research is a handicap towards the creation and dissemination of indigenous knowledges. Increased funding for education and institutional commitment to decolonial frameworks is therefore necessary. It was understood that EYE programmes attract fewer research grants than other faculties. Justice demands equitable distribution of resources (Fraser, 2008). Thus, TET Funds should be distributed in fairness to include EYE research

projects that could enable EYE lecturers to research and publish their works. The analysis of research findings indicates that, while the call to challenge Eurocentrism in the curriculum is increasing, the drive for social and economic mobility results in parents' preference for English.

Chapter 7: How lecturers engage in decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria

Introduction

This chapter focuses on how EYE lecturers engage in the decolonisation of EYE. The themes discerned are creation of awareness, celebration of cultural days and the cultural way of life, use of local resources, and the inclusion of local authors in the reading list, conferences, research and workshops. Some of these themes are closely related and will therefore be merged. Each theme (merged or otherwise) has its own discussion section, while, linking them to decolonisation, Fraser, Ubuntu and Igwebuike are presented together.

EYE in Nigeria is affected by colonial structures including foreign theories and the prioritisation of English. It is, therefore, important to find out how the lecturers are engaging in the project of decolonisation. Lecturers occupy an important role in shaping the ideologies and practices of future EYE teachers.

7. Researcher: How lecturers engage in decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria

Table 7

Creating Awareness (4)	Our local language should be upgraded to the national level. I preach that to my students. The teaching must be demonstrative in things that exist from an African context. The first thing that I teach is the awareness of the environment in which they found themselves

	Creating awareness through radio, seminars, conferences, workshop My university has White students studying Yoruba language
Cultural days and cultural way of life (4)	We make out days in which things are done in our cultural ways Some schools designated some days, for example every Friday, everybody puts on traditional dress as a way of promoting decolonisation and our culture
Use of local resources (4)	There are some of our courses where we engage students in practical production of locally- made resource such as portrait made with egwusi peeled and unpeeled egwusi some with raffia palms, tissue paper rolls, cardboard paper We place value on indigenous concepts such as in artistic works like broom, basket and pottery making, which were relegated to the margins by the colonial masters. We use 70% locally- made materials and 30% foreign ones
Inclusion of local authors in the reading list (4)	In EY we are trying to downplay Western ideas.

	There is a shift to indigenous authors that have knowledge of Nigeria society and how it operates
Conferences and research (3)	There are position papers and research is going on We have our conferences Efforts are not being documented

It was gathered that EYE lecturers engage in decolonising by creating awareness, emphasising indigenous ways of doing things, the inclusion of indigenous authored textbooks, and using local instructional materials etcetera.

7.1. Creating Awareness

According to Ifeoma, '*teaching must be demonstrative in things that exist from a given context and therefore African contexts*. Adamma, on the other hand, talks about the reorientation of parents. She says, '*Parents must be aware of the issue of originality, understanding their environment, what works somewhere may not work in another place; until parents are conscious of this, they cannot teach their children. The parents are the first people to be dealt with, their reorientation'.* She goes on: '*The first thing I teach is the awareness of the environment in which students find themselves'*. Adamma argues that one cannot achieve much by teaching in one environment and thinking of an environment that does not exist or that exists somewhere in America, or in the UK. Adamma adds, '*I always remind my students that they are in Nigeria and therefore should think in that context'*.

'*Our local language should be upgraded to a national level. I preach that to my students,'* says Abiola. Adamma, Ifeoma and Chijioke say they also create awareness through seminars, conferences and workshops. Adamma explains, '*We have our conferences,'* while Ifeoma affirms that her university has a process of inviting elders of the community into the

university to interact with students during conferences and workshops; '*it is part of the university process,'* she concludes. Chijioke adds that one of the ways in which his university is supporting decolonisation and creating awareness is by giving opportunities to white students to study the Yoruba language.

Discussion

Decolonisation is becoming a pressing issue in the academic circle as scholars and activists try to undo the legacies of colonialism and imperialism that have shaped and continue to shape our world (Mignolo, 2012). In this situation, the role of lecturers cannot be overemphasised. Decolonisation involves rethinking curricula, methodologies and power dynamics to challenge and dismantle colonial hierarchies and structures. To do this, we need to create awareness of colonial legacies about the historical inequalities, especially in educational content and the curriculum. By creating awareness of decolonisation, lecturers disrupt hierarchies of knowledge, validating indigenous and communal ways of knowing.

Creating awareness of the environment is, as mentioned by a participant, an important step in the decolonisation process, as it helps to understand and address colonial legacies, dismantling unfair systems that perpetuate social and economic inequalities (Smith, 2022; Freire, 2017). As explained by (Collazo and Hindrix, 2023), it is one of the stages of decolonising the curriculum. Lecturers in this research create awareness through informal curricula; interaction with students; teaching strategies and other ways. Quijano (2000) and Mignolo (2011) explained how coloniality has invaded the entire system through institutions such as knowledge institutions, governance and economy. Creating awareness of this reality is indispensable in education and society. It is decolonising.

Lecturers can shape the thinking of future educators. They can subvert the official curriculum and challenge colonial legacies. Some of the participants claimed to be doing this in their classrooms through the introduction of local context and local teaching materials. By creating

awareness, they help future educators recognise biases in the educational theories. Students are prepared to question and resist-imposed ideologies. They are empowered to build confidence that can enable them shape children's self-concept and identity.

As pointed out by hooks (2000), acknowledging coloniality alone does not initiate change, because the situation can remain the same. It is only when acknowledgment leads to transformation that change occurs. Therefore, creation of awareness will help lecturers ask themselves who are we and what power relations have we perpetuated in the classroom (Sathorar and Geduld, 2019).

7. 2. Cultural days and cultural ways of life

One of the ways in which we engage in decolonisation is that schools set some days apart and things are done in the cultural way of the local environment. In Igbo land, for instance, Ifeoma says, '*We map out some days when things are done in the cultural ways, like saying morning prayers in Igbo language; we are making headway to heed the recent curriculum, which emphasises the use of the local language of the immediate environment for children between 0 to 5 years*. Ijeoma reports that, '*Some schools earmarked every Friday, in which everyone puts on traditional dress as a way of promoting culture and decolonising'*. In one of the States' House of Assembly, every Thursday, according to Abiola, *'all deliberations are done in Yoruba, and every member of the house wears Yoruba outfit'*.

Ijeoma says that, because they train future EYE practitioners, '*there are some courses where we engage students in the practical production of local resources so that when they graduate, they can use them to teach, or they can sell them to schools.* This, she said, could be a source of income. Chijioke adds that a decolonised curriculum will help EYE graduates, *'just as Agric extension increased the employability of Agric graduates*.

Discussion

These activities, reflecting the cultural, linguistic and environmental context of children, are powerful ways of decolonising. They promote indigenous ways of doing things and create agency. Nurturing in children pride and a sense of belonging to the community is promoted through the culture, traditions and values of the community, (Adeyemi and Adeyinka, 2003; Odunayo et al, 2023). These are ways of resisting what Ngũgĩ (1986) described as a cultural bomb that alienates people from their heritage. The cultural bomb manifests itself in EYE through poor policy implementation that priorities the English language over the mother tongue, as recommended in the NNPE (Bamgbose, 2000; Taiwo, 1976; Owojecho, 2020).

The celebration of indigenous festivals such as New Yam Festival connects children with ancestral practices, traditions and communal values (Afolayan, 2018). This integrates indigenous systems into the formal Western education (Toyin Falola, 2022). It involves putting what is indigenous (languages, crafts, stories, festivals, ceremonies and knowledges) into education. If a wrong story is told for a long time, people will believe that wrong story even though it is wrong (Ibid). Adichie (2009) calls this the danger of single narrative. It is therefore important for Nigerian EYE lecturers to use the cultural day celebration to tell their stories themselves; to build a purposeful community. More needs to be done so that the cultural day celebration will not be a mere symbolic event. Okofu and Fakere (2022), citing the Council on Higher Education {CHE}, (2017), say that it is not enough to challenge what is taught, but how it is taught.

The cultural day celebrations in schools must aim to transform pedagogy through centring indigenous ways of knowing (Battiste, 2013). For the event to aid decolonisation, it requires its systematic integration into the curricula. Decolonisation of curriculum (Shahjahan et al, 2021), citing Dutta (2018), creates argument around what constitutes knowledge, whose knowledge counts, how knowledge is produced, etcetera. It entails transforming the university as an institution so that it is affected by its local context, identity and values, thus shifting from the current Eurocentric structure (CHE, 2017). The NNPE acknowledges the importance of indigenous knowledge but prioritises Western frameworks (NNPE, 2013).

7.3. Inclusion of Indigenous textbooks and the use of local instructional materials

The inclusion of indigenous textbooks and local instructional materials are merged as both serve a similar purpose: knowledge, identity and power in education. Ijeoma adds, *'We are trying to downplay Western ideas, and there has been a shift towards indigenous authors that have knowledge of Nigerian society and how it operates'*. Chijioke affirms, *'We try to include Nigerian authors and some of them have written in local languages*. Ada, on the other hand, states that the instructional textbooks are divided between foreign and indigenous authors. Adamma adds that they have textbooks authored by Nigerians, and by lecturers, and '*we encourage our students to make use of these indigenous authors'.* Some participants encourage their students to use the locally made resources in their teaching. Ijeoma says, *'I will send you some of the pictures, you will see a portrait made with egwusi – peeled and unpeeled, some with raffia palms, tissue paper rolls, with cardboard paper, etc.*' She explains that Nigeria is called a 'developing country'; teachers in rural areas with less economic power could convert what they have in the environment to produce learning materials that children can use. Necessity becomes the mother of invention. This is aiding decolonisation.

Ijeoma accused the curriculum of inhibiting decolonisation because it does not reflect traditions, cultures, values and preferences. She says that '*a lot of local teaching resources, like calabashes, woods, clay, leaves, are used in the pre-primary level, but they are absent at the university level because the curriculum does not include them'*. The curriculum, she says, should make their use compulsory at the university. The implication, she explains, is that their absence in the university creates a gap in knowledge about the indigenous ways of doing things and inhibits decolonisation. *'The graduates who will teach at the pre-primary and primary levels are alienated from these resources and may not integrate them in their teaching,*' she concludes. Tunde adds, '*The resources you use must take cognisance of your environment and the needs of your learners'.* We use local materials, he concludes.

Adamma says, '*We have instructional materials within our locality and encourage students to use local materials too'*. There are some highbrow schools for rich children, and they use only imported materials, even textbooks; but '*our students teach in schools for less privileged children, so they use improvised materials most times'*. Adamma opines this is socioeconomic inequality. *'In the highbrow areas the teaching materials are 'imported', while in other areas the instructional materials are 'improvised','* she laments. Abiola, on the other hand, adds:

'we have prepared materials that are indigenous, though we still have foreign ones in the ratio of 70% to 30%'. 'We're practically decolonising in this way,' Abiola concludes.

Discussion

There seems to be diverse opinion amongst the participants on the inclusion of indigenous authors and texts. The importance of indigenous textbooks in teaching EYE future teachers cannot be overemphasised. One reason is that it challenges the dominance of Eurocentric materials, thereby providing learners with not just a single narrative that favours the Global North, but an alternative view (Smith, 2022). Lack of indigenous textbooks also leads to perpetuating the colonial legacy and other consequences decolonisation aims to reduce. The use of local instructional materials is a concrete and practical way of decolonising. Resourcing and co-creating instructional materials with local communities is a tangible step towards a redistribution of economic power. Some lecturers use local materials such as egwusi – peeled and unpeeled – and raffia palms to produce pictures and portraits. This is an excellent way of validating indigenous ways of knowing that Western curricula ignore (De Souse Santos, 2014). The use of local resources promotes learning within the social and ecological realities of students' lives (Tuck and Yang, 2012). This act contributes towards breaking dependence on Eurocentric content and restores epistemic sovereignty (Mignolo, 2007).

The use of familiar objects, symbols and contexts makes abstract concepts easier for children to understand (Farrant, 1980). Adu et al (2022) and Ajaps and Obiagu (2021) argue for a radical paradigm shift in language teaching methodology that supports the revalorisation of the indigenous languages as the standard medium of instruction in early childhood education in Nigeria. This, according to the authors, will aid the decolonisation of EYE.

7.4. Conferences, seminar and workshops

Some participants say they decolonise through conferences, seminars and workshops. Ifeoma states that her university '*invites elders of the community into the university to interact with*

students'. Adamma adds that her university organises conferences but laments that their efforts are not being documented. Adamma says, '*Let us start documenting all the efforts we are making they are not being documented'*. She asks a rhetorical question: *'Are the ones we are doing being documented?'* She goes on: *'If there's anything I want, that I'm looking for, it is research, it is grant'*. Grants to allow me document even the indigenous ways of doing things. '*We are not documenting them,'* she decries. Abiola concurs: *'Yes, we don't have much write-up on the decolonisation of EYE because it is a relatively new area of study, but the advocacy will start. Your research is a good eye opener'*. However, Abiola continues, *'Through the Association of EYE Professionals we are creating awareness'*. Lola suggests that lecturers should engage in decolonisation through seminars, workshops, conferences and publication of articles.

Discussion

The importance of these gatherings in the project of decolonisation cannot be overemphasised. Conferences, seminars and workshops with decolonisation as agenda are sites of epistemic delinking (Mignolo, 2007). These gatherings in decolonisation cease to be a metaphor (Tuck and Yang, 2012). They become academic gatherings and forums of praxis where power over knowledge is contested, redistributed and reimagined. Therefore, agendas set for these intellectual activities must not reproduce existing frameworks but function as spaces for delinking from Eurocentric canons by positioning indigenous, Global- South voices. An example of such agenda is the African Agenda 2063, in which the African States agreed to make education available, accessible and adaptable at all levels (Onuora-Oguno et al (eds), 2018).

Some universities are decolonising through workshops. Elders of the community are invited into the university to interact with students. Workshops serve the purpose of knowledge creation (Smith, 2022). This gives epistemic authority to community members as they become co-creators of knowledge, rather than subjects of knowledge creation. Smith (2022) argues that decolonising research, for instance, requires participatory workshops in which

indigenous communities co-design methods and decide what counts as evidence, research questions and so on. An example is a workshop of a 14-country network organised in 2022 by Nigerian researchers in dialogue with communities to integrate local values of peace into the curricula as part of Decolonising Peace Education in Africa.

Similar was a seminar series titled ‘Critical Decolonialities’ organised in February 2025 by Professor Sanya Osha and Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), Berlin, to explore the African roots of decolonial philosophy, where scholars who are normally excluded co-construct theories that resist epistemicide (Santos, 2014). The participants engaged in dialogue on Wiredu, Hountondji and Yai. African thinkers were in the centre, thus exemplifying representation and recognition of indigenous epistemologies within an institutional space. These are some examples that EYE lecturers can adapt. The efforts of EYE lecturers are not being documented due to lack of funding. The newness of the decolonisation project in Nigeria was also confessed. This research is described as an eye opener.

7.5. Linking to Decolonisation and Fraser

Decolonisation involves acknowledging and respecting the knowledges, traditions and voices of marginalised and colonised peoples. This links to Fraser's theory of justice (1997; 2005; 2009). Fraser argues that justice requires not only distributive equality, but also the recognition of diverse identities, experiences and perspectives and challenging Eurocentric knowledge systems while promoting indigenous epistemologies (Fraser, 1995, 2008). Lecturers, by creating awareness, mean understanding of the existence of injustice, both material (redistribution) and symbolic (recognition), which is essential for effective social justice interventions. The awareness of material inequalities will drive policy changes and resource allocation, and, without recognition, redistribution may fail to address the culturally specific needs of some children. In this way, lecturers are contributing to dismantling the colonial legacies and arousing critical consciousness about the historical and ongoing impacts of colonisation in the next generation of EYE educators. By teaching students about the

histories, languages and worldviews of different cultural and indigenous communities, lecturers contribute to the recognition of these groups. They could challenge the colonial version of history by incorporating alternative historical narratives. Lecturers could encourage the active participation of students, families and communities, fostering an environment where diverse voices are heard and valued. This will give voice to marginalised voices in the educational process. This act fosters a sense of agency and empowerment that is important to Fraser's theory of justice.

Linking a cultural day celebration to Fraser's theory, the event ceases to be a symbolic event but becomes decolonial practice. It aligns with the principle of recognition, which is crucial in addressing injustices rooted in devaluation of indigenous cultures (Fraser, 1995, 2005). The importance of traditions such as the Igbo Masquerade and Ozo Chieftaincy could be affirmed, thus challenging the marginalisation of such cultural heritage. The cultural celebration guarantees redistribution of epistemic resources and ensures that children learn in their mother tongue instead of being forced to learn in the coloniser's language (Bamgbose, 2000). It entails the involvement of community elders and leaders in school celebration. It fosters the participatory dimension of Fraser's theory and gives voice to those who are traditionally excluded from contributing towards shaping education (Battiste, 2013).

The use of indigenous authors is directly linked to the recognition dimension of Fraser's theory. One of the aims of decolonisation theories is to challenge and dismantle the dominance of Eurocentric epistemologies. This involves advocating, validating, including and centring indigenous knowledge systems and voices. Thus, the inclusion of indigenous authors as teaching resources is a practical and symbolic act in reclaiming an epistemic agency and disrupting colonial hierarchies of knowledge (Smith, 2022). It addresses the misrecognition and marginalisation of local knowledges. Fraser opines that injustice arises when cultural domination renders certain groups invisible or inferior (Fraser, 2000). The inclusion of indigenous authors allows for equitable distribution of intellectual authority and opportunities which are excluded through the domination of Westen authors and perspectives (Fraser, 2005).

Parity of participation, according to Fraser, cannot be achieved without giving voice to indigenous authors in the education of their citizens. Therefore, the inclusion of indigenous authors ensures that local communities are not merely a subject of study, but active agents of knowledge production (Fraser, 2008). This links directly to the broader aims of the decolonisation theories that push for equitable, inclusive and contextually relevant education. Sourcing and producing local instructional materials redirect economic and cultural capital that has been marginalised by centralised Western-produced curricula into the communities.

Bourdieu (1970) developed the concept of cultural capital to explain how non-financial assets such as education, tastes and manners can function like economic capital to create social inequality. This is done by giving advantage to those with familiarity with dominant 'high culture' in education and society. Cultural recognition is remedied when learners see their local realities in teaching materials. This validates indigenous epistemologies and affirms students' identities (Fraser, 2008).

7.6 Linking to Ubuntu and Igwebuike

Cultural Day celebrations provide space for the intersection of decolonial, feminist and indigenous pedagogies and consolidate Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies. Through a display of local music, dress, language, et cetera, identities and knowledge systems that have been marginalised are affirmed. The celebration gives visibility to the role of women in the transmission of crafts, songs and food preparation and recognises women's epistemic contribution. This challenges patriarchal and colonial narratives that have undervalued women's knowledge in the educational space (Nnaemeka, 2004; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). The celebration becomes a pedagogical act of resistance and reclamation grounded in feminist ethics.

In this celebration, children, families, teachers and community leaders come together to celebrate the interconnectedness and shared humanity which Ubuntu emphasises (Letseka, 2012; Mbigi, 1997). This act reinforces the idea that learning is a collective journey, rather

than an individual endeavour. From Igwebuike, Cultural Day celebrations showcase the unity in diversity that characterises Nigeria (Asouzo, 2007). In the spirit of Igwebuike: 'strength lies in unity' different ethnic and linguistic groups participate collaboratively (Kanu, 2017, p.55-61; Le Grange, 2012). Cultural Day celebrations affirm the indigenous knowledge systems and cultural identities of learners. The inclusion of indigenous authors as teaching and learning materials aligns with Ubuntu values, which emphasise community, interdependence and shared humanity. It affirms community-based knowledge as legitimate and vital and promotes interconnectedness between learners and their sociocultural realities. This fosters respect, empathy and communal responsibility (Letseka, 2012).

Igwebuike's perspective on the inclusion of indigenous authors in education mirrors the situating knowledge within African communal worldviews and valuing the collective intellectual heritage of communities. It aids the reclaiming of collective epistemology and challenges Western individual epistemology (Kanu, 2017). In Igwebuike worldview, knowledge is not individualistic. It is produced and transmitted through the communities. Indigenous authors carry the memory, voice and worldview of their people, thereby resisting the fragmentation and isolation imposed by Western individualism in education (Kanu, 2016; 2017). The inclusion of indigenous authors is part of reintegrative justice, where silenced voices are restored to the educational canon (Kanu, 2016, p.5). The use of local educational materials means drawing on communal wisdom, entailing stories, proverbs and ecological know-how. This aligns with Ubuntu's affirmation that the individual's flourishing is bound with the wellbeing of the group (Letseka, 2012). It involves integrating multiple community perspectives, linking to Igwebuike's idea that truth is discovered through dialogue among diverse voices (Kanu, 2017).

Conferences, workshops and seminars are active acts of decolonisation when they are intentionally structured. Speaking slots should be allocated, as well as funding and publication opportunities, to indigenous and Global-South scholars. Centring African philosophical frameworks and valuing local languages and traditions in such sessions affirm the spirit of Ubuntu. Igwebuike's relational complementarity is assured by giving opportunity

to community elders, educators and grassroot activists to play a role in designing and leadership during such events.

Conclusion

In this chapter, lecturers explained how they engage in decolonisation as individuals, institutions and the wider society. By engaging in decolonisation in their teaching and other practices, they are contributing to the broader project of decolonisation. This means not only challenging colonial legacies and structures within the university but also in the society.

Chapter 8: CONCLUSION

Introduction

'*Yes, we don't have much write-up in decolonisation of EYE because it is relatively a new area of study, but the advocacy will start. Your research is a good eye opener'*

(Abiola, Male, Senior Lecturer, at a University in Western Nigeria)

This chapter brings together the key insights from this thesis, which explores the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria through the lens of decolonial theories and feminist methodology. The research sought to understand how Early Years lecturers engage with decolonial practices in a post-colonial Nigerian context. The use of in-depth qualitative inquiry revealed the enduring legacies of colonialism in curriculum design, language of instruction, policy implementation, theories and teaching models etcetera. The chapter revisits the research aims and summarises the major findings, reflects on the methodological and theoretical contributions including a blueprint for insurgent curriculum, and offers recommendations for policy, practice and future research.

8.1 Research Aims and Purpose of research

This thesis aimed to contribute to global and national (Nigeria) debates on decolonisation of education particularly Nigerian Early Years Education (EYE). The research explored how EYE lecturers in Nigeria engage with the decolonisation of EYE. This included their concept of decolonisation, perception of EYE Curriculum, their role in Curriculum development, factors affecting decolonisation in Nigeria and their engagement in the decolonisation project. To achieve these objectives, the research was informed by decolonial theories such as Dussel, (1985, 2007); Mingolo, (2000), (2011); Quijano, (2000); Walsh, (2010); Mbembe, (2001); Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2013), (2018); Fraser's theory of social justice (2004, 2008); feminist research methodology. The decolonial theories offered a critique of colonial legacies in knowledge, power, identities and institutions, while Fraser's theory of justice focused on addressing injustice in EYE through the three lenses of the theory (redistribution, recognition and representation).

The feminist research methodology emphasised the importance of marginalised voices, particularly those of educators who may not have been given a platform in more traditional research paradigms. By focusing on the experiences and insights of Early Years lecturers, many of whom are women, this research aligned with feminist goals of inclusion, equity and the validation of lived experiences (Smith, 2022; Bhambra, 2014). It contributed to the broader feminist aim of promoting social justice in education (Fraser, 2008; Apple, 2013; Dei, 2012; UNESCO, 2020).

Feminists research methodology was used because of its democratic and liberating approach to knowledge production (Koch & Kralik 2006). This allowed for the use of semi-structured interviews guided by the Gorden (1987) framework. The use of open-ended questions permitted the participants to speak freely, thereby giving the researcher the possibility of uncovering new and important insights. The semi-structured and open-ended questioning, thus not consistent with a rigid structure of the questions posed to the interviewees, led to some variations in the answers provided, thereby increasing the richness of data obtained. This also increased the validity and authenticity of the research findings. I can therefore say that this research had a latent secondary purpose, which is to highlight the importance of data-driven research that facilitated a deeper understanding of lecturers' view about decolonisation.

The integration of decolonial and Fraser frameworks allowed for a nuanced exploration of the intersectional challenges that EYE lecturers face. By centring the experiences of Early Years lecturers, the research addressed the barriers they encounter in their efforts to decolonise curricula and practices (hooks, (1994; Mohanty, 2003). It highlighted how coloniality of power has shaped and is still shaping education in Nigeria (Quijano, 2000; Bamgbose, 2000; Rodney, 1972; Tikly, 2004), thus contributing to the wider decolonisation project of freeing education from the shackles of Eurocentrism.

8.2 Significance of this research

I argued that this research has broader significance both within Nigeria and globally. In the light of this context, this research is significant on different levels. It addressed an academic gap, contributed new knowledge and provided a foundation for future research. Again, a few studies have employed feminist research methodology to examine the intersection of gender, power and decolonial practices within the context of EYE in Nigeria.

This research, building on existing literature – Mbigi, (1997); Mangena, (2020); Kanu (2019) – highlighted how African philosophies such as Ubuntu and Igwebuike could serve as foundational principles for a decolonised approach to early years education. Ubuntu and Igwebuike, in this research, underpinned the formulation of an EYE curriculum. The curriculum emphasises above all solidarity, cooperation, communalism, interdependence etcetera, key principles of Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies which are ingrained in Nigerian society. The application of these philosophies seeks to promote a sense of community, collaboration and mutual support among learners, educators and the wider society (Ramose, 2002; Kanu, 2017, p. 55-61). These values contrast the individualistic and competitive nature of Western educational models 'cogito ergo sum', I think therefore I am (Descartes 1641/1996). The decolonial curriculum emphasises group learning, the use of mother tongue, integration of indigenous knowledge systems and so on. The importance of integrating indigenous knowledge systems and languages into EYE cannot be overstressed.

8.3 Key Findings

The findings are responses to the research questions, which were formulated in a bid to explore the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria. The main research question was: how do Nigerian EYE lecturers perceive the EYE curriculum and how do they engage with the decolonisation project? To answer the above question, the questions below were asked:

How do the lecturers conceptualise decolonisation/decolonisation of education?

How do the lecturers perceive the EYE curriculum (content and practice), as Eurocentric or Indigenous, and why?

What is the role of EY lecturers in curriculum development?

What factors affect lecturers' attempts to decolonise EYE in Nigeria?

How do the EYE lecturers seek to engage in decolonising both the content and the practice of EY curriculum and why?

8.3.1 Lecturers' understanding of decolonisation

Participants' concept of decolonisation varies from coming up with an idea that favours everyone, embedding African ways of living and allowing children to see and know them, blending the traditional education with the Western education. Other views include setting someone who has been colonised free; cutting off or getting freedom from one who was controlling your life; coming out of the domination of foreign rule, psychologically, culturally, economically and institutionally; getting the hook of white men off one's neck; not being subservient to them. Decolonisation was also constructed poetically: '*I can feel it. I can't see it. I can't feel it'; 'We are free but not free'*. Some of these definitions gave deep and rich value to the research data and some constructions are peculiar to this research, marking the uniqueness of the research findings.

When it comes to education, almost all participants agree that the Nigerian education system is impacted by colonial theories and frameworks; and must be freed from colonial legacies. This aligns with the findings of Shahjahan et al (2022). This research suggested the integration of educational theories and frameworks that are grounded in African philosophies and knowledge systems.

8.3.2 Eurocentric curricula

The next question was the evaluation of the curriculum from the lecturers' perspectives. A few participants saw the curriculum as a mixture – Euro/indigenous – and desired a more

context-related curriculum. The majority of the lecturers described the curriculum as Eurocentric, perpetuating colonial legacies while excluding indigenous knowledges (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). The curriculum, they say, does not reflect the actual realties of Nigerian children. From Fraser's theory, prioritising a Eurocentric curriculum over an indigenous curriculum amounts to misrecognition, which is referred to as a phenomenon of status subordination (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p. 30). Misrecognition is a form of 'institutionalised cultural value patterns that have discriminatory effects on equal standing of social actors' (McNay, 2008, p. 284). As found in this research, a Eurocentric curriculum is prioritised over an indigenous curriculum with local contents. The indigenous knowledges and languages are regarded as inferior to Western scientific knowledge.

This research advocates for an education system that reflects and incorporates Nigeria's diverse cultural identities and linguistic and historical realities. This system is inspired by Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophises, where indigenous knowledges and local languages are celebrated and prioritised, not marginalised, fostering a sense of belonging and cultural pride in children. The system emphasises the interconnectedness of community and identity, urging for a return to education that reflects and sustains the values, languages and practices of local communities, and care and love for one another (Kanu, 2019).

8.3.3 Lecturers are not carried along in the development of curriculum

Another set of questions was focused on the role of the lecturers in curriculum development and factors that affect the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria. Almost all the 13 lecturers affirmed that the lecturers are not involved in the development of the curriculum. The government picks people other than lecturers to draft the curriculum and distribute it to education settings. Analysing this exclusion through Fraser' theory, the lecturers suffered status subordination (Fraser, and Honneth, 2003). They were denied equal access to resources and opportunities necessary for representation, leaving some of their needs, like capacity building, unmet, thereby subverting political equality (Fraser, 1997). They were also not represented in a key decision-making process that directly affects their work and their

students' learning experiences (Fraser, 2005). Fraser argues that justice demands not only recognition and representation, but also the redistribution of resources to ensure that all groups have the resources necessary to participate in the decision-making process (Fraser, 1997).

The new education system, as proposed in this research, will be underpinned by Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies. This could grant social justice and a more equitable and just educational system that will incorporate lecturers in the development of the curriculum.

8.3.4 Dominance of the English Language

The first two factors affecting decolonisation were Eurocentric bias and parents' preference for English as the medium of instruction. The dominance of the English language in Nigeria's education system was pointed out by the participants as a hindrance to decolonisation. This links to the prioritisation of English over indigenous languages, thus perpetuating linguistic and cultural marginalisation (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Dei, 2014). This threatens the survival of these languages and the cultural identities they carry. Bamgbose (1991) and Adepoju, (2019) reported that English is considered necessary for social mobility and globalisation. According to Fraser, this is harmful because it is deeply linked to material inequality, deprivation, and cultural, economic and political injustices (Fraser, 1995). In Nigeria, those who speak English language fluently are valued by employers over native language speakers and they are employed in higher-paying jobs (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

This research is a call to decolonise EYE. The importance of recognising and integrating indigenous languages and worldviews into the curriculum cannot be overemphasised. This calls for a shift in philosophical paradigm. The application of Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies in this research highlighted the importance of promoting mother-tongue education in early years settings, stressing the cognitive, social and cultural benefits of children learning in their native languages (UNESCO, 2003; Cummins, 2000; Kosonen, 2005).

8.3.5 Poor Policy Implementation

Poor policy implementation was identified by some participants as one of the factors affecting decolonisation in Nigeria's EYE system. This is in line with the findings of Salami (2016); Sooter, (2013), which reported disparities between policies and policy implementation, leading to lack of change in the education system. This tension was attributed to lack of resources, political will and bureaucratic inefficiencies.

Fraser's theory conceives this finding as lack of recognition of the cultural, social and gendered dynamics that shape education in Nigeria. Lecturers were not involved in the decision-making process; thus, the policies are detached from local realities; they fail to address systemic inequalities. Marginalised groups, according to Fraser (2009), must have equitable participation in policy design and implementation and the specific needs of women educators, children and marginalised communities must be valued. This is in line with the feminist perspective's call for accountability in policy implementation. This is to ensure that gender-sensitive approaches are used to address how systemic barriers disadvantage women in education administration and pedagogy (Mama, 1995).

From Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies, the finding reveals a breakdown of communal ethics and lack of coordination and shared vision among stakeholders (Mbiti, 1990). Policies should emerge from collaborative efforts that have the collective good at the centre. This strengthens communal bonds, improves outcomes and fosters unity among policymakers, educators and the wider community.

8.3.6 Lack of funding for research

Lack of funding was highlighted by almost all the participants as a hindrance towards the decolonisation of EYE. Limited funding for educational research in the early years reflects a broader patriarchal and capitalist bias that undervalues care work, often feminised and

dismissed as less significant (Connell, 2009; Smith, 2022). This situation reflects economic inequalities whereby resources are disproportionately allocated to sectors considered more profitable or politically important (Fraser, 2009). Ubuntu and Igwebuike view this as a disconnection from the communal ethos, where individual or elite interest is prioritised over collective societal growth.

8.3.7 How the lecturers are engaging in decolonisation

This question aims towards the practical aspect of decolonisation. Without active decolonising activities, decolonisation becomes a slogan, a fanciful phrase without relevance. Decolonisation is not a metaphor (Tuck and Yang, 2012). For this reason, this research went beyond theoretical discussions on decolonisation to collect data on how lecturers actively engage in the decolonisation of EYE in Nigeria. The data consists of efforts and obstacles in the lecturers' everyday practices. Despite constraints, the lecturers expressed commitment to culturally sustaining practices, by incorporating local teaching materials in their classrooms. This is decolonial pedagogy and could lead to an insurgent curriculum (Walsh, 2010).

Lecturers engage in different little acts that foster a sense of agency and empowerment. This is central to Fraser's idea of justice. The inclusion of indigenous authors, for example, allows for equitable distribution of intellectual authority and opportunities (Fraser, 2005). These were excluded through the domination of Westen authors and perspectives. Cultural Day celebrations consolidate Ubuntu and Igwebuike philosophies. In these celebrations, children, families, teachers and community leaders come together to celebrate interconnectedness and shared humanity, which Ubuntu and Igwebuike emphasis (Letseka, 2012; Mbigi, 1997; Kanu, 2015; 2019).

8. 4 Research Contributions

This research makes an original contribution to knowledge at the intersection of Early Years Education, decolonisation studies, African feminist methodology, and social justice. It

advances scholarship in five keyways: empirically, by foregrounding Nigerian EYE lecturers as knowledge producers; theoretically, synthesising African decolonial thought with Fraser's social justice theory; conceptually, by reframing decolonisation beyond metaphor geographically, by situating decolonial analysis within Nigerian's specific postcolonial formation; and methodologically, by operationalising black African feminist research praxis in transnational educational research.

Beginning with contribution to knowledge, this research drew on African decolonial thinkers such as Fanon (1961; Mbembe, (2001); Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2013); Ngugi, (1986) and others to make an original contribution to knowledge. While these scholars theorise coloniality, postcolony, and epistemic dependency at macro-political and philosophical levels, limited empirical work has explored how these dynamics are experienced within Early Years education in West Africa. This thesis extends these scholarly works by translating macro-theoretical concepts into meso-level institutional analysis by showing for example how coloniality operates within curriculum design, policy and lecturer agency; thus, filling an academic gap in the decolonisation debate. The research equally provides empirical evidence of how lecturers negotiate, resist or reproduce colonial epistemic hierarchies.

The research contributes empirically by centring Nigerian Early Years Lecturers' experiences in decolonial research. The absence of the lecturers' voices in decolonisation debates is a significant gap in existing literature. Most scholarly works on decolonisation mainly focus on higher education curriculum, policy, etcetera, while leaving the lecturers' perspectives under-researched (Kamanzi, 2015; Bhambra et al, 2018; Salami and Okeke 2017; Adeogun, 2020; Falola, 2021; Okofu and Fakere, 2022; Fomunyam, 2020; Adekunle and Meroyi, 2023; Ojo et al, 2023; Agbedo et al, 2012; and others). By situating the Nigerian EYE lecturers experiences within a broader global framework of decolonisation, the data from this research makes an original empirical contribution and shows that lecturers are not passive implementers of Eurocentric curriculum but that they exercise agency within the structural constraints and steer through parental demand for English alongside cultural preservation. Positioning lecturers as epistemic actors rather than policy subjects, the research challenges deficit narratives about African educational institutions (Adichie, 2009; Mudimbe, 1988; Said, 1978). This enriches our knowledge on decolonising EYE in particular and education in general at both the national and the international level. EYE lecturers' perspectives impact higher education directly as they deal with EYE teacher programmes and indirectly also the

foundational stage of education, which is crucial for shaping children's cultural identities. This means that the research has expanded the scope of decolonial studies by including the foundation stage of education which is almost marginalised in decolonial debates. The participants, for example, emphasised the importance of using the mother-tongue as the language of instruction from the earliest years of education.

This research contributes to and extends the growing literature on decolonising EYE internationally, by situating the West African perspective into this debate. The research sits among these groundbreaking works such as Nxumalo and Cedillo (2017); Nxumalo, (2017); Miller, (2017), Abawi, (2022); Abebe et al, (2022), and others – most of which works challenge Eurocentric frameworks that underpin EYE policies and practices – while exploring how indigenous philosophies can inform context relevance early childhood education. This literature has largely emerged from settler-colonial contexts such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etcetera. The studies emphasise land, indigenous sovereignty, and settler-colonial relations. While their contributions are invaluable, the studies do not directly map onto the Nigerian postcolonial context as shaped by British indirect rule and federal governance structures (Suberu, 2000). This research extends this literature, by shifting the geographical lens to West Africa, and shows that, in a non-settler postcolonial context, decolonisation manifests itself less through land restitution debates and more through linguistic hierarchy (English dominance), epistemic dependency (Western developmental psychology), policy borrowing from former colonial metropoles, and chronic underfunding and gendered labour devaluation (Fabunmi, 2005; Bamgbose, 2000; 1991; Smith, 2022; Phillipson, 1992). By implication, this research complicates the tendency to universalise settler-colonial models of decolonisation within EYE scholarship and demonstrates that decolonisation in Nigerian EYE must be structured through coloniality rather than ongoing settler occupation. By bringing Nigerian EYE, in other words a West African dimension into the global debates, it expands the comparative base of decolonial scholarship. It ensures that African voices and experiences are documented, rather than being subsumed under the Global North framework. Post-colonial countries can, through sustained research efforts, begin to dismantle the colonial structures that continue to shape the education system and move towards a just, equitable and decolonised future for education in general and EYE in particular.

The research challenges English language hegemony and contributes to the ongoing debates on language policy in education (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Dei, 2014). It highlights the importance of linguistic diversity and advocates for the inclusion of mother-tongue instruction in early childhood education and adds to the global body of knowledge on the importance of mother-tongue education. This is in line with language preservation and the broader goal of protecting linguistic diversity (Bamgbose, 2011; UNESCO, 2021; NNPE, 2013). The research also contributes to the argument that preserving indigenous languages is not only a matter of cultural preservation, but that language shapes children's world view thus critical for maintaining cultural heritage and identity. The research equally highlights the tension between mother-tongue policy and policy implementation, as well as pressure against teaching in the mother-tongue from parents.

Another area of contribution is towards the growing body of work on reclaiming and integrating local knowledge systems into EYE education. The research brings the concepts of Ubuntu and Igwebuike into the EYE decolonising debate. The principles of these philosophies could serve as underlying ones to reshape education and inform a localised, culturally relevant curriculum that might challenge the dominant Eurocentric curriculum (Mbigi,1997; Mangena, 2020; Kanu, 2019). This may help to break the systemic perpetuation of colonial ideologies in education. It could encourage a shift towards an education model that honours a diverse culture and indigenous knowledge systems thereby creating a more relevant and inclusive education system.

The research addresses academic, practical and social concerns, offering insights that have far-reaching implications for education reform, cultural preservation and social justice (Spivak, 1998). By employing a feminist research methodology and integrating indigenous philosophies, the research provides a blueprint for policymakers, educators and future researchers who seek to transform education system. The blueprint could serve other post-colonial nations grappling with similar colonial legacies in their education systems. The research encourages future work and dialogue and serves as a catalyst by highlighting areas that require further scholarly attention. It is by building a stronger body of scholarship on decolonising EYE that educators and policymakers will be empowered to push for reforms that prioritise equity, cultural recognition and inclusivity.

Decolonising education is more than an academic exercise: it is a step toward achieving social justice. This research contributes to national efforts to create a just and equitable

society by highlighting the inequities, cultural alienation and marginalisation that stem from colonial legacies in education. It argues that all children, regardless of their background, should have access to quality education that respects their cultural identities and prepares them to be active citizens.

8.5. The Blueprint for an Insurgent curriculum for EYE in Nigeria and beyond

The list of contributions of this research would not be complete without discussing the blueprint for an insurgent curriculum for EYE in Nigeria and beyond. Having seen the problems besieging Nigerian education in general and EYE in particular, the research advocates for a curriculum that incorporates indigenous knowledge systems. These systems have relevance and potential to enrich children's learning experiences (Battiste (2002); Emeagwali & Dei (2014)). The insurgent curriculum questions the purpose of education, the sources of knowledge and the roles of teachers and learners. It involves rebuilding education systems that reflect the actual realities, struggles and aspirations of oppressed communities (Walsh, 2010, p.202). An insurgent curriculum legitimises indigenous and Afro-descendant knowledges as equal to but different from Western epistemologies and can enrich and extend the creation of knowledge (Walsh, 2010; Bailon and Lissovoy, 2019).

The theoretical base of the curriculum is presented in Chapter 3. It is rooted in Ubuntu and Igwebuike, aiming to promote the use and integration of indigenous language and knowledge, and is geared towards fostering cultural pride and meaningful learning (Higgs, 2012; Kanu, 2015; Letseka, 2012). For example, children will learn the Igbo alphabet through objects that reflect their immediate realities, rather than through abstract objects (NNPE, 2013). The curriculum will challenge the erasure of African views in history and encourage Africans to narrate their own story or correct single narration (Adichie, 2007).

This provides a balanced and nuanced understanding of history that includes the experiences and contributions of marginalised groups. An oral form of instruction would be given space for passing down traditions and customs to the next generation. Grandparents, for example, are custodians of their indigenous traditions: their voices should be included, valued and respected (Eneh and Anyaoku, 2017; Higgs, 2012). An insurgent curriculum leads to critical reflection on power and identity and questioning established norms and narratives and understanding how knowledge is constructed. It promotes open dialogue and collaboration among students, encouraging them to learn from each other's experiences and perspectives. The curriculum is rooted in social justice, challenging societal inequalities and working towards a more equitable world (Odukoyo et al, 2018; Clark, 2006; Fraser, 2009). It cares for the needs of all children, irrespective of their background, ability or disability.

8.5.1 Curriculum Design Principles

The design principles include the following:

a. Collaborative Learning: Learning activities must emphasise teamwork, as in group storytelling. This fosters a sense of collective participation and ownership (Eze, 2010). Projects that reinforce mutual support should be encouraged (Kanu, 2017). Co-operative games that help young children develop social skills and a sense of community must be included (Le Grange, 2012). Learners should be encouraged to support one another, and older learners should assist younger ones. This boosts a sense of responsibility and promotes solidarity (Kanu, 2017).

b. Community Involvement: Parents, elders and artisans should participate in classroom activities, such as in oral instruction and cultural celebrations, bringing in local knowledge and traditions. Festivals for the preservation of cultural heritage and identity should be organised (Eze, 2010). The use of local resources to enrich the curriculum must be encouraged. Projects such as cleaning up a local park to teach children the importance of contributing to the community should be included in the curriculum (Ibid).

c. Language Diversity: The language of instruction must include local languages to ensure children learn in their mother tongue. This is crucial for both cognitive development and cultural retention. The mother tongue is considered an instrument of decolonisation (Agbedo et al., 2020). Teilanyo (2011) argues that the English language was an instrument of exploitation/domination. It is part of linguistic imperialism, a common phenomenon among the former British colonies (El-Haddad, 2022). Today English is a status symbol, conferring on fluent speakers some level of respectability and upward social mobility (James, 1979; Phillipson, 1992). Adebisi, citing Mandela, talks about how speaking to a child in their mother tongue goes to their heart (Adebisi, 2016). This means that mother tongue is tied to the identity of the child and creates emotional connection. Therefore, decolonisation demands a shift in the language of instruction from English to the mother tongue.

The adoption of the above curriculum guideline aligns the education process to a game of football. Football is a game where every player counts. The victory or defeat belongs to everyone. Each player is respected in their unique ability. This being the case, no one plays the role of the 22 players. The new curriculum could contribute to an education system in which success will not only be an examination base or as a criterium for assessing what students have learnt. Decolonising a curriculum is an ongoing process. It requires continuous reflection, assessment and adaptation to ensure it remains responsive to the needs of all students.

8.5.2 Ubuntu Pedagogy (Ubuntulogy) and Igwebuikelogy

The new curriculum gives birth to new pedagogies termed Ubuntulogy and Igwebuikelogy. Ubuntulogy is a coinage from Ubuntu and pedagogy (Blackwood and Washington, 2022). It is an attempt to contribute towards the promotion of co-existence, social cohesion and inclusivity in education (Ngubane and Makua, 2021). Ubuntulogy is defined as ‘a humanising approach to teaching-learning process’ (Blackwood, 2018, p.30). It is a learner-centered pedagogy where every learner matters (Ukpokodu, 2016). Learners are viewed as actors who come into the learning interaction with unique experiences and knowledge, which teachers

could build on leading to the development of new knowledge. Ubuntulogy recognises the incompleteness of both the teacher and the student. It emphasises collaboration between the teacher and student in creating a meaningful learning environment (Ngubane and Makua, 2020).

Igwebuikelogy, kanu, (2017; 2016), from Igwebuike philosophy, stands for dialogical pedagogy that considers the teacher and the student as community of inquiry, community in search for knowledge, where both teacher and students are learners. This resonates with Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 2017). The educator becomes like a midwife, humane, caring, non-authoritative, collaborative and unassuming (Kanu, 2019). The educational process recognises the rights of the individual and allows for the development of critical, creative and higher order thinking (Kanu, 2017). The curriculum incorporates local history, traditions and cultural practices, making education meaningful to students. Teachers place new knowledge in a context that is already appreciated by the student. This form of education has resonance with the African Traditional Educational System, which was never merely abstract. People learn to hunt because they are going to be hunters (Fafunwa, 1974).

It is important to note that, though Ubuntulogy and Igwebuikelogy may be informed by similar frameworks (human liberation frameworks) as the Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Freire, they are different because of their cultural, philosophical and contextual foundations. Pedagogy of the oppressed is conceived as a political tool for the liberation of the oppressed, while Ubuntulogy and Igwebuikelogy are fundamentally seen as an ethical and spiritual journey into shared humanity.

8.5.3 Implementation Strategies

One of the features of this curriculum is its form of assessment. The research proposes an alternative form of assessment. Alternative Assessment can be described as 'performance assessment', 'direct assessment' and 'authentic assessment' (Culbertson, 2000, p. 32). Students are evaluated with a variety of methods such as project-based assignments,

portfolios, and other approaches (Zimbicki, 2007). This depends on student learning styles (Stiggins, 1994). This is equity and justice at work, thus reducing inequality. Scholars like Stiggins (1994) and Svinicki (2004) opine that these methods of assessment provide rich, realistic information about students' achievement, and encourage their active participation.

Baxter et al (1996) stress that Alternative Assessment gives teachers opportunities to encourage students' reasoning and critical thinking. Students create their own solutions for complex problems (Herman, et al 1992). It helps students become more discerning and innovative, helping them determine what they have learned and what they still need to learn (Atta-Alla, 2013; Wiggins, 1998). This gives rise to students' engagement, empowerment and agency (O'Neill and Padden, 2022). The emphasis shifts from individual to group achievements. This reduces the negative impacts of examination. Examination has been found to be stressful for both students and teachers (Bueno, 2021).

Durning et al (2016) argue that examination prepares students for the stress of real life, but examination does not put into context other realities in real life. Outside the classroom, students do have access to information and check it before using it (Saucier et al, 2022). According to Saucier et al (2022), examinations in class are logistically difficult to administer and not equitable, empathetic or fun. In this education system, no learner is left behind. Learners are free to fully pursue their interest as rigid examination that leads to academic failure is eliminated. In place of 'marks' currently allocated to students at the end of assessment, Strength and Areas of Improvement (not weakness) should be adopted.

8.5.4. Challenges and Solutions

The implementation of the curriculum will be affected by factors such as Eurocentric norms, funding, policy, elites, parents' preferences and so on. These factors have been given ample space in this research. To overcome these challenges, a comprehensive, multifaceted context-sensitive approach is needed. A deliberate shift towards culturally responsive, decolonial and

community-rooted pedagogies is required, to overcome Eurocentric norms in EYE in Nigeria (Escayg, et al, 2017). Nigeria should meet the UNESCO's recommendation of 15-20% of the national budget to education. Insufficient funding has been found to be one of the obstacles hindering the decolonisation of EYE (Donwa, 2006; Amadi and Nwogu, 2023Enyiazu, 2022; Mamman et al, 2025; Okeke and Chukwudebelu, 2024).

Key stakeholders should participate in the formulation and implementation of education policy (Mamman et al, 2025). A poor policy implementation example (mother tongue policy) was highlighted as an impediment to the decolonisation of EYE (Odukoya, et al, 2018; Owojecho, 2020). This links to the perception of indigenous languages as inferior by both parents and the elites. English still enjoys a dominant functional role in Nigeria, thus endangering the indigenous languages (Taiwo, 1976; Owojecho, 2020; Thiong'o, 1986). Effort should be made to implement educational policies.

8.6 Recommendations for Future Research

This research suggests the following areas for future research on the decolonisation of education and EYE in Nigeria.

teacher education and pedagogical training, with focus on how EYE teachers are prepared (or not) to engage with decolonising practices.

children's voices in the decolonisation process.

Teacher education programmes in Nigeria from this research are underpinned by Western pedagogical models with little attention to African philosophies such as Ubuntu or Igwebuike. Letseka (2012) suggests rethinking teacher roles to foster relational and ethical pedagogics using Ubuntu philosophy. Children are often perceived as passive recipients, not as agents with insights into their learning or their identity. Decolonisation demands the inclusion of marginalised voices like those of children. The need to listen to the views of children in matters that affect them has been emphasised (Lansdown, 2005).

8.7 Limitations and mitigation measures

The first limitation to the study was the purposive sampling. Purposive sampling does not support results generalisation. The participants came from six universities and three states out of 36 states in Nigeria. The results of this research, though deep and insightful, cannot be generalised. However, the aim of the research was not generalisation of the research outcome. Purposive sampling facilitated the direct alignment between the core research components (data generation; analysis; and results interpretation) and the main research questions, thereby increasing the potential for results accuracy and validity (Bryman, 2012). Consequently, as I used the research design to demonstrate the lecturers' capacity to critically reflect on the decolonisation of EYE, this has mitigated the lack of results generalisability. By using this approach, I was able to engage lecturers with first-hand experience of decolonising EYE in Nigeria. Some of these lecturers are those who may not normally share their views on the decolonisation of education in general. By design, however, this research holds relevance for the decolonisation of EYE, educational policy, curriculum reformation and teacher training programmes, as it provides insights into lecturers' perceptions on issues of national interest.

A more significant challenge was the issue of number. Guest et al (2020) address this in relation to the concept of 'saturation'; the stage of data collection and analysis at which additional information brings about little or no further change to the themes or codes identified thus far. This creates a conundrum because of the need to estimate sample size before the research begins, whereas the point of saturation can only be decided at a later stage. However, Saunders et al (2018) argue against rigid adherence to specific sample size and, rather, suggest flexibility in planning for sample size, recognising that the number of interviews may need to be adjusted based on when saturation is achieved. The point of saturation can vary significantly depending on the research context, the complexity of the research topic and the methods used. Listening to the in-depth conversation with the participants, repeatedly, and seeking expert advice from my supervisor, I concluded that it was time to move on with the next stage of the research.

8.8 Final Reflection

The decolonisation of Early Years Education in Nigeria remains a complex, ongoing process that requires addressing both structural and cultural barriers. This research is crucial not only for its academic contributions but also for its practical and social implications. It addressed gaps in the understanding of how decolonisation can be achieved in EYE, provided actionable insights for policymakers and educators, and contributed to the global decolonisation movement. By so doing, it contributes to the development of a more equitable, culturally relevant, and inclusive education that is the foundation for a just and thriving society.

Reflecting on this thesis, I have come to learn that decolonisation is not a destination, but a process. Decolonisation as a word is contested and it arouses sometimes volatile conversation. This is what made the topic quite interesting. Decolonisation is not only changing what we teach, but also how we teach, who we listen to, and what we value. My participants are more than educators. They are silent revolutionaries who, despite all odds, have continued to create space for the younger generation to learn in ways that affirm their identities and histories. The courage of the lecturers has shaped this research, and it is my hope that their contributions will be honoured as their voices join the chorus that is calling for just, inclusive and culturally sustaining Early Years Education in Nigeria.

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APPENDIX ONE: Participant information sheet and Consent Sheet

Lancaster University

Participant information sheet

My name is Amaka Akabueze, and I am currently a PhD student at Lancaster University, and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about:

Decolonisation of Early Years Education in Nigeria: A Case for Social Justice

Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether you wish to take part.

What is the study about?

The study aims to investigate the perspectives of lecturers of early years education in Nigeria regarding decolonisation of EYE. The research sees the views of the lecturers on decolonisation of education as important and wants to get rich data from them as individuals directly involve in education and their views are considered valuable.

Why have I been invited?

I have approached you because you are involved in early years education. As a qualitative researcher, I believe that lived experiences of participants form valuable source of knowledge. Your views are therefore invaluable. I am interested in understanding how early years lecturers are participating in the ongoing debate about decolonising education in general and early years education in particular. I also want to understand how early years education in Nigeria is being decolonised.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you decided to take part, you will be asked to give your views and opinion on the topic of research which is aimed at decolonisation of early years education in Nigeria. This would involve data generation using qualitative method of research precisely the use of interviews. You will be asked a few questions on the topic; you give your views and opinion freely. This may be through face-face, telephone, skype etc. information will be collected through researcher's notes and audio recording. This will take between 30-60 minutes.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

Taking part in this study will allow you to share your experiences of decolonising early years education in Nigeria. Your taking part in this study will equally advance our knowledge of decolonisation of education in Nigeria. Your lived experiences will also shed light on some issues that might not be evident to an external person. These insights will contribute to our understanding of the topic…

Do I have to take part?

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether you take part. Your participation is voluntary.

If you decide not to take part in this study, this will not affect your position in the university and your relations with your employer.

What if I change my mind?

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time during your participation in this study. If you want to withdraw, please let me know, and I will extract any ideas or information (=data) you contributed to the study and destroy them. However, it is difficult and often impossible to take out data from one specific participant when this has already been anonymised or pooled together with other people's data. Therefore, you can only withdraw up to 6 weeks after taking part in the study.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is unlikely that there will be any major disadvantages to taking part. Taking part will mean investing for example 30-60 minutes for an interview.

Will my data be identifiable?

After the interview, I, the researcher conducting this study and my supervisor will have access to the ideas you share with me.

I will keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will remove any personal information from the written record of your contribution. All reasonable steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in this project.

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How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the information you have shared with me only in the following ways:

I will use it for my PhD research purposes. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences.

When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. I will only use anonymised quotes (e.g. from my interview with you), so that although I will use your exact words, all reasonable steps will be taken to protect your anonymity in **our publications.**

How my data will be stored

Your data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than me, the researcher will be able to access them) and on password-protected computers. I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g., your views on a specific topic). In

accordance with university guidelines, I will keep the data securely for a minimum of ten years.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself : amaka.akabueze@lancaster.ac.uk**; my supervisor: Dr Richard Budd, email:** Richard.budd@lancaster.ac.uk **name and contact details, including their Lancaster University email address, phone number:+44(0)1524593572 and postal address: LA1 4YD Lancaster, United Kingdom.**

here).

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact my Head of Department:

Dr Jan McArthur, email: Jan.McArthur@lancaster.ac.uk. Phone: +44(0)152465201 and postal address: LA1 4YW, Lancaster, United Kingdom.

Sources of support

In some projects, sensitive and potentially distressing topics may be discussed as part of the research. In such cases, it is good practice to add sources of support participants can turn to.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for considering your participation in this project.

Lancaster University

Consent form template:

Project Title: Decolonisation of Early Years Education in Nigeria: A Case for Social Justice

Name of researcher(s): Amaka Akabueze

Email address: a.akabueze@lancaster.ac.uk

Please tick each box in the table below

Statement	Tick box
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in this study and within [x weeks] after I took part in the study, without giving any reason. If I	☐

withdraw within [x weeks] of taking part in the study my data will be removed.	
I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications, or presentations by the researcher(s), but my personal information will not be included, and all reasonable steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in this project.	☐
I understand that my name/my organisation's name will not appear in any reports, articles, or presentation without my consent.	☐
I understand that any interviews or focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.	☐
I understand that data will be kept according to university guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study.	☐
I agree to take part in the above study.	☐

Participant's details

Participant's name_____

Participant's Signature_____

Date_____

Declaration of researcher/person taking the consent

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Name of Researcher/person taking the consent __Amaka Akabueze_____

Signature of Researcher/person taking the consent ___Akabueze_____

Date (Day/month/year) ____1st May 2024_____

APPENDIX TWO

Interview and Research Question (RQ)

How do Nigerian EYE lecturers perceive the EYE curriculum and how do they engage with the decolonisation project?

Auxiliary questions

How do the lecturers conceptualise decolonisation/the decolonisation of education?

How do the lecturers consider the EY curriculum (content and practice) – as Eurocentric or Indigenous – and why?

What is the role of EY lecturers in curriculum development?

What factors affect the lecturers' attempts to decolonise EY in Nigeria?

How do the lecturers seek to engage in decolonising both the content and the practice of the EY curriculum and why?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Could you tell me something about your academic background.

What is your current role and what is your educational history?

Is there anything that I should know about you, such as your family, other interests, your identity?

What do you understand by the term decolonising generally?

Where do you see discussion around it in Nigeria?

What about within Nigerian universities?

What is your view of the Nigerian EY Curriculum and why? Can you give some examples?

For someone who does not know anything about Nigerian EY Curriculum, can you explain how the curriculum includes and encourages the inclusion of, different groups and identities in terms of who is portrayed in it?

In case of child developmental problem, whose theory of human development do you apply refer to?

How do you write your course resources? Or who writes them and where do the materials come from? Do some people have to freedom to write the course materials, and some may have to teach what others have written?

Can you tell me more about your approach to teaching?

in invoking the consciousness of self and national identities in students (b) in promoting social justice (c) in being relevant to indigenous needs of students (d) in promoting dialogue and collaboration amongst the students (e) in encouraging problem-posing in the classroom.

Do you teach different kinds of sessions such as lectured, seminars, tutorials and how do you vary and how do you run them

11. How would you describe the support for decolonising, generally and within the university? Does this promote decolonising in practice? Are there any thing that impede it?

12. How do you think EY sits within higher education, or university- above or below other disciplines? What does this look like, such as research funding, progression, academic debates and so on?

13.What is perception of early years education by the public?

14. In what ways do you think EY education in Nigeria could be improve?

15. Do you have any questions and comments?