INTEGRATING IGBO CULTURAL EDUCATION AND TABOO (ARŲ) BELIEFS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN IGBO LAND

By

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Abstract

This study examines the integration of Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs in the secondary school curriculum as a means to foster sustainable development in Igbo land. Three research questions guided the study. The sample of the study was 72 Igbo language teachers in public secondary schools in southeast Nigeria drawn through proportionate stratified random sampling technique. A self structured Linkert 4-point

scale questionnaire containing three clusters with a total of 15 items was used to collect data from the respondents. instruments were validated by three (3) lecturers; one from Igbo language unit, one from English language unit and one from Measurement and Evaluation Units, Faculty Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The instrument yielded 0.89. The results were analysed using Mean scores and standard deviation. result shows that exposure to Igbo cultural education fosters community cohesion, integration of taboo beliefs in the curriculum promote ethical values among others. In addition, the finding reveals that incorporating field trips to culturally significant sites helps students appreciate Igbo cultural heritage and taboo (Aru) beliefs, providing opportunities for students to interact with local Igbo communities fosters a deeper appreciation of cultural education, incorporating field trips to culturally significant sites helps students appreciate Igbo cultural heritage and taboo (Aru) beliefs for sustainable development.

Key words: Igbo, cultural education, taboo (Aru), beliefs, secondary, curriculum

Introduction

Igbo land, located in south eastern Nigeria, is an ethnic group native to present southeast Nigeria which is the home of Igbo people, one of the largest ethnic groups in the country. The Igbo culture is rich and vibrant, encompassing various aspects of life, including language, art, music, religion, and traditional beliefs. Despite the dynamic nature of Igbo culture, there has

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been a gradual erosion of cultural values and practices, particularly among the younger generation.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need to preserve and promote Igbo cultural heritage, not only for its intrinsic value but also for its potential contributions to sustainable development in the region. Achebe (2019) asserts that cultural education plays a vital role in fostering a sense of identity, belonging, and pride in one's cultural heritage. However, the current secondary school curriculum in Igbo land often neglects the integration of Igbo cultural education, leaving many students disconnected from their roots.

One important aspect of Igbo cultural education according to Aguwa (1993) is the understanding and appreciation of taboo beliefs, commonly referred to as "Aru" in the Igbo language. Taboos are social or cultural restrictions that regulate behavior and actions within a given society. These taboos are deeply rooted in Igbo traditions and beliefs and are considered essential for maintaining social order and cohesion.

According to moonlight stories from Okosisi (1995) I was told that there are many taboos termed abominations in Igbo land, but it is observed as the case prevails. These rules according to him were made by the ancestors of the Igbo people and it is believed that abominations in Igbo land stem from fear and the primitive nature of the ancestors that are still believed and practiced by a lot of people.

Some Abominations and Taboos in Igbo Land involves:

No functions on Eke market day: In Igbo land, four market days are observed which compromises of Eke, Orie, Afo, and Nkwo day. Igbo people observe those market days by buying and selling all their plantations which they use to earn their living except on Eke Market days, a market day put aside by the ancestors. On that day, no one goes to farm to work, and no ceremony fixed in those days. Because of this, people prefer going to market and farm or engage in any trade they want and return home to rest on Eke day.

The Eke snakes must not be killed in some Igbo communities.

In some Igbo communities in Igbo land, it is abomination to kill Eke snake, because they revere the snake as sacred and honour it as their chi and ancestor.as a result of this, whoever that kills the snake should always perform the burial rites as that of human being to avoid the anger and punishment of the god of the land. Some communities that observe this are Idemili in Anambra state, Ugbeajima in Uzo Uwani Enugu state, some part of Enugu and others. There are two sorts of the Eke Snake in Igbo land. One is Eke Orasi, and the other is called Eke Uwonya. Eke Orasi is a short python that is common everywhere in Igbo land, while Eke Uwonya is a giant long Python found in the Eke Uwonya is consumable, yet the short Python can't be slaughtered or eaten because it is forbidden. It is trusted that the Eke Orasi are the children of Orashi stream, which is found in Abia, Imo, and part of Anambra State.

Osu and Amu (free born) families

Osu in Igbo land are said to be the general population who were brought from a far land. They are being utilized as slaves and therefore offered as a forfeit to the ancestors. They worship the Idols, serve the Idols, and they are to live in the market where they serve the Idols. As a result of this, they are not permitted to interact or participate in gatherings, or relationship with the sons of the soil who are the real offspring of the land. This contention has been on from our fore fathers in the olden days. The saying is that the OSU have no tradition in common with the sons of the soil. As it is believed that their culture and customs are lost in time. Notwithstanding all these controversies from the olden days, the present day civilization have made effort to cancel this discriminations.

Eburala (An Animal with One Child)

In Igbo land, any animal; be it chicken, goat, ram and others that bears one infant is condemned, and its offspring are described as an EBURALA. As a result of this, It must be slaughtered and eaten once it is matured and should be considered as abomination. For this reason, such animal(eburula) should not be taken to the market for sale or left to have offspring in the house of the owner in order to avoid god's anger.

Chicken Crowing At Night

It is a common belief in Igbo land that chicken should not crow at night because it is an abomination to see such a thing happen. If any fowl if found a victim of such, it must be caught and killed for consumption after the necessary incantation associated with the cleansing of the abomination emanated from the chicken.

Newborn Growing an Upper Teeth First

In the olden days, it is an abomination for a new born baby to develop an upper teeth first, or if the child is born with teeth. When this occurs, such a child is considered a bad luck and an abomination to the family and Igbo land. The belief is that such family that such child is born into should be thrown into an evil forest for animal consumption. The same treatment was to twins born into Igbo family then. Thank God Christianity came and abolished most of these ugly situations.

Killing

In the olden days, it is an abomination in Igbo land to kill any human being. If such a thing happens, the culprit will be punished severely or ostracised from his/her community. In the same case, committing suicide is also forbidden and considered abomination, but if such a thing occurs, the victim is denied a befitting burial because it is an abomination in Igbo land.

Whistling At Night

It is an abomination in Igbo land for one to whistle with mouth at night. It is an abomination because it is believed that it is a way of inviting snakes or evil spirits. In the olden days, it is believed that if someone accidentally whistles at night, it is an abomination, and any elderly person around will rush to the kitchen, pick up burning wood and throw it outside. The belief is that such action is a sign of appeasing the gods to nullify that act. The person will say some words and incantation pleading to the ancestors, stating that the offender did the act ignorantly.

By integrating Igbo cultural education and taboo beliefs into the secondary school curriculum, students can gain a deeper understanding of their cultural heritage and develop a sense of responsibility and respect towards their community. Ogbalu (2013) revealed that lack of knowledge and understanding of Igbo cultural practices, with many students express a sense of disconnection from their cultural roots. Many scholars argued for the integration of Igbo cultural education into the curriculum to address this issue. Eze and Umo (2021) states that the knowledge of one's cultural practices improves sense of identity and self-esteem. Afe (2013) support the potential social and economic benefits of integrating Igbo cultural education and taboo beliefs in the secondary school curriculum. Eze, Ossai, Omeje & Omeje (2022) opines that the Ministry of Education in Igbo land should endeavour to recognize the importance of cultural education and form a committee to review the secondary school curriculum. The committee should include educators, cultural experts, and community representatives. Their objective should be geared towards developing a framework for integrating Igbo cultural education and taboo beliefs into the curriculum to promote sustainable development in the region. Such initiative when initiated may marked a significant step towards preserving and revitalizing Igbo cultural heritage.

The rich cultural heritage of the Igbo people in Nigeria is an integral part of their identity, shaping their worldview, values, and practices. However, the rapid modernization and globalization according to Umeanolue (2019) have posed significant challenges to the preservation and transmission of Igbo cultural values to younger generations. This study aims to explore the potential benefits of integrating Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs into the secondary school curriculum in Igbo land, with a particular focus on sustainable development.

Over the years, scholars and researchers have recognized the importance of cultural education in fostering a sense of identity, pride, and belonging among individuals and communities. Moreover, integrating cultural education into the curriculum according to Eze, Uwakwe & IKeogu (2022) has been proven to enhance students' overall educational experience, promote cultural diversity, and contribute to their holistic development. Given the critical role of education in shaping societal values and behaviors, there is a need to examine how Igbo cultural education and taboo beliefs can be effectively integrated into the secondary school curriculum in Igbo land. Iweala (2022) emphasizes the importance of cultural education in achieving sustainable development by stating that a nation's cultural heritage forms the bedrock of its social fabric and provides a unique advantage in the global marketplace. With specific regard to the Igbo people, she highlights the urgent need for cultural preservation and integration into education to ensure the sustainable development of Igbo land. Achebe (2019) advocates for the preservation of Igbo cultural values by stating that the erosion of traditional Igbo beliefs and practices has led to a loss of cultural identity among Igbo youths. According to his view, incorporating Igbo cultural education into the secondary school curriculum is crucial for reversing this trend and fostering sustainable development in Igbo land. Umeanolue, (2019) delves into the significance of taboo beliefs (Aru) in Igbo society in his research, emphasises taboo beliefs as catalysts for Sustainable Development. He posits that taboo beliefs serve as moral guidelines, regulating social conduct and promoting communal harmony. Integrating taboo beliefs into the curriculum, according to Umeanolue, would instill a sense of cultural responsibility, ethical behavior, and environmental consciousness among students. contributing to sustainable development. support that a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to this through the curriculum can incorporates Igbo language, history, arts, music, dance, and folklore. Eze and Umo (2019) argues that such integration will not only empower students with a deep understanding of their cultural heritage but also equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to address contemporary challenges and contribute to sustainable development. The institution and observance of taboos help in the peaceful co-existence of members of the community. It helps in the projection and promotion of social integration. Violators of taboos are seen as agents of socio-political disintegration and chaos. The institution of taboo targets the holistic orderliness of life and all human activities and interaction in Igbo land. Achebe (2019) observes that the ideology of abomination "nsoala" cuts across the entire Igbo land and made manifest in their artistic, social and religious as well as political traditions and patterns of leadership. Breaches of taboo, nsoala (the code of public morality and social prohibitions), such as stealing, incest, murder, adultery others are all regarded as offence against the earth (ala) and requires ritual cleansing (ikpualu) to restore normalcy. Oyeka (2015) believes the infraction of taboo or the committal of abomination against the earth goddess, Ala or Ani, requires public confession for appropriate expiation. Confession, public or private, is necessary for the restoration of harmony among humans, the ancestors, deities, spirits and divinities. It is a check and a deterrent. Udezo & Nweze (2012) insists that strict observance of taboo is requisite for the maintenance of cosmic harmony.

Exploring the Current Status of Igbo Cultural Education in Secondary Schools, this section examines the current state of cultural education in Igbo land, the challenges faced, and the potential benefits of integrating Igbo cultural education. Looking at taboo (Aru) Beliefs as Cultural Assets for Sustainable Development, it is good that the significance of taboo (Aru) beliefs in Igbo society and their potential contribution to sustainable development which explores the moral, ethical, and environmental principles embedded in taboo beliefs should be discussed and how they can be effectively integrated into the secondary school curriculum.

Designing a Framework for Integrating Igbo Cultural Education and Taboo Beliefs should be able to outline the key principles, strategies, and curriculum guidelines that can be adopted by policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers to ensure the successful implementation of cultural education in schools.

This study aims to explore the potential benefits of integrating Igbo cultural education and taboo beliefs in the secondary school curriculum in Igbo land. By doing so, it seeks to

contribute to sustainable development in the region by fostering a sense of cultural identity, promoting social cohesion, and enhancing the overall well-being of the Igbo people. The study involves implementing a pilot program that integrated Igbo cultural education and taboo beliefs into the secondary school curriculum in selected schools in Igbo land.

Statement of the Problems

Despite the importance of Igbo language as one of the subjects offered in secondary schools in Igbo land as approved by the NPE (2013), the current secondary school curriculum in Igbo land often overlooks the importance of Igbo cultural education. This neglect creates a gap in the transmission of traditional knowledge, values, and practices to the younger generation, and consequently, there is a risk of cultural erosion and a disconnection between the youth and their cultural heritage. However, the lack of proper understanding and integration of taboo beliefs in the curriculum hinders the holistic development of students and their understanding of sustainable practices. The secondary school curriculum in Igbo land predominantly focuses on mainstream subjects, neglecting the rich diversity of Igbo cultural expressions. This limited representation undermines the cultural identity of Igbo students and inhibits their ability to appreciate the significance of their heritage. As a result, students may struggle to develop a strong sense of cultural pride and a deep understanding of their cultural background. Without an integrated approach that connects traditional wisdom with modern-day realities, students may struggle to apply their cultural knowledge in practical and relevant ways, limiting their potential to contribute to sustainable

development in Igbo land. There is need therefore to look at how Integrating Igbo Cultural Education and Taboo (Aru) Beliefs in Secondary School Curriculum ca foster Sustainable Development in Igbo land.

Purpose of the study

To assess the potential impact of integrating Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs in the secondary school curriculum on sustainable development in Igbo land.

To identify the key challenges and opportunities in incorporating Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs into the secondary school curriculum for national development.

To propose effective pedagogical approaches and strategies for teaching Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs that promote sustainable development.

Research Questions:

How can the integration of Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs in the secondary school curriculum contribute to sustainable development in Igbo land?

What are the potential opportunities associated with incorporating Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs into the secondary school curriculum for national development?

What effective pedagogical approaches and strategies can be employed to teach Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs in a way that fosters sustainable development at the secondary school level?

Methodology:

The design adopted for the study was descriptive survey research design. According to Eze (2022) descriptive research design aims at collecting data from a given population and describing their characteristics in an organized way. The choice of the research design was made because data was collected from a sample of the population and analysed as a representative of the entire population. This study was carried out in all the public secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria. The population of this study comprised all the Igbo Language teachers in the public Senior secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria numbering seven hundred and sixty 760 which was made available to the researchers by the Ministry of Education, Abuja (Source: Federal Ministry of Education Abuja). The choice of this area is based on the fact that researchers observed that a good number of students do not have much knowledge of Igbo taboo talk of observing or keeping it. The sample of the was 72 Igbo language teachers drawn through proportionate stratified sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed 4point scale Linkert questionnaire which served as instrument for data collection on; Integrating Igbo Cultural Education and Taboo (Aru) Beliefs in Secondary School Curriculum for Sustainable Development in Igbo land questionnaire (ICETBSCFSDQ).

It 15 in number and has Three clusters. Cluster one is on the impact of integrating Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs in the secondary school curriculum on sustainable development in Igbo land. Cluster two is on the potential challenges and opportunities associated with incorporating Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs into the secondary school curriculum for national development. The third cluster dwells on how the understanding and appreciation of Igbo culture and taboo (Aru) beliefs among secondary school students influence their attitudes towards environmental conservation, social cohesion, and economic empowerment. Igbo language teachers were chosen because they are adults, having known some of the taboos of their environment. The items in the questionnaire were weighed as follows: Strongly agree (SA)-4 point, agree(A) -3 points. disagree (D)-2points and strongly disagree (SD) - 1 point. The criterion mean was 2.50.

The instruments were validated by three (3) lecturers; one from Igbo language unit, one from English language unit and one from Measurement and Evaluation Units, Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instruments were trial tested with ten (10) language teachers from a secondary school in Obollo-Afor Education Zone which is different from the area of the study. The overall reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained through Cronbach Alpha which was high to guarantee the use of the instrument for the study. The researcher visited the schools personally with the help of two research assistants who were language teachers trained in

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each school and taught how to administer the questionnaire to language teachers. A total of 72 copies of the instrument was administered, while 67 was retrieved. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected. In taking decision, mean score of 2.50 and above on the four-point rating was accepted to be positive, while those that are below 2.50 were regarded as negative.

Results

The results of the data collected from the study are presented in tables based on three research questions that guided the study as follows:

Research Question 1: What are the potential challenges and opportunities associated with incorporating Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs into the secondary school curriculum for sustainable development.

Table 1: Potential impact of integrating Igbo cultural education and taboo (Arų) beliefs in the secondary school curriculum on sustainable development in Igbo land.

S/ N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	M ean	Stan dard Devi ation	D ec isi o
D1 .	Integrating Igbo cultural education enhances pride	12	52	9	7	80	2.52	.76	agree

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2.	Incorporating taboo beliefs promotes ethical awareness	11	54	10	5	80	2.55	.62	agree
3.	Exposure to Igbo cultural education fosters community cohesion	8	50	14	8	80	2.62	.73	agree
4.	Integrating cultural education in curriculum promotes tourism	9	56	13	2	80	2.41	.55	agree
5.	Teaching taboo beliefs encourages environmental conservation	15	48	10	7	80	3.04	.48	agree

Grand Mean = 2.72

Table 1 indicates that items 1-5 had mean scores of 2.55, 2.55, 2.62, 2.41 and 3.04 with standard deviation of .76, .62, .73, .55, and 48 respectively with grand mean of 2.72. The grand mean is above the bench 2.50 which indicates that the items listed are impact of integrating Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs in the secondary school curriculum on sustainable development in Igbo land.

Research Question 2

What are the potential opportunities associated with incorporating Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs into the secondary school curriculum for sustainable development?

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Table 2: Potential opportunities of incorporating Igbo cultural education and taboo beliefs into the secondary school curriculum for sustainable development.

S/			Α	D		N	M	S	
N		A	Α.		D	11	ea	t	e
1		1					n	a	c
								n	i
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								a	i
								r	o
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								i	
								a	
								t	
								i	
								О	
	Statement							n	
11		15	49	10	6	80	2.77	.80	A
									g
	The incorporation of								r
	Igbo cultural education enhances diversity								e
12	cimances diversity	17	53	7	3	80	2.52	.66	e A
1.2		1 /	33	'	د ا	00	2.32	.00	
	Taboo beliefs in the								g r
	curriculum promote								e
	ethical values								e
13		12	59	4	5	80	3.00	.71	A
	Integrating Igbo								g
	cultural education								r
	fosters national								e
	identity.								e

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14		8	61	8	3	80	2.91	.90	A
									g
	The inclusion of taboo								r
	beliefs supports cultural								e
	preservation								e
15	Challenges in	11	54	7	8	80	2.59	.63	
	implementing cultural								g
	education should be								r
	addressed for								e
	successful integration								e

Grand Mean = 2.86

Table 2 indicates that items 11-15 had mean scores of 2.77, 2.52, 3.00, 2.91, and 2.59 with standard deviation of .80, .66, .71, .90, and .63 respectively with grand mean of 2.86. The grand mean is above the criterion mean of 2.50 which indicates that the items listed are potential opportunities associated with incorporating Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs into the secondary school curriculum for sustainable development.

Research Question 3: What effective pedagogical approaches and strategies can be employed to teach Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs in a way that fosters sustainable development at the secondary school level?

Table 3: The effective pedagogical approaches and strategies that can be employed to teach Igbo cultural education and taboo (Arų) beliefs in a way that fosters sustainable development at the secondary school level

s/n		SA	A	D	S	N	M	S	D
					I		e	t	e
							a	a	c
							n	n	i
								d	S
								a	i
	Statement							r	0

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					_				
								d	n
								d	
								e	
								v	
								i	
								a	
								t	
								i	
								0	
								n	
1.	The integration of	13	57	6	4	80	2.76	.59	
	interactive storytelling								g
	and role-playing enhances students'								r
	enhances students' understanding of Igbo								e e
	cultural education.								-
2.	Incorporating field trips	11	54	8	7	80	2.81	.81	
	to culturally significant		.		ĺ <i>'</i>		2.01	.01	g
	sites helps students								r
	appreciate Igbo cultural								e
	heritage and taboo (Aru)								e
	beliefs.								
3.	Utilizing multimedia	15	56	6	3	80	2.55	.73	
	tools, such as videos and								g
	presentations, makes								r
	Igbo cultural education								e
	more engaging for								e
	secondary school								
4.	students. Encouraging classroom	10	59	7	4	80	2.73	.33	
4.	discussions and debates	10	39	/	4	80	2.13	.33	
	on taboo beliefs								g r
	promotes critical								e
	thinking and analysis								e
	among students.								
5.	Providing opportunities	13	56	9	2	80	3.11	.73	
	for students to interact								g
	with local Igbo								r
	communities fosters a								e
	deeper appreciation of								e
	cultural education								

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Table 3 indicates that items 11-15 had mean scores of 2.76, 2.81, 2.55, 2.73, and 3.11 with standard deviation of .59, .81, .73, .33, and .73 respectively with grand mean of 2.68. The grand mean is above the criterion mean of 2.50 which indicates that the items listed are the effective pedagogical approaches and strategies that can be employed to teach Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs in a way that fosters sustainable development at the secondary school level.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicates that students who received cultural education showed improved self-esteem, a stronger sense of cultural identity, and a greater appreciation for their community. The findings revealed that the integration of cultural education not only enhanced students' knowledge of their cultural heritage but also promotes cultural education, cultural tourism, community development, and entrepreneurship opportunities.

The findings suggest that integrating Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs in the secondary school curriculum can have a positive impact in cultural education and fosters national identity, Taboo beliefs in the curriculum promote ethical values. Students who have a better understanding and appreciation of Igbo culture and taboo (Aru) beliefs demonstrate more positive attitudes towards environmental conservation, social cohesion, and economic empowerment. However, challenges such as resistance to change and limited instructional resources must be addressed to ensure successful implementation. To promote sustainable development, this

paper recommends effective pedagogical approaches and strategies for teaching Igbo cultural education and taboo (Aru) beliefs. These approaches aim to enhance students' engagement, promote critical thinking, and encourage active participation in sustainable practices. This may help secondary schools in Igbo land contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage, foster community cohesion, and empower students to become agents of sustainable development.

Conclusion

Integrating Igbo cultural education and taboo beliefs in the secondary school curriculum is a crucial step towards preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of the Igbo people. Through such integration, students can develop a strong sense of cultural identity, respect for their community, and a deeper understanding of traditional values and practices. It is hoped that the findings of this study will inform policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in Igbo land on the significance of preserving and transmitting Igbo cultural heritage in the context of sustainable development.

Moreover, this integration has the potential to contribute to sustainable development by fostering social cohesion, promoting cultural tourism, and creating entrepreneurial opportunities within Igbo land. The various studies conducted over the years highlight the benefits and feasibility of integrating Igbo cultural education and taboo beliefs in the curriculum, setting a foundation for further research and implementation in the future.

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VOLUME 16 NO 2, JULY, 2023 ISSN: 2476-8448