



**UNIVERSITY OF TM
KWAZULU-NATAL**

**INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING
AND ENHANCEMENT OF COGNITIVE JUSTICE IN
INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES**

by

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As the candidate's promoter, I agree to the submission of this thesis.



Professor D. J. Hlalele

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to **God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit**, whose love, favour, strength, and mercy inspired me towards the completion of this research work, in spite of all the challenges encountered.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how early childhood education teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages could be effectively utilised to promote the language of the immediate environment during teaching and learning processes. This qualitative research study was guided by the action research design that consisted of a self-reflective enquiry involving the dissection of participants' actions within a critical emancipatory paradigm. The study also adopted two data generation methods; namely, collages and focus group discussions to respond to the main research question and three secondary questions which guided this study.

Additionally, I employed the asset-based approach as a theoretical framework that focused on the innate capabilities an individual, and the exploitation of existing strengths, potentials and assets within the community which could possibly contribute to the wellness and sustainability of a school-community. Hence, previously 'unidentified' resources were appropriately utilised to promote effective teaching and learning within the school system. Ten participants consisting of male and female teachers, who were considered as primary assets within the community, were purposively and conveniently selected because of their familiarity with the research's objectives. Since purposive sampling was used to select participants to generate data, the research instruments of focus group discussions and collage construction were suitable and thus employed.

Ethical considerations were also observed to adhere to research principles that minimise harm to participants, in addition to validating and authenticating research results. To analyse the collected data, it was firstly organised thoroughly, categorised, transcribed, and then subjected to an open coding process such that emerging themes were also subjected to thematic analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used for data analysis strategy which studies social injustice, oppression, hegemony, conflict, and marginalisation. Findings of the study pointed to the current situation not being conducive because of marginalisation, inequalities, and oppression of indigenous languages during teaching and learning in early childhood education spaces which implied the gradual extinction of indigenous languages as a result of the linguistic hegemony of the English language.

Based on the findings and conclusions, teachers as primary assets and stakeholders within

the community should be encouraged to effectively utilise their inherent potentials towards ensuring equal treatment and justice between a foreign language and an indigenous language that would empower and transform learners. In the same vein, there is the need to promote interactive programmes in the indigenous language for some of the subjects in the classroom to improve the academic performance of learners.

Furthermore, for teachers to be more innovative in the delivery of lessons, the new mode of delivering the curriculum through EKO EXCEL should accommodate the use of indigenous language during teaching and learning in the classroom for all the subjects to ensure that no learner is left behind. The study could also benefit all relevant stakeholders such as Local Government agencies where more than one school could be studied by engaging a larger number of participants for more conclusive results.

KEYWORDS: Early Childhood Education, teachers, enhancement, cognitive justice, indigenous languages

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	
ABA	The asset-based approach
ABCD	Asset-based Community Development
AR	Action Research
CCF	Community Capital Framework
CJ	Cognitive Justice
COMPASS	Community Participation for Action in the Social Sectors
EKO EXCEL	Excellence in Learner Education and Learning
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECDE	Early Childhood Development and Education
EFA	Education for All
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FRN	Federal Republic of Nigeria
HRE	Human Rights Education
IDA	Improvement and Development Agency
IDIL	International Decade of Indigenous Languages
IECD	Integrated Early Childhood Development
IL	Indigenous Language
IYIL	International Year of Indigenous Languages
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge System
LED	Local Education District
NAEYC	National Association for Education of Young Learners
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
NERDC	Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council
NPE	National Policy on Education
NMSECE	National Minimum Standard for Early Childhood Education
NMSECCC	National Minimum Standard for Early Learner Care Centres
NEEDS	National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy
PT	Primary Tier

SHEBA	Supporting Home Environment in Beating Adversity
ST	Secondary Tier
SEEDS	State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy
SUBEB	State Universal Basic Education Board
STAR	Supportive Teachers' Assets and Resilience
TT	Tertiary Tier
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations International Learners' Emergency Fund
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WEC	World Education Conference

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The year 2019 was declared as the International Year of Indigenous languages (IYIL). This Declaration emerged from a United Nations General Assembly resolution promulgated during November 2016 which highlighted the “Right of the Indigenous Peoples” (Andriolo, 2019, p. 18). The primary objective of this Declaration was to create global awareness on the importance of indigenous languages (Sandman et al., 2022). Further, it was meant to benefit speakers of these languages, and to motivate other people to appreciate the important contributions of indigenous languages to enrich cultural diversity in the world (Akindele et al., 2022). Ogwudile (2023) and Thomason (2019) add that if the challenges confronting indigenous languages globally are not mitigated, then these languages will be extinct in a short time. Hence, there is urgency to implement expeditious interventions to prevent the death of indigenous languages (Schreyer et al., 2022). In this regard, recently the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL) from 2022-2032 to create awareness on the great loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve them at national and international levels (Carpenter et al., 2023).

Furthermore, it is imperative that cognitive justice prevails to promote communication in indigenous languages. Lamentably, in the absence of the promotion of cognitive justice in indigenous languages, their extinction looms ominously (Vazquez-Cordoba, 2022). Since cognitive justice provides a platform for dialogue to promote meaningful endeavours to challenge injustices within the community (Ortiz, 2022, the principle that all knowledges should have equal rights and equal treatment to co-exist should be enacted to break dichotomies such as the use of foreign and indigenous languages in ECE. This is the right of the local communities to communicate their knowledge through their indigenous language (Van Der Velden, 2006). In support, De Sousa Santos (2015) agrees that the enhancement of cognitive justice is simply a call that is against the hegemony of the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) where one knowledge system is so powerful that it dominates and oppresses others without considering the norms and values embedded in other knowledge systems. Visvanathan (2009, p. 4) elaborates that cognitive

justice (CJ) views “knowledge [as] not something to be abstracted from a culture as a life form, [knowledge] is connected to livelihood, a life-cycle, a lifestyle; it determines life chance”.

Indigenous Knowledge (IK), therefore, is a key component of indigenous languages (IL) because all knowledge is embedded in language and traditions such as storytelling, parables, riddles, proverbs, music, songs, and dance (Ukah, 2017). Anzaldúa (2015) asserts that indigenous languages enhance national identity, promote culture, norms and values of the indigenous people, and liberates people from oppression. Moreover, IKS consists of knowledge, skills, and values that are conveyed from one generation to another through cultural interactions (Molnár et al., 2018; Olajuyin et al., 2022).

Consequently, the impact of utilising indigenous languages in our society, lives, and families cannot be underestimated as they are acknowledged as core components of human rights and liberation to enhance sustainable development (Carpenter & Tsykarev, 2020). This implies that success and improvement in the quality of education is dependent on the usage of indigenous languages spoken by indigenous people situated in a particular geographical location. Since the inculcation of values and social norms in learners is executed by families and communities, it also cascades into teaching and learning processes (Oloruntoba-Olu & Van Pinxteren, 2023). For example, the Zulu, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and Xhosa tribes speak the language peculiar to their people which is part of their identity (Akintemi & Amosun, 2019). In the twentieth century, the term *indigenous people* was used primarily to refer to ethnic groups that have historical beginnings, and groups that existed in the territory prior to colonisation which normally preserve a degree of cultural and political separation from the colonially imposed mainstream culture (Awopetu, 2016; Igudia, 2023).

Language is perceived as fundamental components of one’s cultural identities however, they do not receive equal treatment with some other languages as some languages are well recognised than others (Campbell, 2024; Mlambo, & Matfunjwa, 2024). In the same vein, UNESCO (2023) affirms that despite the vital role of language in a society, when an indigenous language is lost, knowledge accumulated by the indigenous people will also fade away with negative impact on cultural and biological diversity. Community. Additionally, Ebo (2022) claims that the place of language is

significant in that it is the medium of communication connecting people to meaningful dialogue, knowledge, and understanding embracing the history, culture, and tradition of the indigenous people. If there is a loss of specific indigenous knowledge, then there is the possibility of a total disappearance of a particular language. UNESCO (2016) maintains that where local indigenous knowledge is held in high esteem for mutual understanding and interaction, there exists within the opportunity for astute decision-making for the smooth functioning of these communities.

Moreover, research reveals that language plays a vital role in learners' early education when the home language (HL) is the Language of Learning and Teaching hence, success in education is reliant on learners' ability to access and utilise knowledge through communicating in the HL during teaching-learning processes (Abidogun & Adebule, 2013). In a multilingual classroom, especially where language for knowledge transference is quite different from the HL, learners may automatically operate in a linguistic and cultural setting totally different from what they are accustomed to at home, which may lead to confusion (Shava & Manyike, 2018).

The literature consulted demonstrates that the importance of indigenous language cannot be overemphasised. Meanwhile, Nkonde et al. (2018) allude to the benefits of indigenous languages not only for learners, but also for sustainable national development for all. This is because indigenous people - most importantly the learners - may have the right to access education from their own cultural perspectives and language of the immediate environment (Nakata, 2023). Ajayi et al. (2019) also report that the Nigerian National Policy on Education explains that the use of an indigenous language as a language of instruction in the classroom from Grade R to Grade 3 in Nigeria is critical, but the implementation is challenging. Studies by Anderson and Uribe-Jongbloed (2015), Battiste (2018), Chew and Tennell (2023), Dagbo (2020), Duru (2022), Ebo (2020), Ibrahim and Gwandu (2019), Mhindu, (2016), Fickel et al. (2018), and Ikoba and Jolayemi (2021) reveal that the lack of implementation of language policy initiatives that would have enhanced the promotion of indigenous languages, has been replaced by a foreign language; this consequently endangers the existence of indigenous languages. This implies that promoting cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages in schools as a language of learning and teaching is problematic as teachers find it difficult to implement the national policy on education during teaching-learning situations because Western education practices interfere with the promotion of indigenous languages.

Also, teachers are victims of the imposition of colonial languages – for example, changing their indigenous names to Christian names (Cekiso, 2017; Mhlongo, 2019). Meanwhile, Dagbo's (2020) findings emanating from the responses of teachers on the role of the English language, resonate that teachers at all levels strictly adhere to the use of the English language as language of learning and teaching during teaching and learning sessions, except when teaching indigenous language as a subject. This practice of teachers in constantly using the English language as language of learning and teaching is also criticised by Davies (2016) who contends that the indigenous way of life has not been respected as a result of centuries of cultural oppression. Shava (2013 p. 44) notes that:

“For indigenous peoples, indigenous languages are both a right and a resource. Language embodies the culture, knowledge, and associated practices of any group of people. Indigenous languages, therefore, serve as the main medium through which [they] are transmitted from generation to generation.”

Odora Hoppers (2001, p. 75) points out that “more like the proverbial blind, deaf and dumb torchbearer trampling on everything in his path, the school’s awkward presence is also felt in terms of the value patterns, norms and modes of social and economic relations that it chooses to impact”.

Drawing from Shava’s (2013) claim (above), the survival and livelihood of the indigenous people depends on the process of communicating IK in all dialogues without any preferential treatment of one language over the other; a foreign language should not be allowed to dominate over the indigenous languages of the native communities (Odora Hoppers, 2015). Therefore, there should be an expeditious transformation in the educational system, such that the languages of the marginalised communities are afforded opportunities to coexist with the foreign language. Moreover, Visvanathan (2002) advises that the norms and values of native’s societies must be embraced to integrate indigenous theories of freedom, knowing that past atrocities cannot be allowed to be perpetuated.

It is pertinent to note that, indigenous knowledge is the living embodiment of cultural and historical significance that is rooted in indigenous languages. Additionally, Abah et al. (2015) refer to IK as containing the history of the indigenous people which is crucial to their cultural heritage. This knowledge is acquired through experiences, informal experiments without a scientific a background - but replete with knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of local communities. Since

engaging in an indigenous language (IL) is the fundamental human right of the indigenous people, it should be promoted to enhance the culture, the environment, and the development of the nation. The IKS also embrace storytelling and verbal communication as instruments through which knowledge can be filtered (Stefani, 2017). Hlalele (2019) highlights that the acceptability of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) does not require Western approval for effective utilisation. However, cognitive justice does not call for the eradication of scientific knowledge, but rather it advocates equal treatment regarding the recognition of current knowledge and indigenous languages (ILs) in problem-solving; and not only through communicating in Western languages (Bossaller & Sandy, 2017). In support, Shava and Manyike's (2018) study highlights the crucial role that can be played by indigenous languages and their associated IKS to enhance epistemological access for indigenous learners during teaching and learning processes.

According to Novak et al. (2007), Snaza and Weaver (2015), Davies (2016), Le Grange (2016), Leibowitz (2017), and Hall and Tandon (2017), cognitive justice is a relatively new concept which is mostly applied in higher educational institutions (HEIs). Regrettably, in early education, the use of the indigenous languages is restricted in classroom teaching and learning processes where learners are separated from their cultural heritage, norms, and values (Kumashiro, 2015). Since communities are embedded in socio-cultural norms and values which are communicated through indigenous languages (Bamgbose, 2016), this research aims to propose ways in which teacher's understanding of cognitive justice could be enabled via indigenous languages in early education in Nigeria. Lastly, Visvanathan (2000) affirms that cognitive justice is concerned with recognising the epistemic diversity that promotes co-existence and decision-making influencing people's lives while proffering solutions to community problems.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Having worked as a pre-service teacher-trainer at a College of Education in Nigeria for more than 10 years, I observed that during teaching practice (TP) sessions, the major language of instruction at early childhood education centres was not an indigenous language, but a foreign language. Further, I observed that ECE schools where the learners are fortunate to watch television, learning usually becomes fun at, but programmes are dominated by foreign language cartoons. For instance, the mode of greeting, folktales, and songs in the classroom are mostly in a foreign language. The teachers who are stakeholders in Early Childhood Education (ECE) spoke more fluently in a

foreign language (English) than in their indigenous language. Moreover, the teaching aids (e.g., charts) used in lessons, and those pasted in and outside the classroom environment, were all in a foreign language. Hence, the move to using an indigenous language in the teaching of some subjects like health education, social habits, languages, health habits, and mathematics that will ingrain qualities of honesty, justice, industriousness, integrity, and transparency. I also observed that the learners were not socialised into developing all these qualities. In this regard, the Yoruba philosophy of *Omoluabi*, which essentially means building good character, can be imbibed at the ECE level through communicating in the Yoruba language.

Further, I began my professional journey as a teacher in tertiary education many years ago, and I was fortunate to serve on various committees at the college, including the facilitation of various educational programmes at the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB).

Meanwhile, despite the numerous advantages of education that could enhance sustainable the development of education at the foundational level is very crucial. From my experience, it was disconcerting to note the trend of ECE Nigerian learners being taught in a foreign language without the opportunity to express themselves freely or write in their indigenous language (Degboro & Olatunji, 2022). I observed that during teaching and learning processes, pre-primary and lower primary learners were not taught in their indigenous language as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (Duru, 2022). It was further observed that teachers who are supposed to possess a sense of cooperation and teamwork, lacked good practices such as greeting, respect, appreciation, as well as health habits that are supposed to be inculcated into the learners during teaching and learning in Yoruba indigenous language. Instead, they merely taught the rudiments of numbers, letters, shapes and colours. The values which are supposed to be conveyed through communicating in indigenous languages were absent - they are dominated by foreign languages which do not effectively communicate sound societal norms and values. This implies that Yoruba language is an indispensable part of the Yoruba culture and Yoruba culture is enriched with enviable values, customs, morals and general way of life. Hence, all of these factors motivated me to conduct this study as an attempt to suggest ways in which teachers' understanding of cognitive justice could be enhanced in indigenous languages by early childhood education teachers in the Lagos State of Nigeria.

Contextually, teaching learners in the Foundation Phase in a language that is not their indigenous language could affect their cognitive abilities as well as negatively impact their learning processes (Marnewick & Worksheets, 2015). Similarly, a study by Oyelade (2017) reveals that in primary schools

where core school subjects such as the English language, Science subjects, Mathematics and Social Studies are taught in the Yoruba language, which is the indigenous language of the South Western people of Nigeria, the experimental classes performed significantly better than other classes. This concurs with Awopetu (2016) who mentions that the performance of pre-school learners who are taught in their indigenous language was better than their counterparts who were taught in the English language. Literature also identified that teaching learners in their home language enabled them to perform better (Abidogun, 2013; Ajepe & Ademowo, 2016; Hafiz & Fariiek, 2016; Kioko et al., 2014; Marnewick & Worksheets, 2015; Mhindu, 2016). Despite the above findings, there still remains a gap because of the reluctance of teachers in early childhood education to introduce the indigenous language as the learning and teaching. It is from this perspective that the use of both indigenous language and English language at early childhood education level of learning cannot be over emphasised.

Considering the above, it was clear that most studies dwelt on the importance of indigenous language on early childhood and primary schools' educational system. There is, however, a dearth of literature concerning the enabling or enhancement of cognitive justice in the indigenous languages in ECE, especially in the Lagos State of Nigeria. Hence, this study aimed to fill this gap by conducting this study on the topic: Early childhood education teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Currently, many Nigerian learners find it difficult to communicate in their home language; they do not understand indigenous verbal and non-verbal expressions, sign language, cultural values, local parables, and norms of their communities despite the fact that the Nigerian Education Policy [FGN] (2014) advises teachers to teach using indigenous languages in ECE. This is because Yoruba language in and out of school is regarded as vernacular and most parents prefer to communicate to their children in English language (Olatunji, 2023; Isaiah, 2023). However, recent studies show that some learners may not know indigenous stories but can narrate foreign stories (Ukala & Agabi, 2017). Hence, Shava and Manyike (2018, p. 65) claim that "schools have served as an instrument of colonial processes and knowledge hegemony".

Moreover, Odora Hoppers (2021) asserts that cognitive justice has the potential to unmask the

impact of indigenous knowledge hegemony through strengthening the voice of the marginalised. Since one of the primary principles of cognitive justice involves social justice, indigenous languages that were marginalised could be prioritised as language of learning and teaching (Ortiz 2022).

Significantly, cognitive justice (CJ) when related to indigenous languages, will allow all conversations between two or more people to exist cohesively in a specific area of knowledge (Davies, 2016). Thus, cognitive justice seeks an alternate way of making indigenous languages visible to learners, such that learners are introduced to the language of the immediate environment as a medium of instruction at the Foundation Phase (Van Der Velden, 2006). This is because multiple epistemologies could be recognised and incorporated into how knowledge is produced and legitimated. Hence, allowing epistemologies to function through the medium of indigenous languages is of great benefit to ECE learners (Shava, 2016). Accordingly, this study attempted to investigate ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

An appropriate theoretical framework offers several benefits to research work; for instance, it provides structure that explains how a researcher defines the study philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Ravitch and Carl (2016) concur that the theoretical framework guides researchers in contextualising formal theories into their studies. Also, a theoretical framework can be viewed as the foundation of any research as it provides useful theoretical insights to underpin each research study (Andersen & Skrede, 2017). Stirzaker and Sitko (2019) clarify that a theory informs the current understanding of what is going on. Since this study focused on promoting cognitive justice in indigenous languages in the Foundation Phase (FP) in Nigeria, the asset-based approach was suitable as the theoretical framework to underpin this study.

1.4.1 The Asset-based Approach

The asset-based approach was an alternative to the needs-driven approach (Nel, 2015) because it provided the foundation to strengthen available assets within the communities by focusing on individuals' inherent abilities to enhance situations that would facilitate social justice (Maclure,

2022; Wong-Villacres et al., 2022). Further, the asset-based approach focuses on the capacities, skills and social resources of people and their communities (Seebohm, Gilchrist, & Morris, 2009) which suggests what the community has, rather than what it does not have. Russell (2022) asserts that the asset-based approach is concerned with how untapped available resources are harnessed and utilised within the community in order to enhance the quality of services without external assistance or intervention. Hanachor and Wordu (2021) who explored the asset-based approach found that it assists community members to exploit their latent potentials, skills and capacities that could be thoroughly utilised to contribute to the social capital network of the community. Hence, this theory is potential-oriented in that it unearths strategies to exploit existing resources that can be directed towards uplifting communities (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996; Moayyerian et al., 2022). In addition, the asset-based approach fosters the effective utilisation of identified resources for sustainable development that would enhance the strengths and capabilities of communities (Fisher, 2022). As such, communities can work collaboratively to solve their problems - a contrast to the needs-based approach.

Furthermore, Kretzmann and McKnight (1996) contend that the asset-based approach is beneficial for the sustainable development of communities based on their strengths and potentials. It could also be regarded as a way of harnessing the skills and experiences of individuals for the development of communities - which can be the school and its surroundings. Importantly, the asset-based approach is regarded as an effective motivation tool that is concerned with the process of identifying and utilising individuals' dormant gifts and untapped talents to empower them to make astute decisions to enact appropriate interventions regarding the use of resources for the enhancement and rapid development of the community (El Rahman, 2022; Gilchrist, 2009).

Similarly, Cassetti et al. (2022) and Purcell-Gates et al. (2011) claim that the asset-based theory helps to identify, affirm, and call upon gifts, sources, skills, potentials, and knowledge that already exist within the communities, but were untapped. Cunningham et al. (2022) and Chile and Simpson (2004) reiterate that the asset-based theory contributes to enhancing the quality of people's lives which engenders a sense of communal pride and empowerment. Woodward et al. (2020) elaborates that the asset-based theory calls for the major participation of community members including inviting people to share their talents, resources, and skills to uplift the community in terms of

sustainable development through the creation of opportunities and playing an active role in the community. Moreover, Martin and Loomis (2013) and Tran (2022) note that the asset-based approach is used to initiate change via capacity-building and strengthening individual communities. In support, Barinaga and Parker (2013), Jolivéte (2015), Burgers (2017) and Zimmerman (2023) confirm that the asset-based theory is an Action Research process characterised by the emancipation and empowerment of people within a particular community. The asset-based approach is an alternative to the needs-driven approach in that it meets the needs of the current and future generations by assessing what the communities possess (Nel, 2020) while the need-based approach creates communities that are more consumer-oriented rather than creators of their own solutions (Myende & Hlalele, 2018). According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993, p. 25) assets are “gifts, skills and capacities” of “individuals, associations and institutions” within a community; therefore, teachers who are the primary assets in education should be transformation-oriented.

Myende and Chikoko (2014) and Chidakwa and Lunga (2021) describe tiers of assets which can be categorised into three groups. Firstly, the most easily accessible that are located within the school, are the primary assets such as learners, teachers, management and infrastructure within the school. Secondly, there are assets that are not controlled by the school such as local communities, organisations, parents, and interested individuals. Thirdly, there are outside assets that are not in the immediate community such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), research institutes, and national cooperatives. This is supported by Chikoko and Khanare (2012) who state that the primary tier is the most immediate to the community where assets are found within the school premises such as teachers who are endowed with useful resources to assist the school community to actualise set objectives.

Moreover, Ebersohn and Mbetse (2003) provide characteristics of the asset-based approach: acknowledgement of resources, and the potential within people, societies, and organisations including the promotion of self-determination, the development of school-community partnerships, and the reliance on inner-innovation, self-control, and self-empowerment.

Consequently, the asset-based approach was more appropriate for this study as it focused on teachers as assets who are endowed with talents and potentials to identify resources that could be effectively utilised for the benefit of the school-community through teachers' enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 Aim

- The aim of this study was to explore ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

Objectives

1.5.1.1 To explore ECE teachers' understanding of cognitive justice within indigenous languages;

1.5.1.2 To determine how ECE teachers' understanding promote cognitive justice in indigenous languages; and

1.5.1.3 To understand the reasons teachers in early childhood education, need to enable cognitive justice in indigenous languages in certain ways.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.6.1 Main Research Question

What is ECE teachers' understanding of the enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages?

Secondary Research Questions

1.6.1.1 What are ECE teachers' understandings of cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages?

1.6.1.2 How could ECE teachers' perceptions shape their enhancement of cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages?

1.6.1.3 Why do ECE teachers promote cognitive justice in indigenous languages in certain ways?

1.7 DATA GENERATION: ACTION RESEARCH

Data generation plays a crucial role in empirical research as it enables a researcher to answer critical research questions (Wilhelmy & Kohler, 2022). It is a critical process involving the gathering of vital and relevant information on research in line with stated objectives and research questions (Hendren et al., 2020; Swain & King, 2022). Since qualitative research is not rigid, it allows for the flexibility of employing a variety of research methods to generate data via focus group discussions, interviews, document analysis, life histories, questionnaires, observation, reflective journals, and visual media, among others (Cohen, 2018). In this study, I employed two data generation methods; namely, collage construction and focus group discussion. In addition, in order to strengthen the validity and authentication of the findings, I embarked on writing ‘field’ notes during the data generation processes. Further, the collaborative and dialogic methods were utilised to achieve the desired aim and objectives of this AR study which involved the integration of theory and action to address school problems through the interrogation of the existing knowledge of teacher-participants (Coghlan et al., 2019). This is supported by Khanare et al. (2019) who claim that the asset-based perspective of existing knowledge which is largely untapped in individuals, could be utilised to solve problems within the school system. Hence, action research, which primarily consists of cycles of action and reflection, is activated by following four steps: strategic planning, taking action and implementing the plan, observation, evaluation and self-evaluation, and reflection to make decisions for the possible next cycle of action research (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

The steps and activities within the research process according to the phases of AR are outlined below:

- (i) *Planning*: This is first stage where the researcher maps out the assets (the teachers in the school system). There is a meeting conducted to deliberate on devising a detailed strategic plan of action. My decision to embark on asset-mapping was based on the numerous benefits attached to identifying community assets as purported by Saidi and Kauri (2006) which enabled me to plan how to facilitate change, and to avail myself to identify and facilitate the utilisation of ‘not-yet-mobilised’ potentials for the benefit of the school-community. It was for this reason that I concur with Ferreira (2013) that the advantages of identifying and mapping assets are critical in assisting participants to obtain deep insights

into their latent skills, capabilities, potentials, gifts, and abilities which will enhance the mobilisation of their assets. Furthermore, based on my insight into the community's assets, skills, potentials and interaction between community members, addressing the identified challenges was not difficult. This also included in the discussion of the methods of data generation through the use of collage and focus group discussions.

Action: The identification of assets was followed by an action plan. The plan for this study was executed by focusing on the activities, the content, and the use and construction of a picture collage, and not on the artistic abilities or skills of the teachers. The researcher also ensured that this was not done hastily, but at a leisurely pace such that discussions ensued naturally during the construction of the picture collage, and at group level.

(ii) *Observation:* This entailed effective monitoring and assessing the impact of the action to determine how the untapped resources, skills, and competencies were being prompted and utilised. This phase involved the utilisation of information captured through the use of asset maps for asset-mobilisation to determine whether the planning matched the actions. The researcher penned notes based on the observations to determine if the resources were responsibly utilised in solving community problems. The observation at this phase aimed at confirming that positive transformation transpired.

(iii) *Reflection:* This was a significant part of the study where teachers expressed their feelings and reflected on their understandings of cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages. The final phase of AR coincided with the final phase of the asset-based approach regarding the aspects of managing mobilised assets and resources – in other words, the full responsibility and sustainability of mobilised assets were ascertained (Loots, 2011). The management of assets in ABA involved revising strategies, assessment of processes, and when necessary, the re-identifying and re-mobilising of assets to achieve the aim and objectives of the study. This implied that innovations and issues emanating from group discussions may have precipitated structuring questions for the next cycle of action research. Figure 1.1 below illustrates the four steps of AR:

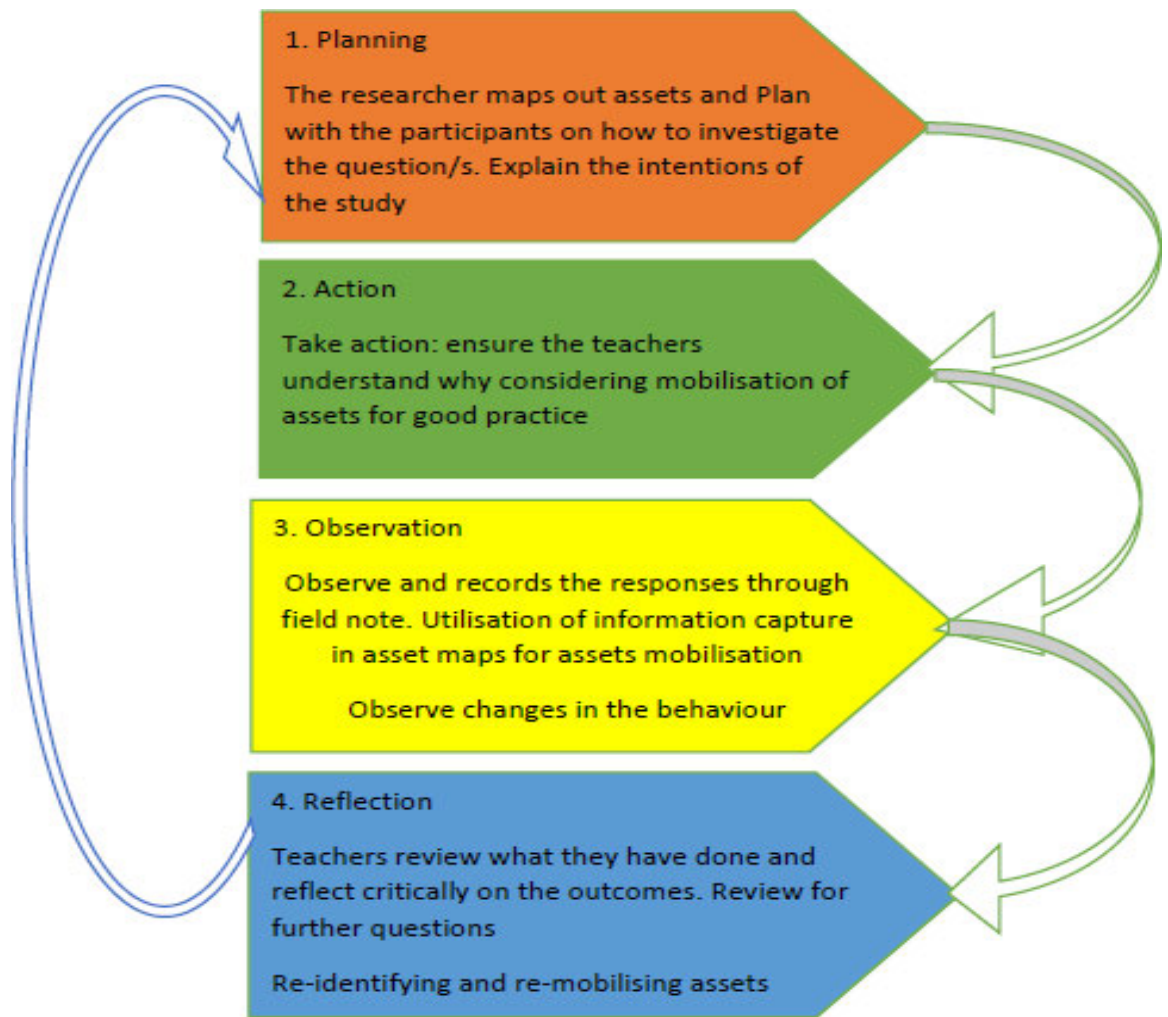


Figure 1.1 Steps and activities during data generation according to the phases of AR (Adapted: Swann, 2002).

Figure 1.1 above illustrates the steps and the activities during the data generation processes in accordance with the phases of action research: asset mapping, asset mobilisation, and asset management. These stages of action research, and the relationship between the phases and ABA, are also indicated. Further, the full and active involvement of the researcher during data generation is supported by Goodnough (2011) who states that participants exhibit more commitment when the direct and full involvement of the researcher is evident, in addition to there being a cordial and professional relationship between participants and the researcher which enhances the quality of the research study. Also, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), research methods assist the

researcher to collect relevant data that answers the research questions. The methods of generating data employed in this study are outlined below:

1.7.1 Collage

Collage, as an art-based research instrument, is a creative form that utilises documented images through pictorial representation. The cutting out of pictures from magazines, texts, and newspapers, and then gluing them onto a blank sheet of paper or cardboard stimulates information-seeking on a research topic that could assist in effectively dissecting a particular phenomenon (Ferro, 2021; Freeman, 2020). In support, Van der Vaart et al. (2018) and Coemans and Hannes (2017) claim that the construction of a collage is an art-based method for data generation processes in qualitative research. In elaboration, Culshaw (2019), Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010) state that collage-making is a participatory art-based method of research which involves the blending of materials on a cardboard to portray a phenomenon which empowers people to create and extrapolate meaning from images. Similarly, Leitch (2008) posits that collage construction involves the integration of works of art by using different materials such as paper, photographs, wool, grass, stickers, pictures, and stickers. Watt and Kehoe (2020) reiterate that the collection of rich data during data generation involves participants' selection of images to express their views about a particular topic in relation to the aim, objectives and research questions. This view resonates with that of Song et al. (2022) who add that the construction of a collage stimulates effective dialogue among participants that leads to deep insight, reflection, and sense-making of a subject under investigation. This implies that the participants have the opportunity to identify and choose which symbol, pictures, words or photographs they want to use in their collages, and how to construct their collages for meaning-making. Importantly, the use of collage in this study provided the opportunity for participants to cut and paste their images or symbols which resonated their opinions and understandings by connecting their own experiences to different aspects of cognitive justice regarding the promotion of indigenous languages as one of the languages of learning and teaching.

Furthermore, Dixson et al. (2018) maintain that the action process in AR which includes the four phases (planning, action, observation, and reflection) promotes the development of theory and meaningful analysis based on the lived-experiences of the participants. This is supported by Hanawalt (2016) who states that a collage combines artwork with research which enhances opportunities for participants to engage in deep-thought that promotes teamwork such that

marginalised voices are heard through dialogue and creativity. A collage is a powerful meaning-making tool that reveals the relationship that exists between researcher and participants which is aimed to stimulate the imagination, allows reflexive thinking on the best images to represent position, and produces rich data and open conversations (Garcia-Lazo, 2022; Nomakhwezi Mayaba & Wood, 2015).

This study's construction of the collage was linked to the aim: to explore early childhood education teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The four phases of AR in terms of collage construction (planning, action, observation, and reflection) are explained below:

1.7.1.1 Planning phase (1)

Step 1:

The first session was the **planning** phase of AR which concerned the researcher and co-researchers' preparation for data generation. In this phase, assets within the community were identified within the three tiers. The primary tiers were accessible within the community which included teachers, infrastructures, and learners. Secondary tiers which were located within organisations were found in the school-community that were not influenced by the school, but located outside the community which included NGOs and private businesses. The researcher embarked on asset-mapping to reveal the assets of the community while highlighting the interconnectedness among them. This could expose other hidden talents, assets, strengths and potentials within the community such that they could be activated and nurtured. This was aligned to the collage method that empowers people to create meaning which is critical to the principles of cognitive justice.

Step 2:

The planning phase involved activities where the participants collectively engaged in designing their performance objectives. Therefore, the researcher invited an expert in the field of education from an HEI as a co-researcher to facilitate a workshop with the participants to inform them on the details of the research topic, and to elaborate on the concept of cognitive justice because the participants were expected to be au fait with the challenges they were facing at school. In addition, the co-researchers were guided by the facilitator on what a collage entailed, and how it is developed by including extensive information, especially in line with the reasons for forming a collage group.

A sample of a collage completed for a previous research project was produced by the facilitator to clarify what was expected prior to engaging in collage-construction. Additionally, the researcher also invited a second seasoned researcher to facilitate another workshop on action research; he provided reasons for adopting AR which were linked to the focus on activities expected from the participants during the four phases of AR.

1.7.1.2 Action phase (2)

Asset mobilisation

The instrument for this action research phase also entailed collage construction and focus group discussions to explore early childhood teachers' understanding of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

Step 1

This second phase also corresponded to the second phase of AR, which concerned **ACTION**. Since the identification of assets results in action, it led to the capacity-building of the community. This phase validated the selection of the asset-based approach (ABA) because individuals shared their identified assets and mobilised them to upgrade the school community. I therefore guided the co-researchers to become more organised and active when they share knowledge and resources, and indulge in activities of common interest. In addition, during this phase of asset-mobilisation which involves the effective utilisation of information generated via asset-maps, I will further guide the utilisation of potential assets that might have been untapped, overlooked, or not mobilised to their full potential.

During this action phase the intention was to enhance the process of the mobilisation of resources since AR is about learning-by-doing to improve a particular practice. This commenced with the participants forming two groups of three participants each who were provided with collage construction materials (A4 papers, scissors, magazines, newspapers, small brush, coloured pencils, glue sticks, and markers). This session was of thirty-minute duration. The participants were encouraged to teamwork to share experiences and ideas in solving a particular problem. I motivated the two collage groups to be maximally engaged in creating a collage linked to their understanding of cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages.

Since the key aspects of AR in this session involved collaboration and participation to enhance

effective discussion during the process of data generation through constructing collages, I ensured that I further reduced the distance between the researcher and co-researchers so that the engagement of participants leads to the development of their own skills to direct the process of transformation within the school community.

In sum, I utilised collage construction for co-researchers to facilitate their rigorous participation in the data generation process in this phase. The rationale was that the mobilisation of the assets of a community required the harmonious collaboration of groups of people to brainstorm ideas and build networks of new connections without intimidation by freely expressing their voices in line with the tenets of cognitive justice to emancipate the oppressed and marginalised.

1.7.1.3 Observation phase (3)

Sharing collages

This third session corresponded with the third phase of AR, which led to co-researchers' **observations** that influenced the enhancement of cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages in early childhood education.

This session was of thirty-minute duration. This third phase of AR involved the creation of the collage. In this session prompts were utilised to enable participants' effective construction of their collage. The prompts were beneficial as they enabled the creation of a collage in line with participants' understanding of cognitive justice in indigenous languages which revealed the following:

- (i) The collage showed the oppression of indigenous languages during teaching and learning processes.
- (ii) The collage illustrated the threat to the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages during the EKO EXCEL (Excellence in Learner Education and Learning) class.
- (iii) The collage demonstrated the promotion of culture, norms, and values of the community, while revealing learners who possess a positive or negative mentality.
- (iv) The collage construction inspired collaboration among teachers and learners during teaching and learning processes through communicating in

indigenous languages.

- (v) The collage exposed the injustice of enforcing a foreign language as the language of learning and teaching, which marginalised the indigenous language.

The co-researchers were allowed to collaborate among themselves without any interference from the main researcher and the facilitators which ensured the effective utilisation of assets. This was based on the construction collages which indicated an in-depth understanding of the issue under investigation, including participants' observing themselves during the session. All proceedings were audio-recorded (with consent) to authenticate the findings.

In addition, I requested participants to focus incisively on the aspect concerning the enhancement of cognitive justice in relation to indigenous languages. The participants in their groups were requested to engage in the presentation of their collage to the other group members. This indicated that AR involved aspects that were personally executed by the participants in their own settings which empowered them to improve their own practice through collaboration with relevant individuals in the school-community. Next, each group had ten minutes to present the collage, which included answering questions asked by the other group's members because AR is activity-oriented. After presentation of their collages, discussions ensued which supplemented data from interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs).

The primary intention of this session was to foster empowerment among the participants by providing freedom for them to spontaneously express themselves on the topic of the enhancement of cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages. During this session, I observed the level of their empowerment in their voices and body language which originated from their practice and lived-experiences.

1.7.1.4 Reflection phase (4)

Reflecting on the process

This session corresponded with the fourth phase of **AR**. The instruments utilised were collages and focus group discussions. The rationale for adopting AR and the collage technique were to improve the understanding and knowledge of the phenomenon through reflection to promote self-

discovery and critical-thinking among participants concerning their experiences and previous knowledge. Specifically, this was based on critical elements of cognitive justice which included empowerment and emancipation.

In this last phase of AR, I also requested participants to indulge in reflective writing regarding their participation in collage construction. The participants were allowed to embark on two types of reflections: written and verbal. Each group in this session was allocated ten minutes for discussion and free-writing to reflect on their participation in the collage sessions during the workshop, planning, action, and observation phases. Spontaneity and honesty were required to elicit authentic responses to promote transformation, empowerment, and asset-mobilisation. Since this was one of the crucial phases of the AR, interference from the researcher and facilitator was not allowed.

Since the purpose of AR is to improve practice and competence at schools, it may necessitate re-reflection and re-mobilisation of assets through the cycle of action based on reflections on transformation outcomes, previous experiences, knowledge, and understanding of the current issue. Moreover, the component of AR in this last phase concerns commitment; and in order to ensure commitment at this level, all the participants were treated equally and harmoniously because their views were highly valued for cognitive justice processes to prevail. Also, I ensured that all the participants remained committed during the reflection process to appraise their work, evaluate the effectiveness of their practice, and recommend strategies to improve their teaching.

Lastly, the participants were expected to be committed to the data generation process which may be repeated if there was no meaningful transformation. Drawing from the asset-based approach of building the community from inside-out such that resources can be effectively utilised for the benefit of the community, the study employed the action research design to elicit positive change within the school-community. The participating teachers were regarded as primary assets within the community. By identifying their potential strengths they were able to exploit their talents and skills to engender positive change in order to build stronger and functional communities to foster cognitive justice in indigenous languages. Because no community is devoid of assets and resources, this study explored how the skills, gifts, and talents of individuals can be optimally utilised to enhance transformation in real-life situations.

1.7.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus group discussions can be referred to as discourses among individuals on a common subject to empower them to speak collectively rather than individually such that views emerge from interactions with each other without any influence from the researcher (Cohen et al., 2018). Neo, Lim, Tan and Ong (2022) add that the uniqueness of a focus group discussion goes beyond generating essential and sensitive data - it also enhances the quality of data rooted in collaboration. The focus group discussion is therefore a unique method of generating data that emerges as result of interactions between the researcher and the participants (Denscombe, 2014). In congruence, Nyumba et al. (2018) and Flynn et al. (2018) confirm that one of the vital instruments to obtain in-depth information in qualitative research is through focus group discussions. This is supported by Pineda et al. (2022) who state that focus group discussions maximise effective communication because participants are motivated to engage in an open discussion during the data generation process. Also, it is evident from literature that one of the ways to solicit information and generate rich data is by applying the focus group discussion (FGD) technique. In addition, this study applies action research processes which can also be referred to as a cycle of action and reflection that is concerned with transformation and emancipation (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). I also employed the four cycles of AR to generate data as explained below:

In accordance with the asset-based approach which is the process of building the community from bottom-up where resources are effectively utilised to benefit the community, this study employed the action research design to engender transformation within the school-community. The participating teachers were regarded as primary assets within the community who possessed potentials and strengths to enable them to utilise their talents and skills to produce positive change in order to build functional school-communities. In this regard, teachers offered their knowledge, experiences, and skills for the sustainable development of the school-community, which involved emancipatory empowerment and transformative practices. This approach also stimulated positive change in teachers' teaching techniques which promoted cognitive justice in indigenous languages in early childhood education in Nigeria.

1.8 RESEARCH SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

Creswell and Creswell (2017) state that the selection of participants in qualitative research by using purposeful sampling is based on who can best inform research questions and increase the understanding of the phenomenon under study. Purposeful sampling involves the process of

collecting information through proper selection and identification (Kalu, 2019), unlike random sampling in quantitative research (Palinkas et al., 2015). The purposeful sampling employed in this study was uncomplicated and convenient as the researcher was already familiar with the relevant people who were deliberately selected, given the researcher's experience as a teacher-trainer (Denscombe, 2014). In other words, participants were selected according to specific qualities they possessed that would enhance the quality of the study.

Present statistics reveals that in the Lagos State alone, there are over 1000 Government primary schools/pre-primary schools (Akinfenwa, 2020). Purposive sampling was used to select the school (research site) in the Lagos State as it was appropriate for this study, because of its proximity to my office making it convenient, less costly, and easily accessible to me. In addition, class teachers were purposively selected by me as the sample for this study because I was familiar with them as I often visited the school in my capacity as a lecturer in the college of education to supervise teaching practice. The reason for choosing these teachers was that their knowledge and experiences would evoke a rich and detailed understanding of how early childhood education teachers enhance cognitive justice in indigenous languages during teaching and learning processes in the classroom. Moreover, this qualitative research involved a thorough descriptive and explorative inquiry that enhanced the research study by engaging a relatively few numbers of participants since qualitative research is not about the number of participants, but on quality in-depth information elicited from the participants. This was the main reason I chose ten class teachers from one pre-primary centre as I anticipated that they will provide me with rich and thick information on the phenomenon under investigation.

The school (research site) had a population of about 150 learners in the pre-primary phase. The ten teacher-participants had a wide range of teaching experience, specialisations, qualifications, length of service, and at least two years in early childhood education practice. Data was generated from the teachers through collage construction and focus group discussions. Also, as a qualitative researcher I avoided bias, and thus became a research instrument to interpret participants' lived-experiences (Razavi & Zeynodini, 2019). In addition, the location of this study was illustrated with the assistance of the map of Nigeria's Lagos State (figure 1.2 below):



Figure 1.2 The map of Nigeria (adapted: (Adebayo et al., 2016, p. 37)

Geographically, Nigeria is one of the largest countries in Africa and the biggest in West Africa. The country is divided into 6 regions and 36 states to form a Federation. It is difficult to identify a single Nigerian culture because the cultural identity of any ethnic group is mainly determined by language.

In the 36 states of Nigeria, there are various ethnic groups with a particular language and dialect (Olajoke & Olamide, 2017). In this regard, Oyemike Victor Benson et al. (2017) assert that there are over 400 languages in Nigeria which originate from various ethnic groups with the Yoruba making up about 30% of the population. There are three main ethnic groups: Yoruba, Igbo, and

the Hausa. The Yoruba live in south western Nigeria, the Igbo live in south eastern Nigeria, and the Hausa live in northern Nigeria. Abuja is the Federal capital. This study focused on the Lagos State which is situated in the low-lying coastal region of south western Nigeria. The Lagos State is the most populous state in Nigeria with 9 113 605 people (Idike & Eme, 2015). Lagos was originally inhabited by the Awori, a subgroup of the Yoruba people in the 15th century. There are 20 Local Government Areas in the Lagos State, and the indigenous language of the environment is Yoruba. The main location of this study is the Ojo Local Government area in the Lagos State where the language of the immediate environment is Yoruba. The participants spoke Yoruba and other languages, and they resided in the community where the data was generated.

1.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Cohen et al. (2018) claim that data analysis is a continuous process that begins and ends with research. It involves the process of critical examination and evaluation of data generated during research processes in order to uncover hidden information that are meaningful to enrich the research study (Kumar 2019). Wahyuni (2012) claims that data analysis entails processes involving interpretation of raw data which has to be well managed in preparation for analysis which entails dismantling, segmenting, and reassembling in order to draw inferences to precipice meaningful findings (Chowdhury, 2019). Hence, this data analysis process was conducted thoroughly for meaning-making to strengthen the validity of findings. Similarly, Alguliyev et al. (2017) confirm that data analysis is concerned with organising, analysing and interpreting which allow for easy identification of patterns and themes to assist the researcher to discover relationships, and develop concise explanations with a high degree of generality that unifies ideas (Vaismoradi et al., 2016).

The researcher, therefore, critiqued and generated theories regarding the subject of enquiry. Thematic analysis was adopted in order to identify categories of patterns and recurring messages that dominate the data sets (Braun et al., 2016; Eisner, 2017). Thematic analysis transcends mere counting of explicit and implicit ideas and words; it identifies and describes both implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Chowdhury, 2015; Holmgren, 2019). Since focus group discussions and collage methods combined to elicit data, constant comparison analysis was executed to dissect discussions after transcribing recordings to ensure room for further exploration. This process involved recording statements from the focus group discussions, classifying them, and comparing them with other focus group meetings. The data that was collected through picture collages for

categorisation was been processed for analysis.

Demuth and Terkildsen (2015) and Smith et al. (2015) reiterate that thematic analysis involves the transcription of all data. Thematic Analysis (TA) did not require rigorous critical analysis but simply the analysis of generated data from participants' experiences (Snelgrove, 2019). Braun and Clarke (2020) note that thematic analysis provides for a more accessible form of analysis, and offers insight into how themes are identified in line with research questions, aim, and stated objectives. Similarly, categorisation and interpretation of data with identical themes were synthesised and generalised. Braun and Clarke (2021) maintain that thematic analysis is very useful for summarising, highlighting, and comparing similarities and differences to construct key features when there is a larger data set. In this regard, I therefore embarked on a well-structured approach to manage data which would help to produce rich, detailed and well-organised analyses of the findings (Cappione III et al., 2015). In sum, the data generated in this study was critically and thoroughly examined and evaluated by the researcher.

1.10 VALUE OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

It is the desire of the researcher that the successful revelation of findings would provide an understanding of the importance of cognitive justice in indigenous languages at the Foundation Phase (FP). It is also hoped that the findings of this study provide intervention strategies for Government, stakeholders, policymakers, learners, and curriculum planners. It is envisaged that this research study adds new knowledge by contributing to existing literature in the area of cognitive justice and indigenous languages.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All ethical considerations were observed in this study. Roberts and Allen (2015) purport that ethical considerations consist of that which is right or wrong when undertaking a research study. In addition, Haines (2017) maintains that thoroughness is prioritised as an ethical issue in qualitative research. Creswell and Poth (2016) add that this includes obtaining permission for ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), the Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), and the headteacher of the pre-primary school in Nigeria. Also, I disseminated consent letters to all selected participants to read, understand, question, and sign

(Allen & Trask 2015). All the procedures involved to conduct an ethical study were strictly adhered to by the researcher (Arifin, 2018). I also clarified that participation was voluntary, and that they were free to exit at any stage without any prejudice. In addition, they were informed comprehensively at a designated meeting on how the research would be conducted in order make an informed decision on whether to participate in the research study (Cohen et al., 2018).

1.12 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One: This chapter provided the introduction and background to this study, the rationale of the study, statement of the problem, theoretical framework, as well as the research aim, objectives, and research questions. In addition, the data generation processes, according to the phases of action research were explained. This chapter also described the selection of research sites and co-researchers, data analysis, interpretation, reporting, value of the study, ethical considerations, layout of chapters, definition of operational terms, and concluded with the chapter summary.

Chapter Two: This chapter presented the theoretical framework informing early childhood education teachers understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The theoretical framework guided this study in conjunction with the asset-based approach. It also covered the relevance of the asset-based approach to the study, phases of the ABA, and the application of ABA in the school system.

Chapter Three: This chapter reviewed the literature on current approaches, and provided the contextual framework of the study. The review of related literature delved into relevant studies from ECE national and international scholars of, specifically on teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The chapter also explained diverse ways in which teachers in early childhood education could enable cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

Chapter Four: This chapter focused on data generation procedures, the research design, and methodology that underpinned this study. In addition, it described the research paradigm mode of enquiry, and the adoption of AR. It also detailed the procedures for data generation and data analysis. Lastly, the chapter outlined ethical considerations and the processes of ensuring trustworthiness.

Chapter Five: This chapter focused on the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data that emerged from participants' responses during interaction and presenting the results of research in

the form of drawings and focus group discussions. The chapter also provided a thematic analysis of data generated through the interpretation of the transcriptions of the collected data.

Chapter six: This chapter provided the findings based on data generated from meetings through drawings, focus group discussions, and written reflections during the process of data generation. In addition, the findings of this study were interpreted, discussed, and re-contextualised using the ABA and relevant literature. The chapter also identified dynamic strategies of promoting cognitive justice in indigenous languages through the involvement and commitment of primary assets within the community.

Chapter Seven: This concluding chapter reiterated the theoretical framework and transformative approach to promote early childhood education teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. In addition, it presented the summary and overall assessment of the study. Lastly, it outlined the conclusions, implications of the study, recommendations for future research, and concluded the study as a whole.

1.13 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

1.13.1 Enhancement

Enhancement can be referred to as any process that provides an opportunity to someone with adequate power or authority to do something that will yield positive results (Lynch, 2018). This is supported by Legg (2019) who states that enhancement involves situations of helping someone with the best intentions of solving a particular problem, and to help access resources by empowering people to make their own choices. According to Gardiner (2020), enhancement is the process of compiling a strategic plan and guide to paint a clear picture on how success can be achieved through motivation. The term enhancing can also be referred to as empowerment that emphasises cordial relationships that exist among the people by creating awareness about aspects of life that people can enact for themselves to encourage individuals to grow and develop within their family, community or society at large (Bertino et al., 2019; Newberger & Melton, 2008). Desborough (2019) elucidates that it is a process where systems can become self-improving rather than relying on top-down control in executing tasks. Lewinson et al. (2018) note that enhancement provides a connecting resource for solving various problems in order for participants to gain better understanding, more confidence, competence, and capabilities to uplift communities. In this study, enhancement refers to the act of improving or augmenting cognitive in indigenous languages, where teachers' understanding of cognitive justice will promote or improve their quality of

teaching in early childhood education.

1.13.2 Cognitive Justice

Cognitive justice is defined by Van Der Velden (2006) as principles that are based on the idea that knowledges should co-exist in a dialogic relationship with each other, which is primarily to foster visibility of other ways of knowing. Further, it is claimed that cognitive justice is a “normative principle for the equal treatment of all forms of knowledge” (Van Der Velden, 2006, p. 12). The concept of cognitive justice recognises the plurality of knowledge by emphasising the appropriate forms of knowledge to co-exist (Visvanathan, 2011). In this study, cognitive justice addresses forms of knowledge and promote a more inclusive and equitable understanding of what constitutes traditional and local knowledge that includes the indigenous languages which have often been marginalised or oppressed.

1.13.3 Indigenous Languages

Indigenous languages refer to the language of the indigenous peoples which goes beyond the identification of their origin or membership in a community. It also incorporates the ethical values of the ancestors, and they hold in high esteem indigenous knowledge which guarantees a sustainable future (UNESCO, 2019). An indigenous language is also defined as any language that is peculiar and native to a community (Walsh, 2005). In support, Shava and Manyike (2018) assert that indigenous languages are the conveyers of knowledge and wisdom of communities through stories, proverbs, folktales, myths, poetry, and songs that give meaning to individual communities, cultures and societies. In this study, indigenous languages refer to languages spoken by the indigenous people, the indigenous language in this study is Yoruba language which is one of the three major indigenous languages in Nigeria. These languages are often tied to the culture, traditions, and identity of the people that speak them.

1.13.4 Early Childhood education

Early Childhood education (ECE) is provided for learners in formal school settings at a crucial stage where basic skills are inculcated, and cognitive abilities are developed through meaningful interactions (Okoroafor et al., 2022; Cabrillos et al., 2023). Yusuf et al. (2023) and Penstate Extension (2022) add that early childhood education is the solid rock that supports the actualisation of a learner’s dream at all levels including tertiary education. The term early childhood education is often referred to as pre-school, pre-primary, pre-kindergarten, day-care nursery school -

irrespective of the name given to it, the school is foundational in that it prepares the learner for elementary education (Giddens & Sutton, 2017). Early childhood education may be formal or informal for learners between 1 to 5 years of age. Oyero et al. (2020) claim that ECE is any well-planned educational programme that aims to add value to learners lives through the promotion of mental processes, physical prowess, and linguistic ability from birth to 8 years (Follari, 2015; Gramling, 2015).

While UNICEF (2019) provides a clear interpretation of the concept of early childhood education (ECE) as being the beginning of learner's journey to greatness in life, learners only reach their full potential through eradicating inequalities, peace-promotion, and creating prosperous societies. Along similar lines, the National Association for the Education of Young Learners NAEYC (2019) asserts that the early childhood education stage is critical because it is the phase of rapid development and growth in the learner where the brain develops faster than any period in life. Therefore, "Early years in life are widely accepted as the most important period during which learners experience cognitive, language, perceptual, socio-emotional, and motor development which they will need for future achievements and social functioning" (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016, p. 33). Anna and Ossom (2018) reiterate that early childhood education is a vital period in a learner's life as it provides a solid foundation for meaningful achievement and sustainable development in the future. Oppong Frimpong (2021) confirms that early childhood education is significant early in the life of learners between the ages of 0-6 years as it provides learners with the opportunity to interact with the environment to precipitate meaningful experiences that will foster development. In this study, early childhood education is refer to the early years of the child's life that is so crucial and highly significant for the overall development of the child.

1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This introductory chapter of the study provided an overview on ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. It also presented the background and explained the rationale for the study based on the needs for conducting this research. The study's aim, objectives and research questions were stated for guiding and framing each chapter of this study. In addition, the theoretical framework used to underpin this study, the action research design, the methodology, value of the research, and ethical considerations were presented. The following chapter (2) focuses on the theoretical framework of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the background and explained the rationale for the study based on the needs for conducting this research. The study's aim, objectives and research questions were stated for guiding and framing each chapter of this study. Meanwhile, this chapter explored the theoretical framework used to underpin the study. It focused on the asset-based approach to explore ECE teachers' understanding of the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. One salient objective of this study was to propose strategies through which the asset-based approach could be effectively implemented by the active involvement and harnessing of identified resources as pathways to advance people's voices within the community. As such, the study promoted confidence in teachers to recognise and resolve their challenges themselves. This implied empowering and transforming teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages in the context of ECE. In addition, the attainment of triangulation was explained, while the latter part of the chapter provided reasons for the application of theory to the school system. Lastly, the chapter concluded with a succinct summary.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK DEFINED

Theoretical framework, as a concept, is derived from two words, *theoretical* and *framework*; two words which were critically examined in this study. Since the term *theory* has various definitions articulated by various scholars, it can be generally defined as a concept that is formalised with inferences and observations in order to explain phenomena (Brouthers et al., 2022). Cavioni and Oruaghi (2020) mention that a theoretical framework is selected as problem-solving tool for researchers and practitioners to uncover in-depth knowledge to answer questions related to a topic under investigation. In line with current literature used to validate the strength and authenticity of the results of a research study by other scholars, a theoretical framework is a logically developed plan with an integrated set of concepts to engage the researcher purposely to adhere to the set aim and objectives of the study to attain credible findings (Varpio et al., 2020). Clark et al. (2022) elaborates that theory leads to answers as to why events occur in certain ways, and why people

behave in a certain manner. While every theory has primary targets and objectives to foreground an issue (Dadashpoor & Shojaee, 2022), Adejola (2020) asserts that theories are based on predictions of a phenomenon which seek to provide basic answers to the *what*, *how* and *why* questions concerning a particular phenomenon's occurrence. This is supported by Nilsen (2016) who contends that a sound theory will provide a comprehensive explanation of *how* and *why* a particular relationship leads to a particular event or issue.

The term *theory* is considered as a body of knowledge that directs since it possesses the ability to explain in detail the past, present, and to predict the future. This implies that a firm theoretical foundation strengthens the quality of research outcomes while shedding light on a particular phenomenon (Crawford, 2020). Similar to a blueprint, it involves elements within a structure, and how it correlates with each other; hence, theory facilitates structuring an idea that exists in relation to other ideas (Goncher et al., 2023). Furthermore, a considerable body of literature affirms that since theory enhances the understanding of research, we have to make-sense of human interactions through interrogation and observation to meet stringent criteria before it qualifies as a theory (Ahlemann et al., 2013; Hunt & Thomson, 2017; Johnson, 2017; Schieltz et al., 2017). The characteristics are as follows (i) Clear, logical, and coherent definition of terms or variables; (ii) Clearly described and stated relationships that exist among variables to make specific predictions; (iii) It is based on quantitative and qualitative empirical data, and comprises of concepts, themes, various principles, and constructs; (iv) Its predictions must be general enough to be quite obvious, clear, and applicable to multidimensional contexts; (v) Its concepts and principles are unambiguous to promote enhancement and accurate predictions of events in the near future; and (vi) It situates what is occurring, and the reasons for such occurrences (Varpio et al., 2020).

Consistent with above, DeYoung and Krueger (2020) describe theory as the guidelines that provide the lens for the construction of research. I concur with Li et al. (2020) that theory has abilities to predict an outcome based on specific inputs; or that theory is highly intricate with integrative functions on generalised thinking or the result of that thinking (Hunt & Thomson, 2017; Saviano et al., 2016).

Considering the above characteristics of a theory, I concur with Savolainen and Thomson (2022) who clarify that theory facilitates a deep understanding of actual events since it is grounded in local contexts and indigenous perspectives. Glanz and Rimer (2017) state that theory produces a pathway for researchers to name what they observe, and understanding incisively the relationship

that exists to make human interaction meaningful in order to contribute to knowledge in the area of specialisation, and for further theorisation. Similarly, theory as a concept is explained by Schutt (2018) as that which is interwoven as a set of variables, based on specific predictions of a phenomenon that will assist researchers in formulating research questions that can elicit information for data analysis.

Importantly, it is better to grasp an understanding of *framework* within the context of empirical research. In simple terms, a framework is a set of theoretical constructs that represent a way of organising a body of knowledge that is scientifically interesting regarding a particular phenomenon (Frig & Hartmann, 2020). I concur that a framework is also a blueprint that involves the implementation of procedures or strategies for the attainment of desired aims and objectives of an organisation (Rudgers et al., 2018). However, once the research data and relevant framework are used as a lens to view the presence of discrepancies (and where it occurs), the question is whether the framework can be used to also explain contrasting characteristics (Savolainen & Thomson, 2022).

The theoretical framework which guided this study, assisted in measuring the statistical relationships (Tamene, 2016) by providing direction via procedures for data analysis and interpretation (Kivunja, 2018). In other words, the theoretical framework guides the research in order to make-sense of an event or phenomenon which could proffer solutions or shed more light on a societal problem (Imenda, 2014). Hence, for this study, several social science theories were deliberated on and one theory was chosen, which is the assets-based approach. This was used as a guide to understand early childhood education teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. This implies that, in this study, the theoretical framework links the researcher to the current sources, presents ideas that directs the research, assists the research to select suitable questions for the study. Additionally, Hughes et al. (2019, p. 27) state that a theoretical framework consists of the following:

- (i) Stating the theory or theories that inform the formulation of the problem to be studied;
- (ii) Mapping the significant concepts, constructs, and propositions of the theory;
- (iii) Illustrating on the map whether the constructs are distinct or overlap (showing links or the lack of them with lines, arrows, geometric shapes, open spaces between shapes, etc.);
- (iv) Constructing a narrative that accompanies the illustration;

- (v) Identifying literature sources from pioneers, proponents, and opponents of each theory (including relevant primary and secondary sources); and
- (vi) Speaking in-depth about components of the theoretical framework that are under investigation.

In sum, and drawing from Darlington et al. (2018) and Murray et al. (2019), a theoretical framework can be referred to as the epistemological paradigm a researcher adopts in looking at a given research problem which consists of a structure which guides the researcher's activities during data generation.

2.2 THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since a theoretical framework is referred to as a structure in the composition of a scholarly study which is based on current knowledge, concrete findings, and comprehensive contributions based on a particular empirical study (Agovino, Cerciello, & Musella, 2019), this study aimed to be guided by a theoretical framework consisting of the asset-based approach. This theory provides an appropriate strength-based lens to foster transformation regarding teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

2.2.1 Discussion on the Asset-based Approach

The historical origin of the asset-based approach can be traced to the industrialisation of jobs, businesses and governments, which led to gross unemployment and job losses in the United States of America (USA) which propelled people to become proactive by proffering solutions to confront their challenges. In order provide sustainable solutions to the challenges, two approaches were conceived: firstly, there was the focus on communities' needs and deficiencies, and, secondly on empowering communities to identify and address their own problems by assuming ownership of their own future through the utilisation of available local assets (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Nel et al., 2023). (Ramatea & Khanare, 2021; Zimmerman, 2023; Russell, 2022).

Contrastingly, the needs-based approach was one-sided and revealed its deficiency by advocating that human capital emanates from outside the community (Garcia, 2020). This was because leaders in organisations and communities inherited deficit mindsets by problem-solving without the mobilisation of community assets (Ab Halim & Noor, 2023). Moreover, Flint and Jagers (2021) criticise the shortcomings of the need-based approach which involved the creation of social change through outside actors in line with the deficit form of community development, while ignoring the

capacity and strengths of people within communities. Therefore, this study explored the identification and mobilisation of available resources in schools and within community contexts to enhance the effective utilisation of the resources to benefit the people within their own communities.

The Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) was originally conceived as an approach to support community development regarding deprived inner-city populations in the USA in the early 1990s (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996). The initial focus of ABCD was on empowering communities to identify and address their own problems through exploiting available local assets. This was because the asset-based philosophy emanated from the development of an entire community based on the ability of the people within to invest their strength, potentials, and skills for the sustainable development of the community (Garcia, 2020). Lu'Lu'IL et al. (2022) assert that ABCD focuses primarily on the empowerment of local human potentials in order to improve and promote the development of the community. Since implementation was enacted by local non-specialists using local resources, less attention was paid to the monitoring of ABCD than to ABCD processes in ways that would be accessible to the locals. However, "Today in hundreds of communities across five continents, ABCD initiatives focus on identifying and utilising the assets of a community which include the skills and potentials of local residents, the power of local associations, the resources of public, private and non-profit institutions, and the physical and economic resources of local places so the community itself can respond to its own needs to manage internal issues (Kretzmann et al., 2005, p. 31). Thus, Russell (2022) provides a clear perspective of how community development can be enhanced when people collaborate through the process of identifying assets within the community, and then connecting them for effective utilisation.

The asset-based approach is a community-driven bottom-up development approach that focuses on potential-exploration in order to foster transformation and sustainable development (Reddy & Barbalat, 2022). At this juncture, it is convenient to emphasise the primary tier asset pointed out by Chikoko and Khanare (2012) who maintain that the school system which includes the teachers, learners, headteachers, and the school infrastructure form a unique combination of assets which provides a better future and solid foundation for the learners at school level. Alexiou et al. (2022) and Omodan (2023) add that by the asset-based approach we refer to multidimensional practices which are vehicles to enhance meaningful development rather than focusing on challenges in the community.

2.2.3 Justification for the Triangulation of the Study

The aim of this study was to explore ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. This study acknowledged the fact that the Yoruba indigenous language is confronted with various challenges, mostly at the ECE level. Since a conceptual framework is referred to as a network of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena, this qualitative study engaged the principles of theoretical triangulation as it intertwines with the asset-based approach, cognitive justice, and indigenous languages which reinforces the findings (Saračević et al., 2019). Therefore, to achieve the purpose of this study, I decided to integrate the asset-based approach and cognitive justice tenets for a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation since triangulation is a process of using different approaches (Burton & Obel, 2011). Also, Thurmond (2001) states that triangulation contributes immensely to increased confidence in collecting data, creating innovative ways of understanding the phenomenon, revealing unique findings, and integrating theories to foster a better understanding of the research problem to be solved. More importantly, it enhances the in-depth understanding of the data for critical analysis to reach findings which can contribute positively to community change and to avoid the acceptance of untested notions. Moreover, it enhances confidence in the development of new concepts that may promote theory development.

This implies that triangulation in this study also enhanced the understanding of the phenomenon. In this regard, I concur with Moon (2019) and Pettersson et al. (2018) that triangulation is one of the methods that does not function in isolation, but rather promotes reliability in a research study by enhancing the dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability of research findings while fostering the attainment of authentic and verifiable results during evaluation processes.

2.2.4 Asset-based Approach within the Positive Psychology Discipline

It is interesting to note that one of the most exciting scientific developments gaining momentum today is positive psychology. This is because science is not a mere understanding of the universe, but also of human emotions, hopes, aspirations, skills, potentials, and talents for the creation of a harmonious world (Compton & Hoffman, 2019). Wijekuruppu et al. (2016) affirm that positive psychology is the other domain of knowledge that needs further exploration to develop individuals' and communities' inherent strengths. Since, psychology goes beyond the study of weaknesses, it

also focuses on strength and virtues, not only enriching the best things within, but also striving to mend areas where there are lapses or weaknesses (Seligman & Adler, 2018). Sheldon and King (2001) also explain positive psychology as a study that is scientific-oriented emphasising what is right, what is improving, and what will enhance the peaceful functioning of human beings in spite of challenges within the community.

Additionally, the relation between the asset-based approach and positive psychology is of importance as the two are strength-based approaches as both focus on positive transformation by empowering people through the effective utilisation of resources within the communities which facilitates development without dwelling on their weaknesses (Clifton & Harter, 2003; Lask, 2010). This is supported by Fairlearner and Bibb (2016) that the strength-based approach is characterised by innate values embedded in a person that engender sound habits, passion, and motivation. Similarly, Eloff and Ebersohn (2001) purport that the asset-based approach emphasises potentials, skills, capacity-building and social resources in communities that could be utilised to solve social problems. In addition, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) agree that positive psychology acknowledges that addressing needs is a product of an individual's strength, while the asset-based approach, according to Khanare (2009, 5, p.8), has "a strong correlation within the inherent capacities, skills and social resources found in each individual to benefit the survival and social functioning of the whole school".

However, some researchers argue against positive psychology despite the nature of its positive-oriented-focus without emphasising needs (Forster, 2005; Kowalski, 2002). Positive psychology focuses on studying positive traits and behavior of individuals in order to build human strength, nurture ingenuity, enrich communities, and express positive emotions such as joy, happiness, optimism, hope, confidence, contentment, astute decision-making, and a voice for change (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The asset-based approach, according to Eloff and Ebersohn (2001, p. 151), "focuses on what is currently present in the environment and what the capacities inherent to the individuals and the environment are. It does not start with what is lacking or problematic. It has a strong internal focus, which means that problem-solving and mission development, need to come from within".

Figure 2.1 below illustrates how the asset-based approach could be used to address the challenges confronting learners during teaching and learning processes in the classroom. The first column on the right reflects the risk factors which include suffering, distress, challenges and adversity which characterised the experiences of learners in the classroom. This study considered such risks and thus sought to suggest solutions. In an attempt to proffer solutions, the focus falls on the column

on the left which presents the effective utilisation of assets, strengths, capacities, potentials, skills, resources, control, and powers to deal with such risks. Similarly, the asset-based approach is applied to address the issues of human oppression, conflict, hegemony, abuse of power, and marginalisation of indigenous languages. Therefore, in order to effectively mobilise teachers' assets and resources, it is the function of relationships, networks and partnerships to share primary assets rather than waiting for resources to be provided from the outside (Zimmerman, 2023).

Further, Figure 2.1 illustrates how positive psychology could be employed to suggest solutions to the challenges identified as risk factors through capacities, potentials, skills, available resources, gifts, and talents to promote quality outcomes (McMenamin et al., 2023; Hernandez, 2022). Moreover, the process of using the asset-based approach to deal with the risks also reveals teachers' resilience of circumventing challenges by activating coping strategies and leveraging assets and resources within the community (Ahumada-Newhart et al., 2021; Alexiou et al., 2022).

However, the focus of this study was on how to use the capacities, potentials, skills, gifts, strengths and resources possessed by the teachers to deal with the challenges (Shava & Manyike, 2018).

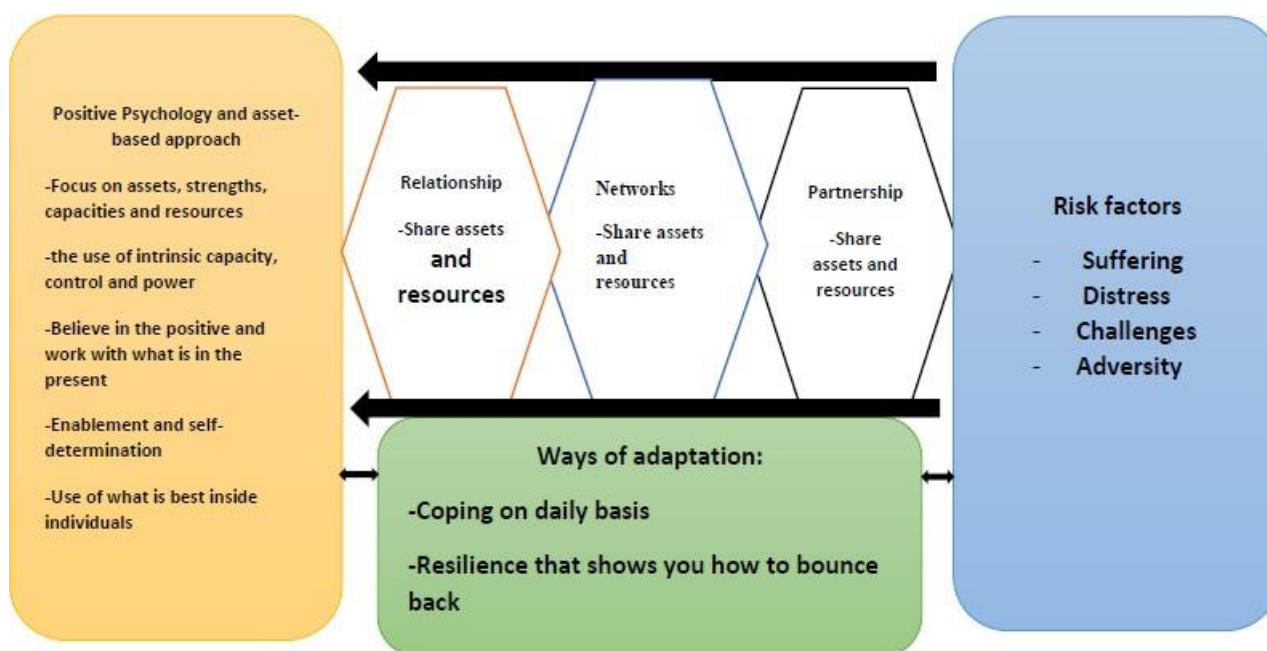


Figure 2.1 Using the asset-based approach to address challenges (adapted: Eloff, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

2.2.5 Relevance and Application of the Asset-based Approach (ABA)

This section examined how the asset-based approach was linked to this study; in other words, what was the relevance of this approach to this study. This study is transformational in nature since the primary objective was to instill positive attitudes in the communities. Moreover, the asset-based method is a community development collaborative, people-oriented, and citizen-driven-approach for the effective utilisation of available resources to enhance positive change (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2022; Torrent-Sellens et al., 2023).

Importantly, ABA is an integral part of community development as its application could contribute to the wellness of a school community, where available resources are efficiently utilised for engendering positive change especially in teaching and learning within the school system (Omodan, 2023). The asset-based approach is invaluable as it facilitates people (and communities) to teamwork to achieve positive transformation through applying their skills, talents, and experiences for community development. High et al., (2022) point out that quality time and effort must concentrate on needs and problem-solving to achieve success via the utilisation of innate and existing strengths, capabilities, potentials and assets within the community (Russell, 2022). This is because individuals, families and communities have what it takes to be problem-solvers through what they possess in terms of potentials, capacities, skills, resources and assets which can be exploited to control their affairs without external intervention (Hunter et al., 2022; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Ntsiapane et al., 2023).

Similarly, Kasonga (2019) and Lopez (2018) state that the asset-based approach focuses primarily on the capabilities, resources, and properties within the community which can effectively solve community problems. This is because the main focus of ABA is on what the community possesses, rather than what the community does not possess, which enriches community development and social justice (Wong-Villacres, Gautam, Ismail, Kumar, Pei, & Motti, 2022).

Since the focus of this study was to explore the relevance of teachers as primary assets and stakeholders within their communities such that they could use their potential, gifts, innate abilities and resources to promote cognitive justice in indigenous languages which may enhance development and sustainability. Further, there was the need to understand how the asset-based approach could be best exploited to benefit the community. Moreover, asset-based approaches

have the potential to build partnerships with the primary tiers on how teachers could identify assets within their communities to use them during the teaching and learning processes in the classroom for positive transformation (Paradise et al., 2022).

Therefore, the asset-based approach grounded this study on early childhood education teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. Accordingly, the individual in the community needed a change of attitude to identify problems, critically analyse, avoid negativism, and practice positive thinking in line with Flores and Kyere's (2020) contention that positive relationships should be built to enhance commitment among communities. McShame and Coffey (2022) claim that an understanding of the asset-based approach in the school system empowers communities in decision-making processes to enhance sustainable development through social relationships and the establishment of links that produce positive results across cultural borders.

The asset-based approach, therefore, provides the means through which the involvement of the local community becomes a channel through which local assets can be harnessed and utilised for school improvement (Myende, 2017, p. 37). Furthermore, the asset-based approach's relevancy and practicability to problem-solving is 'internally focused' which means that its development strategy concentrates mostly on primary assets like the learners, schools, as well as individuals for mutual support to promote capacity-building and to adopt positive behaviour through the utilisation of available community resources (Myende, 2017; Pek et al., 2022). In other words, people within communities are inherently endowed with knowledge, skills, and potentials that could be astutely utilised for the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages (Campbell et al., 2023). Montanez (2023) adds that the asset-based approach provides avenues on how to solve challenges from the inside-out for initiating positive change in society. Hence, the asset-based approach is useful for this study as opposed to the needs-based approach which focuses mainly on bottlenecks, challenges, problems, needs, obstacles, and deficiencies. However, Tran et al. (2022) disagrees, and state that the needs-driven approach could be of a great benefit to the community especially in a situation where the existing strengths of the communities are weakened.

The asset-based approach as a theoretical framework uproots the hidden potentials in stakeholders and creates awareness on how potential can be effectively converted to empower the community rather than waiting for resources to be provided from outside. This can be done when individuals

within the community harness their untapped resources to engender positive change (Lamb et al., 2022). From all indications, the ABA is a process of facilitating transformation and empowering members within the community to mobilise identified or latent assets through effective strategies to combat challenges (Reddy & Barbalat, 2020). Khanare (2009) used asset-based approach to inform her study and emphasised more on school context of broader categories of school, leadership and management, human resources, and infrastructure. In addition, a case study of school-community partnership conducted in KwaZulu-Natal which sought to investigate assets that were crucial in the partnership indicated that the historical engagement of schools in partnerships served as greatest assets. On the other hand, Taliep et al. (2020) used asset-based approach to inform their study through effective stimulation of active participation and inclusion of community members which was exclusionary practices based. The study focusses on the use of asset-based to enhance voices of the voiceless, mobilize assets and capacities, and address epistemic and social justice, the plurality of knowledge, including cultural and spiritual diversity, as well as liberatory and sustainable praxis. Hence solving community challenges involves the effective mobilisation of assets in the right direction. The community must mobilise latent resources within, and utilise them effectively towards the sustainable development of the community without waiting for external assistance (Tangit et al., 2022; McShane & Coffey, 2022). In all likelihood, this study will create a sense of commitment, understanding and determination within the community to promote the enhancement of cognitive justice to promote indigenous languages.

Since the asset-based approach focuses on assets, possibilities, potentials, gifts, capacities abilities and available resources that have not yet been utilised, the success of the communities in solving their problems is realisable (Taliep et al., 1997). Similarly, Epstein et al. (2018) advocate the asset-based approach is ideal for innovation and positive transformation and sustainability within communities. Consequently, the asset-based approach encouraged and enabled stakeholders to provide quality learning that will promote cognitive justice in indigenous languages through relevant, creative, and innovative strategies in lesson presentation (McKnight, 2010).

Additionally, Emmett (2000) advises that the asset-based approach is an alternative to the needs-driven approach, but cautions that we must not neglect the dire challenges of communities which may need additional resources from the outside. However, the effective mobilisation and utilisation of internal resources must be first explored first before accessing external resources (High et al., 2020; Omodan, 2023). This concurs with Wong-Villacres (2022) who posit that the asset-based approach

is not only loaded with strategies for intervention to stimulate positive change, but also allows for outside assistance to supplement internal resources for the development and empowerment of the communities. Moreover, Panzarella et al. (2023) advise that the successful engagement of the asset-based approach is accelerated through individual willingness and concerted efforts to develop and sustain development of the community.

Therefore, I applied the asset-based approach because it is community-driven such that stakeholders in any community who are endowed with potentials, gifts, talents, skills and capacities can be mobilised to benefit the community (Ab Halim & Noor, 2023; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). In addition, I agree with Campbell et al. (2023) that the asset-based approach's relevance transcends intervention strategies to embrace multidimensional schemes for empowerment and transformation of the underprivileged. However, Tran (2022) and Hopkins and Rippon (2015) argue that despite the numerous benefits of ABA, there could be possibilities of selective bias when specific assets could be regarded as being most appropriate for the effective utilisation of resources within the community. Myende (2017) and Carrillo (2023) elaborate on the relevance of the asset-based approach to schools' improvement in the 21st century concerning the abilities of stakeholders to nurture local assets within the school- community for the improvement and sustainability.

2.2.6 The Asset-based Approach Intervention

It is significant that every individual, family, classroom setting, learning environment, and community consider its needs and challenges. As such, this study focused mainly on the effective utilisation of untapped resources, capacities, strength, potentials and skills that were rarely mobilised within the community (Drago & Setnikar, 2023). Hence, every individual must be available and committed to be mobilised for the benefit and transformation of the community (Kratochvil et al. 20122). The primary objective of the asset-based approach is to inspire the community to appreciate, mobilise, and nurture available resources to promote sustainability and development (Russell, 2022; El Rahman, 2022).

Chikoko and Khanare (2012) reiterate that the primary assets are the teachers' enthusiasm and willingness to engage their skills and knowledge to promote cognitive justice in indigenous languages in ECE for the sustainability and development of the community. Panzarella et al. (2023)

add that the asset-based approach empowers, promotes self-development, and motivates communities to effectively utilise their resources to achieve maximum benefit. It is asset-based because it starts with what is present in the community because available resources inherent in individuals can contribute to community-building rather than relying on outside help (Kratochvil et al., 2022). In this study, it was evident that the strengths and talents of teachers would effectively engender positive change in the school-community. In support, Khanare (2009) and Hernandez (2022) agree that the asset-based approach identifies potential within the community which could be beneficially harnessed to provide immediate needs and solve the inherent challenges of the people in order to promote sustainable development and cohesive partnerships in the community.

Kretzman and McKnight (1993) group the key characteristics of the asset-based approach: empowerment of the people, self-actualisation of the desired objectives through determination with an emphasis on mutual relationships, and capacity-building based on the available resources within the communities. Similarly, Garven et al. (2016) purport that the elements of the asset-based approach promote the creation of an enabling environment that will facilitate the effective utilisation of resources based on individual and community strength and commitment. Moreover, the asset-based intervention, according to Briggs and Huang (2017), and Hornby-Turner et al. (2017), involves working with accessible resources that are already present in the community to accelerate the attainment of objectives.

This implies that ABA promotes sustainable initiatives, and creates opportunities that empower communities to generate sustainable livelihoods that allow for the differentiation of various types of resources that may influence the individual to participate in sustainable development (Alexiou et al., 2022; Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Myende, 2017; Taliep et al., 2023). I argue that if the ABA is efficiently applied by teachers during the teaching-learning processes in the school system, there is the possibility of accelerating cognitive justice in indigenous language.

2.2.7 Comparing the Needs-based Approach with the Asset-based Approach

The asset-based intervention in table 2.1 below reveals comparisons between the needs-based and the asset-based approaches to provide a better understanding of resolving the issue under study. The needs-based approach exposes the inability of the community to solve their problems and that they must access outside resources to recommend solutions regarding community challenges

(Kretzmann & McKnight,1996), while the ABA promotes community-capacity-building which leverages that which is within the community before considering alternatives from outside the community (Batres-Faz et al. 2020; Montanez, 2023). Kujanpaa et al. (2022) assert that the needs-based approach involves communities that are not conscious of their innate capacities, skills, strengths, assets, resources and potentials that could be utilised within the community for positive transformation.

Further, Kasonga (2019, p. 77) maintains that although the asset-based approach focuses on the utilisation of internal resources:

[T]his is not to deny that communities have problems and deficiencies, but to start out from what the community has, rather than what it does not have. Therefore, the known potential of people can be exploited to solve challenges for the benefit of the community. This is a very different perspective from the 'needs' perspective.

The needs-based approach, therefore, is more relevant for consumers rather than producers of solutions. The needs-approach sees members of the community as being incapacitated, deficient, helpless, powerless, and victims of their circumstances (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Myende & Hlalele, 2018). Campbell et al. (2023) agree that the needs-based approach creates communities who pay more attention to their shortcomings, weaknesses, and deficiencies instead of possibilities for the effective utilisation of their assets to enhance sustainable growth and development.

In addition, Ebersohn and Mbetse (2003, p. 12), Briedenhann (2003) and Trivette (1997, p. 77) provide a comparison between the needs-based approach and the asset-based approach (see Table 2.1 below).

TABLE: 2.1

The needs-based approach	The asset-based approach
Emphasises problems, shortfalls, challenges, and needs	Emphasises resources and potentials that could be harnessed
Bottom-down approach; Outside-in solution-oriented	Bottom-up approach; inside-out solution-oriented
Professionally-centred (from outside)	Community-centred (from within)

Narrow, one-sided perspective of what is needed and problematic; scarcity paradigm; deficit focused	Holistic perspective of what is needed and beneficial; an asset-map is drawn; synergistic paradigm; asset-focused
Professionals are viewed as experts who deliver a service, impart knowledge, and advise their clients who are viewed as inexperienced and need help	Professionals are viewed as partners; advocate networking to support, build relationships, share knowledge, and acknowledge the expertise of clients
Disempowerment and dependency of clients; Formal support is emphasised	Empowerment and interdependency where each is motivated to contribute; formal and informal support
Fragmented support from outside	Collaboration and participation within the community

Table 2.1 above illustrates that the asset-based approach can be seen as promoting “potentially useful information, experiences, skills, [and] opportunities that might be mobilised and used to meet the needs of an individual or group for sustainable development within the community” (Trivette, 1997, p. 76). Similarly, Mason-Williams et al. (2023) believe that the asset-based approach has a strong internal focus on what is currently available in the community, while advocating for the utilisation of the capabilities of the individual. This implies that the place of ABA invaluable because each individual has something to offer such that his/her abilities can be promoted to reduce injustice within communities. This approach will therefore be useful for teachers’ understanding to advance cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

2.8 COMPONENTS OF THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH

The asset-based approach assumes that stakeholders in any community are endowed with untapped potentials, skills, gifts, talents and capacities which can be utilised for the maximum benefit of the community as a whole (Panzarella et al., 2023; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Russell (2022) and Whiting et al. (2012) state that the focus of the asset-based approach is on identifying assets in terms of individual strengths to engage meaningfully in processes that uplift the community

towards transformation. In this study the teachers are the assets who are willing to maximally utilise their capacities regarding the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. This is supported by the asset-based principle of creating opportunities based on what is available that could be effectively utilised by constant building and rebuilding relationships within the community (Tran, 2022; High et al., 2022).

Additionally, Ebersöhn et al. (2015) state that asset-based contributions to sustainability and development are dependent on the community's strengths and potentials. Accordingly, the asset-based strategy consists of a series of procedures for building opportunities that explores people's strengths rather than on their challenges (Bates et al., 2019). These assets are shared with individuals, families, and school-communities to enact ideas for change-production (Panzarella et al., 2023; Cunningham et al., 2022). The process of identifying assets calls for massive participation through instilling confidence in people to discover their hidden potentials to recognise and solve challenges themselves through asset-mapping by empowering indigenous communities (Aquino et al., 2022; Massingham, 2019; Sudhakar, 2019).

For the purpose of this study, the primary asset identified was the teachers' crucial role to support learners to confront various challenges such as feelings of low self-esteem and discipline issues (among others) during teaching and learning processes (Omodan, 2023). The process commences by identifying changes and activating innate available resources to solve the challenges of the community (High et al., 2022). The asset-based approach therefore emphasises strengthening community assets and building opportunities through self-determination for a stronger, reliable, and functional society (Dunst, 2017).

Considering the above, Nielsen et al. (2022) and Moser (2010) maintain that asset-mapping engages and empowers individuals in capacity-building to uplift the community towards sustainable development. The study explored people's strengths and gifts because they have something to offer in the initial phase of the asset-based approach which consists of constructing an inventory of resources through identifying various assets (Blickem et al., 2018; Campbell et al., 2023). The components of identifying assets are discussed below:

2.8.1 Asset-mapping

Asset-mapping is the process that involves the utilisation of untapped assets to strengthen relationships within the community (Russell, 2022; Moayerian et al., 2022). Similarly, Aquino et al. (2022) confirm that asset-mapping is a method of research purposely developed for community capacity-building by mapping-out the available assets; and through it, the community explores,

describes and plans the use of resources for the promotion of sustainable growth and the development of the community. Talieb et al. (2023) explain that asset-mapping involves the process of documenting the tangible and intangible resources, viewing it as a place where assets could be utilised maximally to be preserved and enhanced within the community.

Additionally, Casseti et al. (2020) maintain that asset-mapping could be referred to as a process that involves and enhances the capacities of individuals and communities to be conscious of their potentials and to channel them towards sustainable development. Moreover, Foot (2012) states that asset-mapping can be visualised as a starting point of awareness-creation where participants' potentials within the community are identified as available resources which could be accessed and mobilised in the community. Griffin and Farris (2010) add that asset-mapping provides a conducive platform to brainstorm with positively-oriented individuals regarding their perspectives on issues via the problem-solving technique to uplift communities. Further, Jabeen and Guy (2015) contend that asset-mapping is an optimistic strategy which focuses primarily on what the community has (beginning from within) that could enhance the sustainability of the community.

Carrillo (2023) adds that asset-mapping could be visualised as the beginning of transformation resulting from the conscious efforts of individuals to teamwork by utilising available resources. Importantly, Moayerian et al. (2022) state that asset-mapping is the strategy where the community identifies, in an unbiased manner, individual assets on an ongoing basis to contribute meaningfully to the school system (Aquino et al., 2022). Asset-mapping involves vital methods of identifying assets and procedure to embark upon capacity-building to utilise individual contributions within the community. Since, asset-mapping is referred to as one of the core components of the asset-based approach that facilitates community development and explores relationships amongst all individuals, it is guided by the following steps (Soma et al., 2022):

- (i) The facilitators meet those people who become the core group that will take the lead.
- (ii) The group, together with the facilitator, contacts the individuals and groups who are active in the community. This will identify people who can extend the mapping outside the school arena.
- (iii) Using face-to-face conversations through door-to-door knocking and other strategies such as storytelling, these individuals collate the assets and talents of individuals in the community.
- (iv) The group and the facilitator identify available resources and assets of local associations.
- (v) The group and the facilitator map assets of the agencies, including the services they offer,

the physical spaces, funding, human resources, and networking skills.

In line with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDA), Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) assert that the mapping of assets is not stereotypical in nature, but a continuous process where no one is left out in the asset-mapping construction. This is because asset-maps act as visual tools to identify assets and resources which can include several dimensions like symbols, writings, shapes, drawings, and photographing (Mathie et al., 2017). These components resonate with Kasongga's (2019) assertions that the mapping of assets is critical to conscientise individuals of their potentials, skills, gifts, abilities and experiences for the smooth utilisation of assets. In this study, asset-mapping was not only used for primarily identifying assets (teachers) in the community, but also for focusing on their understanding and promotion of cognitive justice in indigenous languages regarding ECE in Nigeria. This was because asset-mapping is a research strategy that produces valid and reliable data which helps researchers and stakeholders to identify potentials lying dormant in the community; and with this understanding they will solve problems based on their individual or group strengths (Lightfoot et al., 2014).

Ammerman and Parks (1998, p. 34) and Snow and DicKard (2001) state that asset-mapping is an inventory of capacities, skills, talents and experiences inherent in stakeholders. This method unearths the richness of personal resources that can be mobilised and identified within the community which may include actual work experience, volunteer work, or life experience (Jones & Sheffield, 2022). This also applies to an inventory of local associations and organisations that may contribute to the solution of problems; it may be formal or informal and it can include support groups, church groups, youth groups, political groups, businesses, or sport organisations. In addition, an inventory of local institutions that may contribute resources in terms of materials and services may be included (e.g., libraries, schools, hospitals, human service agencies, banks, parks, and community centres).

This study, therefore, engaged teachers as a stakeholder-group by encouraging them to contribute to the development of the community through utilising their potentials and resources. The asset-based approach as an intervention emphasises what exists presently in the community as instruments of problem-solving. The capacity inventory is therefore not for research, but rather designed to empower individuals in the community (Eloff, 2006). It is assumed that if asset-mapping is contextualised appropriately, it could facilitate and enhance knowledge-production that would promote effective interaction, capabilities, and creativity among groups and individuals

within the school system (Alevizou et al., 2016). Alevizou et al. (2016) add that the adaptation of the Community Capital Framework (CCF) indicates that asset-mapping is a tool to promote the understanding and analysis of systems in relation to intervention within different capitals to engender tangible changes and reflection to facilitate transformation within communities. Similarly, Panzarella et al. (2023) assert that for positive development and sustainability to proceed smoothly within the community, asset-mapping must explore nested strengths inside organisations, government structures, groups, and institutions.

This in turn can link asset-maps to social network maps – “helping us to identify where the potential nodes of energy and innovation are within and between groups and organisations in a community” (O’Leary et al., 2011, p. 31). The essence of creating the asset-map is to enhance the direct involvement of the community members by exploring people’s strengths to identify desirable and undesirable patterns, so that the map can be used as a springboard for creating a visionary community (Sharpe et al., 2000).

2.8.2 Community Capital Framework (CCF)

The Community Capitals Framework (CCF) was also reviewed in this study because it provided a detailed account on the analysis of a community from a systems perspective by identifying people’s innate resources, potentials, and capabilities; and not the needs within the community. Emery et al. (2007) list seven components of community capital which can be effectively utilised by primary assets within the community: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial, and built capital.

2.8.2.1 The natural capital, according to Costanza and Folke (1997) and Pretty and Smith (2004), refers to it as assets that are identified to be in a particular location; and if people managed natural resources, then they would have engaged in some form of collective action. These natural capitals involve natural resources, amenities, geographic isolation, weather, and natural beauty. The schools chosen for this study are in conducive environments where the learners and staff are endowed with natural resources and sound infrastructure which made it possible for teachers to excel during teaching-learning processes.

2.8.2.2 The cultural capital is described as “the structure of relations between actors and among actors” that leads to productive activities (Coleman, 1988, p. 94). Emery and Flora (2006) comment that cultural capital is an embodiment of people’s understanding about their world and

their relationships within it, which also provides great opportunities and advantages for people's voices to be heard and understood in the community. Pretty and Ward (2001) also posit that social capital encourages harmonious relationships within communities to work collaboratively to achieve common desired goals. Moreover, Caen (2009) maintains that the availability and recognition of assets in the school environment will promote a better understanding and learner-readiness to achieve higher academic performance levels. Becker et al. (2007) and Emery and Flora (2006) confirm that future transformation in the community will emanate from the effective utilisation of assets within the community.

This implies that primary assets' (teachers') understanding of their schools, which involve how they act within it (including traditional values and language-use), will be determined by their cultural capital. The influence of culture will enhance cohesive interaction between learners and teachers which will facilitate the enrichment of teaching-learning processes in order to reduce oppression and hegemony.

The human capital is described as 'the skills and abilities of people to develop and enhance their resources, in addition to accessing outside resources and bodies of knowledge in order to increase their understanding, identify best-practice, and to access data for community building (Emery & Flora, 2006). Emery and Flora (2006) add that human capital is ability to lead across differences through the mobilisation of assets for future transformation in the community. In other words, and according to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), the asset-based approach is grounded in the understanding that stakeholders in any community are endowed with potentials, gifts, skills and capacities that could be well utilised to the advantage of the community without intervention from outside.

2.8.2.3 *Social capital*, according to Daniel et al. (2003), involves the enhancement of capacities to proffer solutions, thus empowering communities. It is operational, effective, and crucial for improving the wellbeing of people which lead to sustainable outcomes via the utilisation of available latent resources (Flora & Flora, 2008). Social capital is also described as a source that strengthens relationships that exist among people and organisations; it acts as the social 'glue' to stimulate positivity including the mobilisation of local resources and the willingness to consider alternatives to attain the desired goals (Flora, 1997).

In elaboration, social capital refers to community members' attempts to "get by" while "capital-bridging-social" deals with how communities "get ahead" after they have bonded (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003a, p. 497). However, from all indications, two constructs in social capital show that the community can gain immensely from teamworking which is based on mutual trust and understanding. Hence, I concur with Myende and Hlalele (2018) and Jopling and Vincent (2016) that social trust and mutual relationships between people are imperative within the school system – but only through effective administration that effectively facilitates the channeling of available resources to achieve the desired aim and objectives. Therefore, the effective utilisation of social capital can produce positive results when stakeholders are well-positioned to enact the exchange of support between schools and the community (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003a). Therefore, transformation is a product of how stakeholders position themselves on how to support the school-community; this implies that the teachers and the learners should unpack cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages.

2.9.2.4 *Political capital* involves access to power, authority, organisational connections to resources, and power-broking methods (Flora, 2004; Flora et al., 2007). It is a community asset which involves the ability of people within the community to find their voices to embark on immediate action to enhance sustainable development (Emery & Flora, 2006, p. 21). This is supported by Akoma (2008) who posits that transformation in any community is a product of power. The place of power cannot be over emphasised in the unlocking of resources; this means that the stakeholders in the community must have a voice which must be heard before transformation can occur. Emery and Flora (2006) add that political culture is key to community assets as it encourages stakeholders to express their voices to influence political structures for the wellbeing and survival of the community. This means that teachers are stakeholders in the school system who have the responsibility to utilise their resources and mobilise themselves as a team with one collective voice to advance transformation by addressing shortcomings, and thus promote cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

2.8.2.5 *Financial capital* is described as that which is available to invest in the community including the accumulation of wealth to utilise judiciously in the future (Lorenz, 1999). Chikoko and Khanare (2012) classified community assets into three tiers: primary, secondary, and outside. For the purpose of this study the primary asset will be considered because the successful mobilisation and utilisation of assets entail drawing from primary tiers first, before moving to the secondary and outside tiers. This implies that the primary tiers must first be exhausted before considering the secondary and outside tiers. However, since the asset-based approach calls for

maximum participation involving the utilisation of talents and skills for sustainable development, the community must exploit their latent such strengths (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996; Nel, 2015).

2.8.2.6 *Built capital* concerns the availability of infrastructure that facilitates and supports the provision of quality education in schools within the community (Emery & Flora, 2006). Gutierrez-Montes et al. (2009) also comment on the flow of assets across capitals, and that human capital invested in a project will produce an increase in assets. This will initiate an ongoing process of asset- building which will lead to speedy transformation which strengthens the adage that ‘success builds on successes.

Similarly, Yosso (2005, p. 79) states that “familial capital can be fostered within and between families, as well as through sports, school, religious gatherings, and other social community settings; isolation is reduced as families “become connected with others around common issues and realise that they are not alone in dealing with their problems”.

Moreover, the community capital framework can be divided into two main areas that are important to cultivate sustainable community development – they are human and material resources (Emery & Flora, 2006; Flora, 2004; O’Leary et al., 2011). This suggests that the application of the asset-based approach is founded on creating opportunities to harness people-resources to solve problems within the community.

Figure 2.2 below (Emery & Flora, 2006, p. 21) illustrates the seven components of community capital that can be effectively utilised via primary assets within the school system through asset-mapping, identification, and mobilisation of available resources regarding ECE.

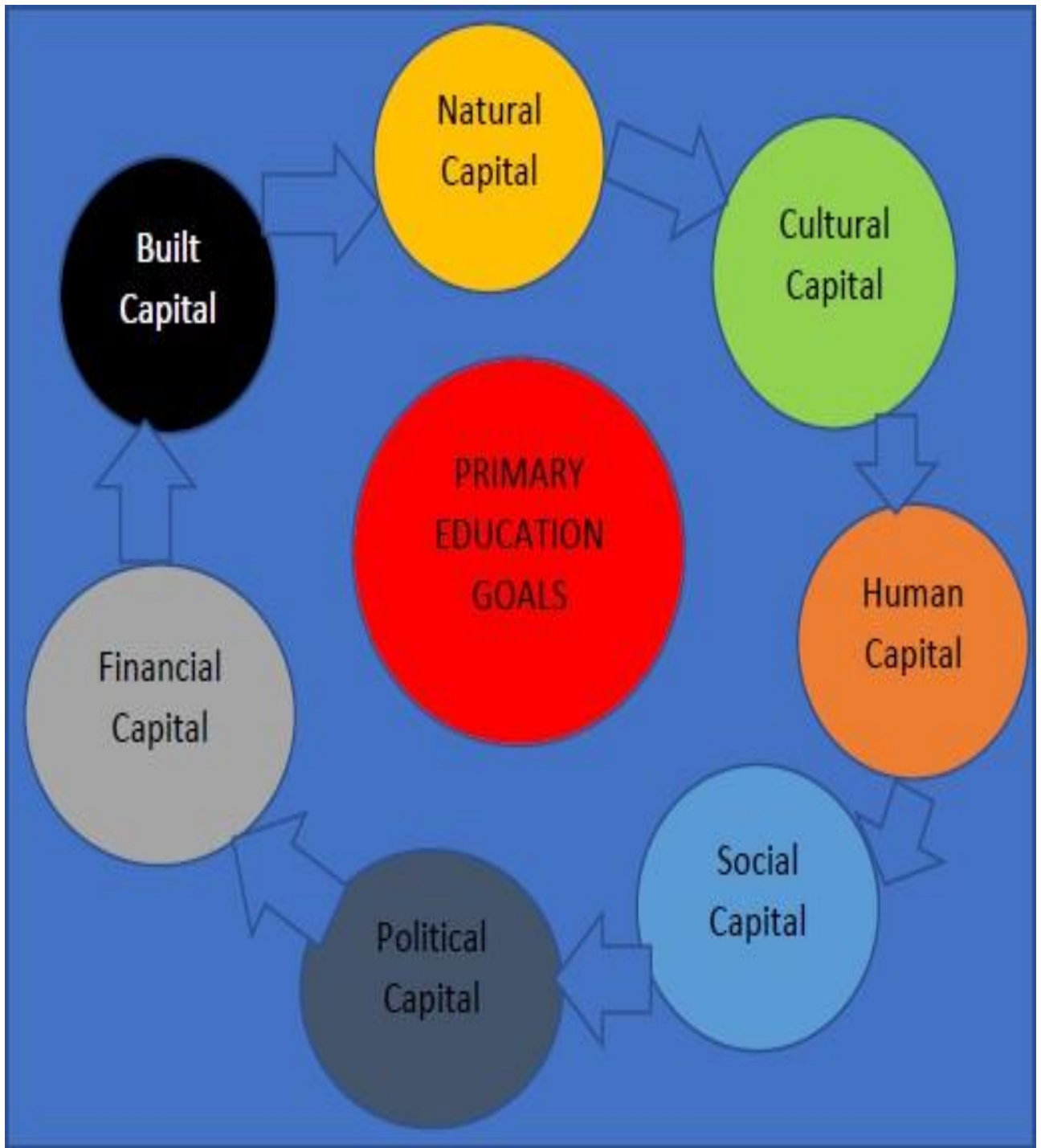


Figure 2.2: Seven components of community capital (Emery & Flora, 2006, p. 21)

2.9 WHY THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH?

The introduction and implementation of the asset-based approach which was initiated by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), was seen as ideal for development and empowerment of the community from the inside-out or from the bottom-to-top approach (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012). Taliep et al. (2020) assert that the asset-based approach is an attempt to re-conceptualise communities as being resourceful, resilient, and cohesive. Hence, the asset-based approach was selected for this study as a tool to promote teachers' understanding of cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages. Khanare (2009) also maintains that the realisation and activation of hidden skills, gifts, potentials, and resources embedded in individuals within a community are capable of enhancing sustainable development in the school system. The asset-based approach acknowledges the three-tier classification: primary, secondary, and outside (Chikoko & Khanare (2012). The focus of this study was on teachers who are the primary agents to lead community development and sustainability (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006).

Teachers have the potentials and capacities required to identify challenges and to capitalise on opportunities for building schools from inside-out rather than dwelling on negatives that emanate from the belief that help will come from outside. This can only be achieved through capacity-building initiated by school teachers who are endowed with inherent capacities to uplift the community (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Nel, 2015; Rose, 2006). This inside-out approach to community involvement contrasted with the needs-based approach which relied on outside assistance (Nel, 2015; Thomas & Albright, 2018).

This study advocated for teacher's understanding and enabling of cognitive justice in indigenous languages in early childhood education. As a theoretical framework, the asset-based approach leads to identifying the challenges and creating opportunities of building schools from inside-out. In other words, the people within the same community or schools become assets in understanding cognitive justice in terms of unpacking and promoting indigenous languages (Braithwaite et al., 2009).

This approach focuses on the strengths of a community; and can be community or outsider initiated as long as it is 'by the community, for the community'. Unlike other approaches to community

development, asset-based community development seeks to build the capacity of community members to drive their own development by utilising what already exists in the community.

The asset-based community development centres on the social justice approach by seeking to build inclusive and resilient communities. In sum, the most important resources in a community are the people. In this regard, the asset-based community development (ABCD), according to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993, p. 9), has three important principles:

- (i) Asset-based: community development starts with what is present in the community, the capacities of its residents, and the associational and institutional base of the area – not with what is absent.
- (ii) Internally-focused: the development strategy concentrates mostly on agenda-building and problem-solving capacities of the residents, associations, and institutions within the school-community.
- (iii) Relationship-driven: the relationships among community residents, associations, and institutions should be constantly built or rebuilt.

The asset-based community development's ultimate goal is to uncover and expand the knowledge and skills of the local residents by exploring their strengths to empower them to create a future for sustainable development and for a better livelihood (Sen, 1991). The goal is to collate the assets or resources within the community that are already available, and then use them to solve problems to build a resilient and sustainable community (Pan et al., 2005).

2.9.1 Enabling Voice through the Asset-based Approach

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) and Russell (2022) define assets as strengths, talents, capabilities, experiences, and skills that are identified within and utilised to achieve sustainable development within the community. Bebbington (1999) and Montanez (2023) also agree that it is crucial to explore people's strength to exploit opportunities to encourage decision-making processes to engender positive transformation for sustainable development within the school-community. Cunningham et al. (2022) and Foot and Hopkins (2010) define the asset-based approach as a tool for rediscovering the voice of the people through association, organisation, passions, and interests regarding indigenous people's transformation based on the available

resources to improve their wellbeing. Additionally, good relationships and neighborliness contribute to people's voices being heard. Moreover, Vines (2018), Brabant et al. (2016), and Kratochvil et al. (2022) highlight the pivotal role played by effective networks, relationships, and connections between school and community which enhance successful community engagement initiatives. In addition, there is the need for sensitising teachers on how their voices could be heard to become effective role-players in the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages in their own schools. Consequently, Hlalele (2019) exposes the fact that social and political economies marginalised the voices of the indigenous people which have to be now revitalised.

This is supported by Massie et al. (2018) that the utilisation of existing skills and experiences of stakeholders gives them a voice that will enhance the improvement and sustainable development of the community. Similarly, Myende (2017) reveals that the activation of voices in the community leads to the improvement of education and people-empowerment through their ability to utilise their skills, experiences, and potentials. Rippon and South (2017) elaborate that the indigenous people's voices will promote sustainable development for interdependence rather than independence. This implies that the application of ABA will rediscover teachers' voices to generate positive results that can be appreciated within the school system.

2.9.2 Characteristics of Asset-based Activities

The purpose of applying the asset-based approach in this study was to explore teachers' understanding and enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages in early childhood education. Khanare (2009) and Zmayc (2022) elucidate that ABA serves as a guide to recognise challenges and provide opportunities to overcome them through inherent capabilities, potentials, skills, talents, and social resources found in each individual that could be channelled towards the growth and emancipation of communities. This implies that the features of the asset-based approach have a strong correlation with this study. However, these characteristics must be examined comprehensively. Fritz (2022) and Nel (2018) opine that a conducive environment is a precondition for the active discovery of hidden, latent potentials, and gifts embedded in the people within the community. McLean and McNeice (2012) provide characteristics of the asset-based approach by identifying, mobilising, measuring, and evaluating assets to promote transformation from within after having harnessed available resources through the following processes:

- (i) Firstly, identifying assets - transformation is from within the community.

(ii) Secondly, mobilising assets - prioritising and scheduling of activities.

(iii) Thirdly, measuring assets - from the dependency syndrome to the independency syndrome.

(iv) Lastly, evaluation of the assets - includes measuring and reflection.

The above processes of ABA promote the reduction of the dependency syndrome to exploit opportunities for the effective utilisation of people's strengths, skills and potentials for transformation that guarantees the emancipation of people within the school-community.

2.9.3 Teachers as Assets

The ABA is viewed as being strength-based in that every individual is endowed with certain potentials and resources to overcome problems within the community (Mason-Williams et al., 2023). Assets can be described as resources, actions, transactions, capacities, abilities, inner strengths, potentials, gifts and talents inherent in people but not yet realised to build stronger and functional communities (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Taliep et al., 2023). In this study assets are seen as those resources (inner strengths) possessed by the people without a full understanding of their full innate potential which needs to be exploited for the benefit of the community. Omodan (2023) emphasises that assets are powerful tools when centred on both the material and non-material components that are primarily necessary to coordinate resources in a sustainable way for the empowerment of local communities (Alexiou et al., 2022).

2.9.4 Tiers of Community Assets

The asset-based approach is concerned with collaboration within communities to achieve positive transformation through the discovery and honing of people's talents, skills, knowledge, potentials and experiences (Drago, & Setnikar, 2023). Similarly, Chikoko and Khanare (2012) drawing from Mourad and Way (1998), affirm that there are three tiers: primary, secondary and outside tiers - categories of resources that can be utilised by school stakeholders (Figure 2.3 below). The primary assets include teachers, infrastructure and learners, while the secondary assets are organisations found within the community that are not under the influence of the school, and the third tier (outside resources) is located outside the community and is controlled and owned externally by private business and NGOs (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012).

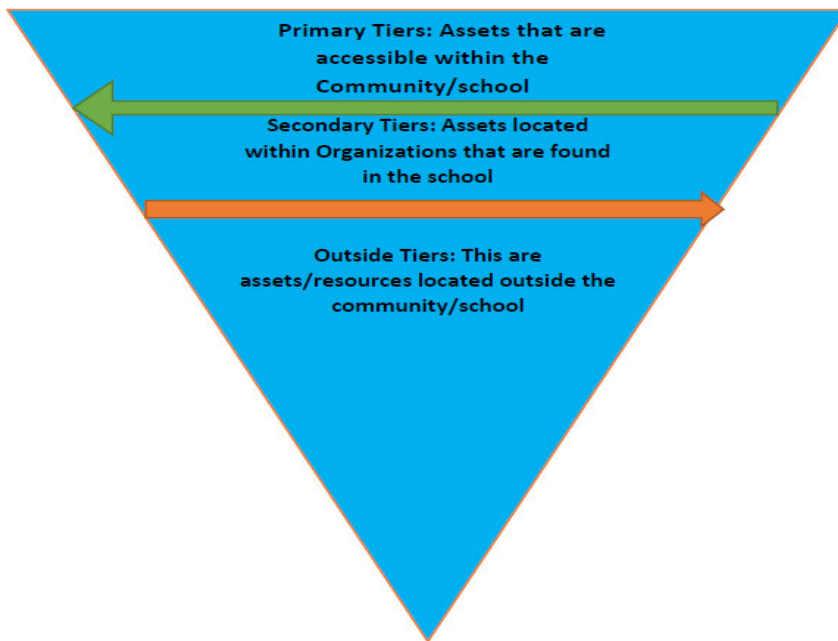


Figure 2.3: Three tiers of community assets (Mourad & Way, 1998; Chikoko & Khanare, (2012, p. 31)

Importantly, it must be noted that this study is situated in an area which considers teachers as stakeholders and primary assets in the community since they influence learners positively through their skills, talents, and experiences (McMenamin et al., 2023). The value of teacher-involvement is critical to this study because “if educational reform is to be systematically and effectively managed for sustainable development, the role of teachers needs to be fully recognised, well-implemented and incorporated into the reform process” (Schwedes & Calderhead, 2021, p. 797). Hence, I concur with Chidakwa and Hlalele's (2021) findings that confirm that teachers are endowed with vital qualities to guide learners. Further, I agree that ABA is a crucial tool for teachers to harness their latent capacities, knowledge, and potentials to produce maximum benefits within the school-community system which is aligned to teachers’ understanding and enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. In other words, the study aimed at understanding how teachers understand and promote cognitive justice in indigenous languages since they are agents of change in the classroom, and in the community where resources can be effectively utilised (Russell, 2022). Moreover, it is assumed that the enablement of cognitive justice can be effectively

achieved if teachers' inner strength is fully explored for the actualisation of the desired goals (Panzarella et al., 2023). In addition, Khanare et al. (2019) and Tran (2022) posit that teachers feel empowered and ready to utilise their skills and experiences positively within the community; therefore, it was believed that school stakeholders in this study were suitable to mobilise available resources that would enhance sustainable development in the school-community.

Myende (2015) reiterates that for the effective utilisation of available assets in a community where social trust and human capital can be strengthened, the environment must be conducive. However, to achieve successful sustainable development in any community, capacity-building must be effectively and efficiently facilitated in such a way that stakeholders are encouraged and empowered to harness all their available assets (Hunter et al., 2022; Myende & Chikoko, 2014; Oakley, 2002; Reddy & Barbalat, 2022). Myende (2015) elaborates on strategies to enhance community-building as described by Hyman (2002, p. 2) in table 3 below:

Table 2.3: Cluster community capacity-building (Adapted: Hyman, 2002, p. 2)

Cluster	Rationale
<p>School Community Engagement</p> <p>Agenda-building</p> <p>Community Action</p>	<p>The school community should become more engaged in ways that will facilitate relationships and the exchange of information.</p> <p>The school community should create forums for sharing concerns and aspirations for their schools.</p> <p>The school community must rely on trusted and capable leadership to strengthen their social capital and other assets.</p> <p>The school community stakeholders must pool their assets and then plan action by networking with other sources that will be needed for improving academic performance.</p>

Communication and Messages	Community builders will need to keep an open line of communication with residents and their community partners.
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Table 2.3 above provides a clear outline on the importance of strong interconnected relationships for realising and activating resources that are already available to build a stronger and functional community. Myende and Chikoko (2014) confirm that the vital component is the quality of the relationship within the school-community such that the school can easily access resources beyond their boundaries. Therefore, community engagement must be cordial and conducted through the exploration of people’s strengths to improve the academic performance of learners. As such, to attain the desired goal and objectives involves a joint effort where all activities must be effectively coordinated. Since the teachers are the primary assets in this context, community action will involve the pooling of resources to enable cognitive justice in indigenous languages which will also facilitate the improvement of learners’ academic performance. Therefore, connecting community assets is crucial for ensuring sustainable community initiatives which in turn will contribute in creating future benefits for promoting the quality of life for residents (Green & Haines, 2015, p. 13). Community-building must also utilise a clear-cut communication channel that focuses on challenges, and not deficits (Myende, 2015; Zimmerman, 2023). Accordingly, there must be free-flow communication within the school which will enhance effective administration and for teachers to maximally utilise their potentials. For the transformation of the community, four major principles should be adhered to: change must emanate from within the community; sustainable development must be as a result of the assets discovered from within and well-utilised; change should be relationship-driven, and change should be oriented towards community development (Healey, 2006). Hence, the focus is on the teachers who are the primary agents for utilising resources rather than focusing on the problems (Ramatea & Khanare, 2021; Kratochvil et al., 2022). This results in success when primary assets within the community are collated and organised to effectively find solutions, despite challenges confronting them (Russell, 2022).

2.10 PHASES OF THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH

Beaulieu (2002), Jones and Sheffield (2022) and Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) profess that there are three phases of the asset-based approach: identifying assets, asset-mobilisation, and asset-based management. These stages are outlined below:

2.10.1 Identification of Assets

Identification of strengths and asset-mapping are crucial processes rooted in the community to understand how to utilise resources which can promote transformation (Chambati, 2021; Woodward et al., 2021). Asset-mapping is concerned with systematic processes of compiling an inventory of potentials, skills, gifts, capacities, and resources that could be synergised to foster sustainable development within the community (Aquino et al., 2022; Kasonga, 2019). Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) add that the identification of assets is an on-going process that can easily be achieved through asset-mapping. Eloff (2006), who agrees with Kretzmann and McKnight, emphasises that the identifying process begins with a conscious effort to transform mindsets such that the focus is on strengths that are not utilised, instead of needs and problems. In this study, the purposively selected teachers fell into this category. These assets (teachers) were within the premises of the purposively selected early childhood education school. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) categorise the identification of assets into five stages:

- (v) Individual assets - This consists of individuals who participated in a particular study within a community.
- (vi) Assets within a group of people - This group is described as a body of people that participated in particular study within the school-community; for example, the school governing body (SGB) or school administrator, heads of departments, individual learners, support teams, and District support team.
- (vii) Relationships in the community - This is also one of the major categories of asset identification; for example, among parents and between parents and their relationship that exists within the school.
- (viii) Economic resources - These include the budget, donations, and financial support to facilitate viable development.
- (ix) Physical resources - These are the infrastructural facilities which include school buildings, school grounds, furniture, and classrooms.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that asset-mapping may also assist in the understanding of issues the communities want to explore such as enhancing cognitive justice in indigenous languages

(Moayerian et al., 2022). Hence, Bhatti et al. (2022) state that the identification of assets is of immense benefit because it allows teachers to entrust learners with more responsibilities. Aquino et al. (2022) elaborate that the important function of asset-mapping (visually mapping available resources and assets) enhances relationships that exist between different systems and subsystems in communities. However, in this study the teachers (primary assets) were expected to identify and map their assets based on the above five categories (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Further, asset-mapping promotes critical-thinking and optimism which exposes the strengths of the community (McShane & Coffey, 2022; Russell, 2022). This was because asset-mapping enables individuals within communities to think positively by engaging principles of service, integrity, and dignity towards sustainable growth and development (Luo et al., 2023).

2.10.2 Mobilisation of Assets

The mobilisation of assets can be defined as a process that involves the effective utilisation of information generated via asset-mapping to build partnerships that will enhance community-building (Eloff, 2006; Ferreira, 2006; Hunter et al., 2022). Asset mobilisation involves the process of connecting people such that their skills are used and valued in the community (Sotarauta et al., 2022). Daly and Westwood (2018) state that during the process of asset- mobilisation, parties utilise their ‘un-identified’ assets. This is supported by Eloff (2006) and Tran (2022) that this phase activates unutilised or unidentified resources in order to enhance sustainable development. Also, asset-mobilisation involves connecting people with other people for capacity-building (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2022). Mobilisation is to elicit positive changes to increase efficiency and strengthening of relationships to empower individuals to better cope with challenges (Aquino et al., 2022; Ebersohn & Mbetse, 2003; Chaskin, 2001; Pek et al., 2022).

This second phase of the asset-based approach is also in line with Asset-based Community Development (ABCD), which emphasises strengthening relationships to build a functional community (Zmavc, 2022). Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) and Paradise et al. (2022) add that this phase empowers teachers to use their assets for positive transformation during teaching and learning processes. This empowerment migrates from professional dominance to availing opportunities to participants as part of the process of incorporating differential resources within the community (Luo et al., 2023; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). In support, Sapanen, Kolehmainen and Kurikka (2022) maintain that participants mobilised available assets and resources by exploring people’s strengths within the community rather than relying on external

support to solve the challenges.

In sum, the asset-based approach as the theoretical of this study, offered strategies that promoted teachers' understanding and enablement of cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages. Hence, the mobilisation phase empowered teachers with opportunities to create relationships and strengthen partnerships which improved their teaching and learning processes in the classroom (Alexiou et al., 2022; Gilchrist & Taylor, 2022).

2.10.3 Asset-based Management

The management of assets is the final and paramount phase of the asset-based approach which allows for the smooth control of mobilising assets and resources that entails the full responsibility of sustaining a community (Bhatti et al., 2022; Loots, 2011; Mason-Williams et al., 2023). Loots (2011) and Alexiou et al. (2022) purport that the attainment of desired objectives is through the effective management of resources which involves assessing processes, revising strategies, and re-identifying and re-mobilising. It is imperative that for positive transformation to occur, the commitment of all parties should be highly evident for sustainable development.

2.11 APPLICATION OF THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Since the asset-based approach formed the theoretical framework of this study, the phases of the theory are relevant, and should be followed. Ferreira and Ebersöhn (2013) effectively utilised the asset-based approach in their project Supportive Teachers Assets and Resilience (STAR) which was followed-up by the Supporting Home Environment in Beating Adversity (SHEBA) intervention. Therefore, in this study the asset-based approach assisted the participants in the school system to identify their hidden potentials, capabilities, existing knowledge, talents, and skills during data generation. Since I did not interfere in the process of transformation, participants were able to experience a sense of empowerment as they took charge of their situations. They were able to identify their innate strengths and resources to direct them into their community in a positive way which enabled cognitive justice in indigenous languages (Haernandez, 2022). The application of ABA in the school system allows for teachers, parents and the community to cohesively collaborate (Panzarella et al., 2023; Kretzmann, 1992).

In line with Montanez (2023) and El Rahman's (2022) position, this study used the asset-based approach to discover readily available resources and potentials within teachers, societies and

organisations by enabling cognitive justice in indigenous languages to promote the teachers' self-determination in developing school-community partnerships in ECE to build stronger and functioning communities.

2.12 A VIEW ON THE NATURE OF REALITY (ONTOLOGY)

Ontology is concerned with a philosophical paradigm that is based on a set of beliefs about the nature of reality (Benferdia et al., 2023). From a philosophical perspective, ontology is broadly used in multidimensional ways which aim to model a common-sense view of reality (Borg et al., 2022). In other words, ontology is described as the study of *being* and *view of reality* (Untalan, 2020). In addition, Jenkins (2023) states that ontology is regarded as the assumptions made and concerned with *what is*; it deals with the nature of existence and structure of reality. Dube (2023) elaborates that ontology relies on philosophical principles rooted in well-established methodologies with a coherent view of reality. Xue and Huang (2023) add that ontology is considered for data heterogeneity where the relationship between different aspects of society like social actors, social norms, and social structures exist within a community.

In research, the concept of social ontology is defined as the nature of social elements which exist independently from social actors comprising of social constructions which include social, economic, religious, political and cultural aspects (Borgo et al., 2022). This research was ontological and linked to a critical paradigm which considered how individuals view the world (Bertram & Christensen, 2014; Buergelt & Paton, 2022). Therefore, a view on how to see the world is shaped through multiple layers such as surface reality that is visible, deep, and unobservable; hence, theories also assist in uncovering the 'deep unobservable' (James et al., 2014). In other words, what is real is part of what exists, which constitutes reality that is embedded in the mind of the researcher as it relates to early childhood teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages (Grygiel, 2022).

2.13 THE PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP WITH KNOWLEDGE (EPISTEMOLOGY)

Epistemology refers to the field of philosophy that analyses the sources of science, methodology, and validity of science (Hayati & Dalimunthe, 2022). Cohen et al. (2018) affirm that epistemology

focuses primarily on the theory of knowledge, construction of knowledge, its nature and form, method of acquiring it, and how it can be communicated to others. Epistemology, therefore, involves a branch of philosophy concerned with the origin, reliability, and orientation of knowledge (Pratt & De Vries, 2023). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018), Hudson et al. (2023) and Lewis (2014) elaborate that epistemology is concerned with a common assumption that involves the nature of knowledge. This is supported by Sarason and Conger (2018), Maarouf (2019), and Setiawan and Syamsuddin (2022) that epistemology is a branch of philosophy dealing with knowledge in a bid to differentiate between what is true or adequate, or what is not true or inadequate. Also, Creswell and Creswell (2017) provide a clear notion that epistemology deals with the *nature* of knowledge based on scope and legitimacy of what knowledge is possible, and what is not. These epistemological assumptions about knowledge influence the process of uncovering the knowledge of social behaviour as it delves deeply into a series of activities in order to gain incisive knowledge (Chung, 2022).

Additionally, R'boul (2022) and Jenkins (2022) assert that epistemology dwells on what constitutes acceptable knowledge, steps followed in obtaining knowledge, whether deductive or inductive, and the nature of knowledge in the field of study. Setiawan and Syamsuddin (2022) detail that epistemological assumptions in any research are concerned with how researchers access the nature of knowledge, components of knowledge, origin of knowledge, source of the knowledge, and what is possible to know, understand and re-present about the knowledge. Salabi (2021) summarises that epistemology consists of the ways in which knowledge is acquired, validated, and how it can be known.

2.14 THE NATURE OF VALUES, NORMS AND EVALUATION (AXIOLOGY)

Axiology is one of the branches of philosophy that has scientific dimensions concerning judgement about values and ethical issues to be considered in research (Hamidi et al., 2022). The study of value is recognised as axiology because it has a strong relationship with both the physical and the spiritual. Soomro et al., (2023) reiterate that axiology is concerned with human values, and the process of valuation that provides answers to several questions. In concurrence, Posicelskaya et al. (2023) affirm that axiology has three philosophical areas of study: ethics, aesthetics, and religion. This is supported by Wennerlind (2017) who confirms that axiology is a branch of philosophy concerning judgement about value. This suggests that making value judgements is flexible because

the drawing of conclusions from one research might be different to the other based on each other's value system (Adamboeya, 2023; Levernier, 2017). It is imperative to note that axiology focuses on questions of *what ought to be* comprising of the nature of values and the teaching of morals by teachers to enhance character development during teaching and learning processes (Xiangdong, 2022). Axiology plays a crucial role in the study of reality in connection with other methods of scientific knowledge (Egamberdieva & Saydullaeva, 2022). Hence, it is imperative to determine the values and standards when assessing anyone's values (Edwards, 2022).

2.15 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the theoretical framework that underpinned the study which aimed to dissect teachers' understanding of cognitive justice regarding the use of indigenous languages in ECE. This chapter began with a comprehensive explanation on what the term theoretical frameworks means, its significance, and its relevant components in a research study. Thereafter, the operational concepts within the study were examined. In addition, it explained the historical origin of the asset-based approach as well as its relevance and application. This chapter also discussed the relationship between the asset-based approach and cognitive justice in relation to their perceived relationship with knowledge (Epistemology), their view about the nature of reality (Ontology), and the nature of values, norms, and evaluation (Axiology). The next chapter (3) reviews the related literature to this study.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter (2) provided an insight into the theoretical framework that underpinned this study which focused on the asset-based approach and its operational concepts. This chapter (3) was organised into five sections. The first section dwelt on the situational analysis, concepts of cognitive justice and principles, dissecting cognitive justice within indigenous knowledges, the current situation regarding ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages, and the diverse ways in which teachers could enable cognitive justice in early childhood education. The second section critically examined the concepts within indigenous languages with other sub-themes like reasons for an indigenous language in education, factors militating against an indigenous language, and attitudes of teachers and parents towards indigenous languages being included as the language of learning and teaching. The third section of this chapter described the misconceptions about indigenous languages, its success in education, frustration of learners introduced to a non-native language, sociological impacts of the loss of indigenous languages, the use of indigenous languages in the teaching and learning in ECE, Nigeria's National Policy on education, and the National Development Plan. The fourth section of this chapter concentrated on the concept of ECE, the role of early childhood care and development, the objectives of ECE, ECE and the National Policy on Education, the policy framework of ECE, and the prevailing situation in ECE regarding indigenous languages. Lastly, this chapter presented the historical background of teacher-education, professionalism in ECE, professional development, and the future prospects of education in line with the National Development Plan.

3.2 UNDERSTANDING OF ECE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF COGNITIVE JUSTICE IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Situational Analysis (SA) is a method applied to analyse qualitative data through examining a situation and its link to decision-making processes (Clarke et al., 2022). Clarke (2022) adds that situational analysis in qualitative research includes knowledge, information and uncertainty which can be astutely represented and managed through contemporary research methods. This implies

that the essence of situational analysis is to describe the general state of life's experiences or circumstances occurring at a given time (Clarke et al., 2017). Therefore, to acquire a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions of cognitive justice in indigenous languages, we should consider the trend towards accepting the English language as a language of learning and teaching in Nigeria which has led to the relegation of indigenous languages by most people; even many parents and teachers avoid the use of indigenous languages in their homes and schools (Arop et al., 2023). The present situation at schools, according to Ogwudile (2023), is exacerbated by the lack of indigenous language books, or that the available books are unappealing for learners to read. Hence, situational analysis facilitates the understanding and dissection of complex issues (e.g., language intricacies) because it unravels problems via theoretical perspectives (Evans-Jordan, 2020).

3.3 COGNITIVE JUSTICE

The concept of Cognitive Justice (CJ) originated from an Indian scholar, Shiv Visvanathan in 1997, which was elucidated in his book titled *A Carnival of Science* where he asserts that cognitive justice is based on the recognition of the plurality of knowledge, and expresses the right of the different forms of knowledge to co-exist in the decision-making process (Visvanathan, 2009). Régulus (2020) elaborates that the essence of cognitive justice lies in its ability to question the hegemony of knowledge through modern scientific methods, and to pave ways for indigenous forms of knowledge to receive equal treatment. Régulus (2020, p. 2) articulates the pivotal role played by cognitive justice by asserting that:

Cognitive justice is articulated around a paradigm that seeks to reconstruct the conceptual systems governing models of humanity and different ways of being, while acknowledging and respecting the knowledge systems of each individual and each community.

In congruence, Van der Velden (2006) states that the concept of cognitive justice is based on equal treatment of all forms of knowledge in discourse, adding that it goes beyond methods or approaches, but highlights the way of life of indigenous people. Further, Rodriguez (2017) maintains that this knowledge is rooted in an ecology of knowledges, where the functions of these knowledges are traceable to the livelihood of the community. This implies that it is the

responsibility of the indigenous people to suggest a way out of colonial supremacy to promote cultural revitalisation, which includes transforming the language system used in schools.

3.3.1 Principle of Cognitive Justice

Visvanathan's (1997) study which involved cognitive justice, emanated from the impact of Western science on developing countries when it was illustrated by Indian farmers' local knowledge about agriculture compared to that of Western knowledge. The big questions were, which knowledge was superior when it came to farming practices in India? This led to 'clashes' between modern and traditional knowledges especially when indigenous people were not allowed to use their traditional 'sciences' to strengthen their circumstances, and in turn contribute to their own development (Visvanathan, 1997). Visvanathan (1997) elaborates that the negative impact of Western science will affect progress in developing countries, and that different ways of knowing should be afforded equal treatment in dialogues and in decision-making processes.

In addition, literature indicates that primarily cognitive justice is not meant to sensitise us only to the different forms of knowledge, but also to diverse challenges confronting communities that must be solved (Visvanathan, 1997; Karmakar & Chetty, 2023). Also, the principle of cognitive justice recognises the right of different forms of knowledge to coexist with one another in a dialogical relationship without preferring one over the other in decision-making processes (Visvanathan, 1997). I view cognitive justice as simply being the tool for upholding justice or fairness. Similarly, Kraak (1999, p. 3) provides clear outlines concerning the principles of cognitive justice: Firstly, all forms of knowledge are valid and should co-exist in a dialogic relationship to each other, and that cognitive justice implies the strengthening of the 'voice' of the defeated in the community. Secondly, Traditional knowledges and technologies should not be 'museumised', that every citizen is a scientist, and each layperson is an expert. Finally, Science should help the common being, and all competing sciences should be brought together into a positive heuristic dialogue.

This implies that the principles of cognitive justice, to a very large extent, embrace the traditional knowledge of the indigenous community where equal treatment is practiced. This suggests using indigenous languages in the teaching and learning process. This is reinforced by Makoelle (2014) and Ortiz (2022) who contend that cognitive justice comprises of various potentials to enhance equitable learning through engagement with the indigenous voices for the restoration of local languages to the immediate environment of the school system.

3.3.2 Understanding Cognitive Justice within Indigenous Languages

The concept of cognitive justice is contested because different sciences have different ways of knowing about survival and the livelihood of indigenous people within communities (Rodriguez, 2017). Since cognitive justice encourages the principle that all knowledges should co-exist in a dialogical relationship with each other, the process of sharing divergent ways of knowing should be visible (Van der Velden, 2006). In addition, Visvanathan (2009) and Odora Hoppers (2021) maintain that cognitive justice can be visualised as the democracy of knowledges which recognises the right of different forms of knowledge to co-exist, and that the plurality of knowledges is an active recognition for diversity. Moreover, indigenous languages play a crucial role as a vehicle of communication for the acquisition of people's knowledge which enriches practices related to culture, knowledge, wisdom, and norms and values of the communities (Shava & Manyike, 2018). In this regard, language can be viewed from two perspectives: there are languages that can be learnt and taught, and there are languages used in the impartation of knowledge that would enhance growth in the educational sectors and in national development (Obanya, 2004). Leibowitz (2017, p. 7) states that "through knowledge we liberate ourselves; through knowledge we question the limitations of a single culture/nationalistic identity". Hence, cognitive justice goes beyond creating awareness about the plurality of knowledges – it also employs various ways of solving communities' problems (Visvanathan, 2009).

Further, to understand cognitive justice within the indigenous language discourse, it is imperative to shed more light on the concept of culture because culture is bound within a particular social context (Edwards, 2018). I believe that the place of culture is significant in relation to indigenous people, especially regarding indigenous languages. Baruth and Manning (2009) explain that the concept of culture relates to people's values, language, religion, ideals, artistic expressions, and patterns of social and interpersonal relationships, among others. Rodriguez (2017, p. 2) elaborates that "knowledge is not something to be abstracted from culture as a life form - it is connected to a livelihood, a life cycle, and a lifestyle; and it determines life chances". Cognitive justice, therefore, promotes epistemic pluralism which involves knowledges playing a vital role in democratic and dialogical sciences, while remaining connected to the livelihoods and survival of communities (Fischer & Klazar, 2021; Odora Hoppers, 2009).

Importantly, these functions of culture highlight the position of incorporating indigenous languages into the school system as this is a way of applying cognitive justice for learners from

diverse cultural backgrounds to enhance their academic performance. This entails reconstructing, recovering, and re-evaluating indigenous languages to enable and attain cognitive justice. Mbembe (2016, p. 37) concurs that it is imperative to embrace this approach to knowledge; "a process that does not necessarily abandon [indigenous languages]". Walsh (2010) elaborates on Baruth and Manning's (2009) view by emphasising the hegemony of indigenous language in relation to the notion of universal knowledge for humanity, since it embraces it via a horizontal strategy of openness to dialogue among epistemic traditions. In agreement, Ude et al. (2020) purport that an indigenous language is a product of indigenous knowledge which acts as a solid foundation on which knowledge systems are rooted to enhance community development and sustainability. This implies that there is an inseparable connection between an indigenous language and indigenous knowledge.

3.3.3 The Current Situation Regarding Cognitive Justice in Indigenous Languages

Recently, critiques in the fields of humanities, social sciences, and Human Rights Education (HRE) have exposed colonial domination which destroyed indigenous languages through brutal physical oppression and brainwashing which stifled the growth of various forms of knowledges in local communities. These critiques also reacted against Western and Eurocentric oppression which transgresses the rules and regulations that guides Human Rights Education (Chew & Tennell, 2023). Also, De Sousa Santos (2015) contends that cognitive justice is a mere rejection of Western knowledges imposed by the colonial powers as a social injustice. Since "language is inseparable from our way of being, our thoughts, our feelings, our joys and much more, it is through language that we show who we are, and if our language disappears, the whole sociocultural foundation of our community of speakers is put at risk" (Auden, 2019, p. 12).

Further, Ebo (2022) and Leibowitz (2017) suggest bridging the wide gap between the language of colonialism and the languages of indigenous people - given that indigenous languages would enhance effective teaching and learning processes in the classroom. Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2015) confirm that it is quite obvious in ECCE that the teaching and learning process is on a faulty foundation as a result of colonial practices that did not consider indigenous knowledges through indigenous storytelling, folktales and songs. Weiler (2011) adds that knowledge politics must be considered for advancement in teaching and learning, as knowledge is conveyed in indigenous societies for maintaining law and order, a sound administrative system, and an effective and

functional economy. As such “cognitive justice is about rethinking the purposes, content and processes of teaching and learning in ways that would open up and acknowledge the validity and primacy of multiple knowledges” (Van der Westhuizen, 2015, p. 13; Karmakar & Chetty, 2023).

Mbembe (2015), Ndofirepi and Cross (2015) and Ahuja, (2019) criticise the prevailing situation in many developing countries where the population still feels indoctrinated by the notion that anything without the touch of the colonial master cannot be authentic, good or original. This perception results from oppressing and devaluing indigenous people’s cultural heritage, unique knowledge, and educational system. It is evident from literature that the first wave of colonialism was basically the conquering of physical spaces and bodies of native people, and the second wave of colonialism was based on the colonisation of the mind through disciplines such as education, science, economics and law (Odora Hoppers, 2011; Richards, 2014). In line with this position, De Sousa Santos (2018, p. 92) purports that the first and second phases of colonialism resulted in the belittling and destruction of indigenous knowledge, adding that this decimation of indigenous languages led to the “the murder of knowledge”. I concur with Ude et al. (2020) that acknowledging the importance of indigenous knowledge enhances people’s identity and culture within the community.

Additionally, Shava and Manyike (2018) and Duru (2022) elaborate that the negative impact of the colonialism’s language hegemony over indigenous languages, is still very pronounced in society and in educational systems of indigenous people. Dei (2014) notes that at international meetings other countries’ leaders are proud to speak their indigenous languages (with translation) despite their ability to communicate fluently in English; only leaders from African countries speak in English and other colonial languages other than their own indigenous languages. This reveals the extent to which they undermine their own languages in the international arena. This implies that some indigenous people measure modernisation as the ability to communicate fluently the colonial language. It imperative for the introduction of cognitive justice to legitimise the right of different knowledge systems to exist, and primarily to suggest a way out of colonial supremacy by demanding the recognition of knowledges as a way out of oppression (Visvanathan, 1997). Social injustices inflicted on local communities and indigenous people are legacies of colonial domination, still evident today (Brechin et al., 2012; Martin & Theory, 2017). Rodríguez and Inturias (2018) assert that many of these injustices arise from the exclusion and marginalisation of the indigenous people’s values, customs, languages and traditions. Santos (2018) contends that a global shift that guarantees cognitive justice through which the oppressed voices can be heard will

liberate indigenous populations.

3.3.4 Strategies to Promote Cognitive Justice in Yoruba Language through Early Childhood Education teachers

The dynamic process of change in any society is through education which promotes meaningful development to foster natural growth, cohesion, and peaceful learning in educational systems for the sustainability of the community (Olajuyin et al., 2020). Nigeria is not an exception in this context because the learner is at the centre of a country's educational system (Ukala & Agabi, 2017). Hence, Nyamnjoh (2012, p. 1) criticises that “education has become a compulsion for Africans to ‘lighten their darkness’ both physically and metaphorically in the interest of the nation, and for the gratification of colonising and hegemonic others”, adding how formal education is cultural estrangement rather than cultural engagement of the indigenous people.

Meanwhile, the place of teachers in ECCE is crucial when it comes to learners acquiring knowledge, competencies, and values (Sulyman, 2022). O’Byrne et al. (2018) elaborate that teaching goes beyond the classroom; teachers as role-models inspire and encourage learners to excel whether in kindergarten, crèche, music and physical education spaces, or in special education centres. Bishwakarma (2019) affirms that a teacher plays a vital role in the grooming of learners to become successful adults in the future; hence, the unconditional love displayed by a teacher regarding learners cannot be quantified which helps the learners to believe in the teacher. Early Childhood Education teachers are responsible for helping infants and toddlers prepare for kindergarten through play, interactive activities and games, while preparing early childhood learners for the world of learning (Jacob & Olakunle, 2022; Okoroafor & Ikuenomore, 2019).

Since culture is embedded in the teaching and learning process through the indigenous language, learners should be encouraged to explore their African culture. Oluwadiya (2022) and Charlesworth (2009) contend that culture is promoted through the indigenous language as it enhances learners’ perception of concepts during and after teaching-learning processes.

3.3.5 The importance of the presence of Cognitive Justice in Yoruba language

Cognitive justice is about the right of many forms of knowledge to exist, seeing that all knowledges are interconnected (Visvanathan, 2001, p. 7). In line with Van der Velden (2006) and Visvanathan's (2020) position, cognitive justice dissects relationships that exist between two different knowledges through the principle of equality. Visvanathan (2009, p. 5) and Karmakar and Chetty (2023) elaborate that cognitive justice is about the “democracy of knowledges” and the need for diversity. The advantages of cognitive justice concerning the enablement of indigenous language are numerous, and according to Odora Hoppers (2009), cognitive justice fosters epistemic pluralism, which allows other knowledges to integrate with democratic and dialogical sciences, thus promoting indigenous languages, enhancing livelihoods, and sustaining indigenous communities.

Similarly, literature proposes strategies to utilise diverse knowledge systems to inform social change within communities (Fischer & Klazar, 2019; Santos, 2004). Also, Hess et al. (2007, p. 9) conceptualise diverse knowledge through the notion of “the commons” which promotes individuals beyond the level of mere consumers to producers. This makes it possible for the individual to imagine himself/herself as “an embodiment of knowledge who generates ideas rather than one who merely consumes them” (Johnson, 2008, p. 66). This implies that cognitive justice means recognising your own knowledge, as well as listening and responding to the knowledge of others to promote cordial relationships (Fricker, 2017; Rogers, 2019). Additionally, cognitive justice empowers communities to problem-solve, but rejects a production chain of knowledge that excludes whole sectors of populations as knowledge creators (Burt et al., 2018). Moreover, cognitive justice rejects a hegemonic vision of the future, but embraces the possibility of an ethical and inclusive future as being essential for knowing and being in the world (De Sousa Santos, 2018).

In summary, cognitive justice involves rethinking the purpose of teaching and learning in ways that would create awareness about the validity and primacy of multiple knowledges for the survival of indigenous communities (Westhuizen, 2015). This implies the possibility of positive transformation through teachers’ enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages in ECE.

3.3.6 Cognitive Justice and Indigenous Languages in Early Childhood Education

Cognitive justice claims that different conceptions of knowledge can co-exist, while stipulating that colonial powers should treat traditional knowledge equally when taking crucial decisions (Moulaison et al., 2017). The social injustice or oppression meted out to the indigenous communities and their languages paralysed sustainable development, therefore cognitive justice must be activated in the decolonisation of knowledge (and the mind) to promote local and indigenous people's agendas (Fischer & Klazar, 2019; Mignolo, 2008). Vazquez-Cordoba (2022) and Raymond et al. (2010) reiterate that many of these injustices were as a result of hegemony, oppression, and the marginalisation of the indigenous people's languages especially during the teaching and learning processes. Even though it is stipulated in the National Policy of Education that the language of the immediate environment should be the language of learning and teaching for early childhood learners during teaching and learning process, English still prevails as the language of learning and teaching in most Nigerian schools (FGN, 2013). This implies that local populations must be empowered to voice their opinions on issues of language (Piron, 2021; Pretty et al., 2009). Burgess (2015) emphasises that cognitive justice vehemently opposes the oppression of people's fundamental human rights where the indigenous language and cultural heritage are not given equal opportunity to flourish. Local people must develop a sense of belonging by removing the vestiges of colonialism.

Although Fogg-Rogers et al. (2015) contend that we should not relegate the 'scientific approach' to knowledge, they advise that we should rather seek for the equal treatment of traditional knowledge embedded in indigenous languages that should co-exist harmoniously with other languages. In addition, Rodriguez (2017) suggests that a way forward is through dialogue with indigenous people to understand constructions of their life plans, indigenous languages, customs, traditions, and their identity. Hence, the construction of the life plan will enable teachers and educational authorities to apply cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

3.3.7 Cognitive Justice in the Framework of Human Rights Education (HRE)

Literature on cognitive justice encourages the acceptance of different forms of knowledge (Gwaravanda & Ndofirepi, 2023; Muchenje, 2017). Although the ways of knowing are rooted in

colonial thinking, expeditious reform in this regard is imperative and inevitable (Karmakar & Chetty, 2023; Muchenje, 2017). Accordingly, several scholars in the field of decolonialisation and post-colonialism have criticised the Eurocentric framing of human rights which has led to the massive violation of dignities (De Sousa Santos, 2021; Osler, 2015; Odora Hoppers, 2021; Takayama et al., 2017). It is noteworthy that Zembylas (2017, p. 398) clarifies de-colonial and postcolonial critiques on the domination and oppression of indigenous populations as brutal European imperialism, and not as a superior form of knowledge-bringing. Similarly, Dervin (2017) asserts that human rights are universally valid, irrespective of the background (social, educational, and political) in which they operate; they may vary among countries, but international basic human rights are enshrined in all Constitutions.

Notwithstanding the above, various levels of injustices due to the Western framing of human rights prevails, which is the main reason for agitating for global social justice which gives rise to cognitive justice (Santos, 2018). Coysh (2014) and Zembylas (2018) advocate for a revised HRE because generally people are not questioning HRE practices within communities. For example, teaching and learning processes in early childhood education is mostly through a foreign language (English) and not the language of the immediate environment, yet there is much silence on this issue from communities. Considering this situation, Coysh (2014, pp. 110-111) suggests that human rights need to be reconsidered based on the following: first, human rights education cannot be detached from its natural community and environment; second, it is plural and diverse and circulates in a society of difference, rather than a homogeneous state; third, human rights education should be learned in terms of different contexts, cultures, people and experiences; and fourth, it is rooted in people's everyday experiences, aspirations, concerns and needs - rather than abstract and intangible concepts.

In consideration of the above, it is evident from literature that efforts are afoot to correct the situation by discouraging hegemony and the domination of the Western powers by introducing indigenous knowledges through inclusive decision-making processes (Al-Daraweesh & Snauwaert, 2017). This implies that with the entrenchment of fundamental rights, cognitive justice is inevitable such that indigenous people and their languages would be allowed to thrive through the principle of equality.

3.4 INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

The role of language in teaching and learning cannot be overemphasised in processes of knowledge and skills acquisition (Aturamu, 2023; Casil-Batang & Malenab-Temporal, 2018; Degboro & Olatunji, 2022). Since language is one of the main channels of communication through which societal norms, values, etiquettes, beliefs system and cultural heritage are transmitted to younger generations (Duru, 2022; Olanrewaju, 2020), indigenous languages should also be imbibed to guarantee an enriching future and the survival of cultures (UNESCO, 2019). Ikoru (2019) purports that an indigenous language is spoken by particular groups of people born into a community who engage in all activities through their native languages. Salawu (2022) and Walsh (2005) reiterate that an indigenous language is any language that is native to a community for communication and interaction. Similarly, Shava and Manyike (2018) assert that indigenous languages are conveyers of knowledge and wisdom in indigenous communities communicated through stories, proverbs, folktales, myths, poetry and songs that give meaning to individual communities. In support, UNESCO (2018) affirms that indigenous knowledge is rooted in the understanding of indigenous people's interactions through indigenous languages fundamental for their survival. Nelson Mandela said: "if you talk to a man in a language that he understands it will go to his head, but if you talk to him in his mother's language it goes to his heart" (Noah, 2016, p. 23). Hence, it is imperative that the revitalisation of indigenous languages occurs by using the Nigerian educational system as a vehicle to enhance the development and sustainability of indigenous languages (Oboko & Obika, 2022).

Further, Renganathan and Kral (2018) support Shava and Manyike's (2018) motivation to revitalise indigenous languages by emphasising that language is the primary medium and a bridge to connect people to knowledge, history, cultural heritage and traditions. Also, when knowledge is lost, a particular language ceases to exist. Campbell, cited in Wallace (2010), speaks of language death when a language becomes extinct and no longer spoken to communicate. Therefore, Renganathan and Kral (2018) claim that the loss of an indigenous language is colossal at a global level. However, Goding and Mabadeje (2021) state that due to educational 'advancement' in Nigeria, the English language is highly rated and accorded great respect over other indigenous languages. I observed that the indigenous language is of

little relevance in the educational system in Nigeria, which is supported by Emeka-Nwobia and Ndimele (2019) who claim that the death of an indigenous language is attributable to the decision of the speaking-community to stop using their own language such that it leans on the precipice of extinction. In this regard, Wurm (1998, p. 192) affirms that there are five stages of indigenous language endangerment as follows (i) Potentially endangered - This occurs when learners from a linguistic group prefer the dominant language which is not the language of the immediate environment. The language consequently begins to lose learner-speakers. (ii) Endangered - A language is endangered when the youngest speakers are young adults and there are no or very few learner-speakers of the indigenous language. (iii) Seriously endangered - The youngest speakers are middle-aged or past middle age. (iv) Moribund or terminally endangered - There are only few speakers left for effective communication in the indigenous language. (v) Extinct - There are no speakers of the language left at all.

In other words, language death is tantamount to the obliteration of a people or community, their cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge, values, norms, and identity. It is obvious that language is embedded in people's culture, and no culture can survive in the absence of a language (Odu & Alabi, 2023; Oyemike et al., 2017; Rahim, & Munirah, (2022)). This implies that the sustainability and development of any community or society is a reliant on indigenous languages, but this is now threatened by the entry of foreign languages. Consequently, Bamgbose (2011), Herman et al. (2020), Ojonugwa and Emah (2020), and Olajoke and Oluwapelumi (2018) maintain that the extinction of native languages is accelerated by the passing away of the aged and the reluctance of the younger generation to embrace the indigenous language due to the imposition of the colonial language on the Nigerian educational system. Also, the indigenous people are lured by the colonial influence to neglect their cultural heritage and language by adopting a foreign language (De Varennes & Kuzborska, 2016). This implies that cognitive justice is urgent to revive indigenous languages at the FP level.

3.4.1 The Evolution of Indigenous Languages in Nigeria

Human development is embedded in the practice of language communication (Nwanyanwu, 2017). Since language cannot be separated from communication and interaction in society (Olawaju & Sunday, 2020), the indigenous language (Yoruba) is easily imbibed by learners at the foundational level without the complication of learning the grammar of foreign language (Aboh, 2017). In Nigeria, there are three major indigenous languages: Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa - but Yoruba serves as the main indigenous language spoken mainly in the southwest, with Igbo spoken in the southeast, and Hausa in the north (Akujobi, 2019; Emeka-Nwobia & Ndimele, 2019; Ikoba & Jolayemi, 2016). Nigeria is a multilingual and multi-ethnic country with a population of about

182 million (National Population Commission, 2016). It is noteworthy that Nigeria has between 400 to 450 languages which are from various ethnic groups (Akujobi, 2019; Ugwu & Ogunremi, 2019). The Yoruba group from the southwest consists of 30% of the total population of the nation, making them the second largest ethnic group in Nigeria (Olajoke & Oluwapelumi, 2018).

The Yoruba ethnic group is well-known for its all-encompassing, rich cultural norms and values which are ingrained in all learners and adults through indigenous languages from a young age (Makinde, 2017). Thus, Olanrewaju (2020) affirms that from the cradle to the grave, a Yoruba is embedded with customs and traditions (including indigenous languages) acceptable to the local community. I concur with Olanrewaju (2020, p. 71) that “The Yoruba people are culturally conscious of their norms; hence, at every gathering, the elderly ones do not hesitate to instil values that promote virtues in the younger ones whom they believe are the future leaders of tomorrow; hence, the Yoruba maxim, *Eyinnii di akuko*. [Learners are leaders of tomorrow]. However, the future of indigenous languages in Nigeria is not encouraging - a foreign language is the main language of pedagogy, which is exacerbated by the negative attitudes of the native people towards their indigenous languages (Nicholas & Prisca, 2020; Ude et al., 2020).

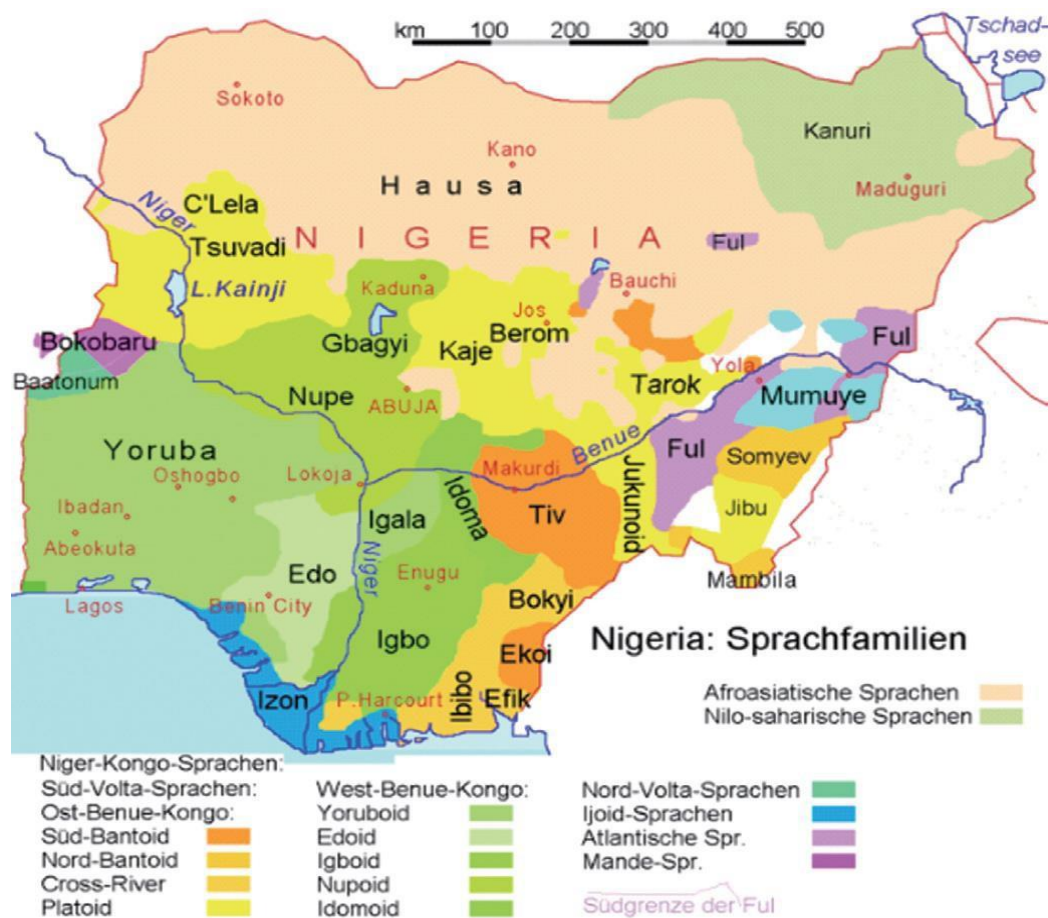


Figure: 3.1 Indigenous language groups in Nigeria (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/languages>)

3.4.2 Promoting Indigenous Languages in Education

It is evident that language is the supporting tool of education in any country, and without language, educational success is impossible (Obanya, 1999). It is therefore important that sustainable development in education is enhanced via the promotion of indigenous languages for the attainment of desired the aim and objectives in education, and to fight against illiteracy in the community (Nwanyanwu, 2017). This is supported by Obanya's (1999, p. 23) five-point-plan (below) on the importance of indigenous languages if astutely and inclusively designed by the country's educational policymakers:

- (i) promoting national languages and developing them for use in education;
- (ii) using indigenous languages for instruction in basic education, including teaching them as school subjects at all other levels;

- (iii) using indigenous languages for instruction in the early years of formal education and teaching them as subjects at all other levels;
- (iv) teaching indigenous languages as subjects to a limited extent in basic education; and
- (v) fostering ongoing experimentation and argumentation on the use of indigenous languages in education.

Since a language does not exist in isolation, it is of great value as a source of traditional ecological knowledge that is entrenched in indigenous societies (Chiblow & Meighan, 2022). Simpson's (2017) research demonstrates that an indigenous language plays an important role because it promotes the successful performance of learners, as opposed to a colonial language imposed in a developing country. Moreover, research proves that using an indigenous language as a medium of instruction during the first three years of basic education is the most efficient and effective way to achieve quality outcomes for learners in terms of acquiring skills, knowledge, and values (Awopetu, 2016). Additionally, research findings reveal that learners educated through an indigenous language are likely to attain bilingualism, and perform better than the learners taught in a foreign language (Draper & Nilaiyaka, 2015).

In sum, a number of international research findings revealed that the positive effects of indigenous languages on the academic performance of learners cannot be overemphasised. It facilitates learners' reading, writing, and learning of new concepts during teaching and learning processes to develop new skills such as reading faster for meaning, compared to using the colonial language (Ibrokhimovich, 2022; Mangila, 2018). In addition, research findings consistently reveal that in early childhood education learners benefit immensely from using an indigenous language as their home language, and as the language of learning for teaching (Stone-Cadena & Álvarez Velasco, 2018). This implies that with the introduction and implementation of the language of the immediate environment as the medium of instruction, there is the likelihood of learners performing better as they become more interested in the teaching-learning processes.

3.4.3 Attitudes of Teachers, Learners, and Parents towards Indigenous Languages

The attitude of indigenous people towards using their native language determines the quality of progress within their school community (Owojecho, 2020). A negative attitude towards one's indigenous language endangers its existence as non-involvement in the language of the immediate

environment decreases its importance (Ayakoroma, 2017). This worldwide phenomenon of negative language attitudes towards one's mother-tongue is widespread but has not been given adequate attention by scholars (Alebiosu & Culture, 2016). Smith (2017) attests that attitudes can have considerable psychological implications that determine what and how we interpret the environment, how we code the information, observe, and react based on what information we process. For example, if learners are indoctrinated daily that the global language of communication, commerce, and safety is English, then they will sway towards a language that guarantees employment and comfort, and may possibly marginalised their mother-tongue that is only locally spoken. In this regard, Smith (2017) purports that there are three components of attitude: cognition (belief), emotion (feeling) and behaviour (action). This implies that these components act together to enhance positive attractions towards others; and where there are right attitudes in place, there is the possibility for rapid improvement in the learner's performance that will enhance development and sustainability. In addition, attitudes of teachers and learners' parents towards an indigenous language have a great influence on teaching and learning processes. Many educated Nigerians only speak in English to their learners and not in the indigenous language, while some schools forbid the use of the mother-tongue (Chun & Abdullah, 2022; Gupta & Adams, 2018). Bamgbose (2005) opines that a more positive altitude should be adopted by Nigerians towards the use of indigenous language within their various communities. In addition, Brown (1994, p.168) believes that an attitude is part of one's perception of the self which can be connected to the use of indigenous languages. Those who communicate in English when teaching their learners flout the National Language Policy which stipulates the use of the language of the immediate environment (Kazeem & Suleiman, 2020, p. 332). Kwao et al. (2021) state that speaking the Yoruba indigenous language during teaching and learning at school enhances critical-thinking and literacy skills. Igudia (2023) and UNESCO (2015) caution that using only a foreign

language to teach in early childhood education is likely to create controversies and cultural boundaries that could expose teaching and learning to many obstacles. Therefore, in order not to limit the scope of learning and to proffer a solution to this problem, it is expedient to use a bilingual or multicultural approach to teaching and learning at the foundational level (Kwao-Gertrude &

Ackah-Appiah, 2021; Lee et al., 2023) This implies that the learning environment becomes learner-friendly because the indigenous language becomes the way of life to enhance sustainable

development and the actualisation of language policy planning (Oakes, 2023).

3.5 FOREIGN LANGUAGES

3.5.1 Decline of Foreign use in Early Childhood Education

Usmanova (2022) states that a foreign language is not familiar to indigenous people. It could be studied as an elective for international communication (Edung, 2017; Rustamov, 2022). In a bid to promote Western education in Nigeria, indigenous languages were relegated to the background (Kazeem & Suleiman, 2020). In concurrence, Guanah (2018) elucidates that presently in Nigeria, there have been growing concerns over the decline in the use of indigenous languages in homes, schools, and communities over the last two decades. Also, there have been no conscious efforts to revive indigenous languages for the younger generation. I observed teaching and learning processes in early childhood education where songs, rhymes, and storytelling are mostly in the English language, and not in Yoruba which is the language of the immediate environment. Ikoba and Jolayemi (2021) state that it is very disheartening that the indigenous language is sidelined in schools to promote Western education. Alarmingly, Disbray (2016) found that parents and teachers believed that success in life is dependent on the adoption of a foreign language and not on the learner's home language. This implies that there is need for teachers to understand and enable cognitive justice in indigenous languages in early childhood education.

3.5.1 Language Maintenance in Early Childhood Education

There are approximately about 6000 languages and dialects in the world, and 50% of them are threatened. Nigeria alone has about 450 languages, but none predominantly used in schools. Globally, challenges concerning languages arise as a result of the marginalisation of indigenous languages while colonial languages, especially English, are encouraged (Endeku, Ochieng, & Achieng, 2019). Consequently, the foreign language has gained linguistic power over the indigenous languages (Alabi, 2021; Fasan, 2011).

Furthermore, Oladimeji et al. (2020) maintain that there is a drastic reduction in the number of people who can speak Yoruba fluently without mixing English into it, which is an indication of the imminent disappearance of the Yoruba indigenous language from the curricula. For the

revitalisation of the Yoruba language to occur, there is an urgent need for a coherent and consistent language policy that can be well implemented and monitored (Ikoba & Jolayemi, 2021). Then only will the Yoruba language in ECE thrive as a language of the immediate environment as per National Education Policy (Alabi, 2021; Bádéjo & Gordon, 2022).

3.5.2 Sociological Impact of the loss of Indigenous languages

Meighan (2022) and Jibir-Daura (2014) refer to an indigenous language as belonging to the indigenous people based on tribe, nativity, ethnicity, or local language spoken by them; that is, they form a linguistically distinct community in a particular area for a very long time. Adedeji (2014) and Salawu (2022) agree that a local or indigenous language involves the language spoken by the indigenous people which has a strong connection with the environment or community where they live. Learners learn their first language primarily from those who are very close and stay around them most of the time such as caregivers, siblings, and immediate and extended family members (Boateng, 2019). Ibrokhimovich (2022) refers to the indigenous language as a mother-language based on the fact that learners spend more time with their mothers. Therefore, early Childhood education is an important phase in the cultural, linguistic and educational life of a child as he/she transits from the mother's house to pre-primary school. Kwao-Gertrude & Ackah-Appiah (2021) illustrate the importance of the indigenous language and its impact on socio-cultural development while promoting norms and values of the community to reinforce learning experiences at the foundational phase.

The loss of an indigenous language is the loss of peoples' heritage, culture, norms and values of the communities which obliterates parts of a nation's history that might not be easily retrieved because as language goes into extinction, it takes many treasures along with it (Ikoba & Jolayemi, 2021; Ogwudile, 2023). Obanya (1999) asserts that when a language does not originate from the immediate environment and is not selected as the language of teaching and learning process at ECE level, it could have a negative impact on the nation's development. Benson et al. (2017) observe that in Nigeria today there is a preference for a foreign language as the official language of education at all levels, including in NGOs and in all parastatals of government within the

country.

3.5.3 The Use of Indigenous Languages in Early Childhood Education

In recent years much literature focused on teaching and learning in ECCE. Hagos and Tefera (2017) maintain that language plays a crucial role in ECE which is influenced by cultural background, skills, and experiences. Consideration should be given to the use of indigenous languages which will enhance cultural identity and the quality of teaching and learning processes. Since teaching and learning cannot occur in the absence of language (Chiblow & Meighan 2022; Halliday, 2004), success in early childhood education should be encouraged through the use of the mother-tongue to acquire wisdom and knowledge to develop the learner holistically (Chew et al., 2019). This is because indigenous languages are often taught during teaching and learning process on how indigenous language pedagogies can reflect Indigenous knowledge systems that could impact academic performance of learners positively (Chew, Leonard, & Rosenblum, 2023).

Furthermore, Nkonde et al. (2018) purport that teaching and learning in a foreign language is a mere disruption of the cognitive ability which slows down the teaching-learning process. This is supported by Marnewick and Worksheets (2015) who agree that without using the home language of the learner, it might not only affect the educational foundation of the learner, but also stifle effective participation which makes the learning process boring and frustrating. It can also promote teacher-centred lesson delivery which deviates from current modern participatory methods. I observed that during the teaching and learning process when the teacher uses the indigenous language, the class becomes lively and receptive.

Hu et al. (2018) cited in (Ho & Lin, 2015) refer to the influential philosophies introduced by theorists such as Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky which are widely practiced in Early childhood Education. In support, Ying and Ho (2015) purport that teaching approaches such as Reggio Emilia and Montessori are pedagogical philosophies that have contributed to the foundation of contemporary Early Childhood Education by emphasising that learning is rooted in teachers' pedagogy during the teaching and learning process at ECE level. This was because indigenous languages play a vital role in the impartation of native intelligence and wisdom to enhance sustainability and development in indigenous communities (Adegbite, 2019; Amfani, 2009). Chew and Tennell (2023) and Hu et al. (2018) suggest that the English language must be integrated with indigenous languages; hence, teachers must apply codeswitching to facilitate learners' psychomotor, intellectual, and attitudinal domains during teaching and learning. This blend of the English and indigenous languages through the bilingual approach may be advantageous.

Nevertheless, there is need for early childhood education teachers to understand and enhance cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

3.5.4 Legal Framework on Indigenous Languages

Educational policy is concerned with the adherence of rules and regulations to govern the operations of an educational system (Bolaji et al., 2019). Arop et al. (2018) claim that no nation can rise above itself if it follows foreign educational policies. The Nigerian National Policy on Education which covers education from early childhood education to tertiary level, emphasised the use of indigenous languages at the ECE level; However, teaching and learning is still dominated by the English Language (Amechi, 2017). This implies that there is a need for the expeditious implementation of indigenous languages at the ECE level as stipulated in the policy which could be enhanced through implementing cognitive justice.

Public early childhood education came into full existence in 2004 when the Federal Government of Nigeria mandated compulsory pre-school education to be included in all public primary schools (FGN, 2004). This was tailored towards the formative years of learners to add meaning and shape their personalities towards socially acceptable norms (Salami, 2014). However, irrespective of Government's national policies on ECE, in practice, commitment and attention to introducing indigenous languages in the Foundation Phase (FP) is lacking (Salami, 2016). This suggests that the ECE national language policy has inherent shortcomings for not being enacted in early childhood education.

Additionally, since indigenous languages are marginalised in ECE, learner-performance has remained mediocre. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Udoeye (2016) on multilingual proficiency in Nigeria, it was revealed that learners find it difficult to communicate fluently in their indigenous languages even though the language policy in Nigeria recommends the use of native/local languages (Kazeem & Suleiman, 2020).

3.5.5 Indigenous Languages in the National Development Plan

The concept of development involves total transformation towards improving the quality of areas such as language, economics, culture, sociology, politics, science, technology, and education (Emeka-Nwobia, 2015; Rahim & Munirah, 2022). Smith (2017) agrees that development can be

defined as a process concerned with the improvement of the quality of society through effecting fundamental human rights by raising the standard of living, and the confidence of the people. Accordingly, language is an indispensable tool for engaging in day-to-day activities within the community in order to enhance national development through meaningful interactions (Benson et al., 2017). For the successful transformation of a society, the indigenous language within a community should be kept alive (Emeka-Nwobia, 2015). I concur with Nwanyanwu (2017) that an indigenous language has an important role to play in the sustainability of an educational system within a society; thus, the revival of indigenous languages will enhance a better understanding of ourselves as Nigerians. I believe that the introduction of indigenous languages to learners at the early childhood education level will enhance academic performance. Banjo and Jennings (2017) reiterate that language is vital for the life-blood of a community to facilitate development and sustainability.

3.6 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the foundation of a learner's preparation to become an asset to future generations (Latiana et al., 2018; Steed et al., 2022). For this preparatory stage in life, a firm foundation is crucial to enhance an individual's smooth entry into primary education (Manuel, 2023). This significant period of ECE develops a learner's personality such that the learner is raised in a morally upright manner (Sharaffitdinov & Yusupov, 2022). Okoroafor et al. (2022) and Campbell and Speldewinde (2022) reveal that if a learner's foundation is shaky, it will limit the exploitation of the innate potential which will affect development and sustainability. In this regard, Ibhaze (2016) agrees that the strength of an education system is determined by the quality of the Foundation Phase. Jacob and Olakunle (2022) reiterate that education plays a crucial role in the development of any society, adding that the place of early childhood education is critical for the holistic development of the learner.

Further, Oyero et al. (2020) claim that ECE is any well-planned organisational programme with goals to promote learners' mental, physical, and linguistic abilities from birth to eight years of age. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the system of education for learners - a process where the individual learner is being developed for future success (Follari, 2015; Gramling, 2015; Steed et al., 2022). UNICEF (2019) clarifies the concept of early Childhood education as being the foundation of a learner's journey to greatness in life, which helps the learners to reach their full

potential when there is a reduction in inequalities, promotion of peace, and progress in societies. Moreover, the National Association for the Education of Young Learners [NAEYC' (2019) asserts that the early childhood education stage is critical because it is the phase of learners' rapid development where the brain develops faster than during any other period in life. Therefore, "Early years in life are widely accepted as the most important period during which learners experience cognitive, language, perceptual, socio-emotional and motor development which they will need for future achievements and social functioning" (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016, p. 33). Similarly, Anna and Ossom (2018) state that early childhood education is a vital period in a learner's life which contributes to shaping their future based on a solid foundation for meaningful achievement and success in the future. Maduewesi (1999) elaborates that ECE is offered to learners who are yet to reach the expected age for primary school beginners, and that it is a semi-formal education arrangement, usually outside the learner's home where learners from three years old are exposed to play activities in a group-setting through mental, social, and physical stimulation meant for their holistic development until they enter the formal schooling stage.

3.6.1 The Objectives of Early Childhood Education

The National Policy on Education [6th edition] (FRN, 2014, pp. 7-8) stipulated the following objectives:

- (i) Effecting a smooth transition from the home to the school;
- (ii) Preparing the learner for the primary level of education;
- (iii) Providing adequate care and supervision for the learners while their parents are at work;
- (iv) Creating individuals who are responsible citizens;
- (v) Inculcating in the learner the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature and the local environment, playing with toys, and artistic and musical activities;
- (vi) Teaching cooperation and team spirit;
- (vii) Teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, and forms, through play; and
- (viii) Teaching good habits, especially good health habits.

The National Policy on Education (2014) spelt out the responsibility of the Nigerian Government to promote early childhood education on how to achieve the above objectives. This implies that if

the minimum standard for ECCE is effectively implemented, then the possibility of a total transformation at the early childhood education level is very possible.

Lastly, it is noteworthy that the contents of the National Policy on Education (NPE) are in detail and well-planned because it is the stated goal of the Nigerian Government to surpass continental benchmarks at the foundational level (ECE). The Government intervention in ECCE became pronounced at the Nigeria United Nations (UN) Jomtien Convention in 1990 which highlighted that basic education is a fundamental right of the learner; hence, governments need to ensure free equal access to it. Consequently, the first educational policy on ECE was included in the National Policy on Education in 1997, and revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004 (FRN 2004).

3.6.2 The National Policy on Education and Early Childhood Education in Nigeria

The quest for a quality and standardised educational system in Nigeria led to the formulation of various educational policies including that of ECE (Torpev et al., 2015). Oluwafemi et al. (2014) observe that the current National Policy on Education (2014) has numerous provisions to promote early childhood education, in addition to providing detailed texts on the philosophy of education in Nigeria. According to the FRN (2014, p.1) the philosophy of education was built on five principles:

- (i) Education is an instrument for social change and national development;
- (ii) Education is vital in promoting a united and progressive nation;
- (iii) Education exploits the creative skills and potentials of citizens for self-actualisation and societal development;
- (iv) Education is the right of every citizen of Nigeria regardless of his or her social status, gender, colour, religion, tribal origin, or contextual individual challenge; and
- (v) Education should be functional, of great quality, comprehensive, and address the needs of the Nigerian society.

Salami (2016) claims that the document on the National Minimum Standard for Early Learner Care Centres in Nigeria (NMSECCC) was produced by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) with support from United Nations Learners' Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2007). The NMSECCC stipulated the primary aim and objectives, the strategy to be

adopted, and the prescribed minimum standards which cover types of centres, location, ownership, and characteristics of an effective centre. In other words, education in Nigeria (and all over the world) is an instrument for national development and social change (FGN, 2004).

The National Policy on Education clarifies the five goals of education in Nigeria which form the backbone of ECE in Nigeria:

- (i) The sound development of the learner or individual into a morally patriotic and effective citizen;
- (ii) The immediate and total incorporation of the individual into the Nigerian community in particular, and the world in general,
- (iii) The provision of quality educational opportunities to be equally accessed by all citizens of Nigeria at all levels of the social strata, both within and outside the formal education system;
- (iv) The inculcation of national unity, national consciousness, and values in the education system; and
- (v) The development of physical, mental, social, and psychological competencies for the individual to contribute positively to the wellbeing of the nation.

3.6.3 Role of Universal Basic Education and ECE in the National Policy on Education

Universal Basic Education (UBE) is meant for all, regardless of tribe, indigenous language spoken, culture and race, which should be a fundamental right of every citizen to promote sustainable growth and development in the country (Osarenren-Osaghae & Irabor, 2018). The need to be centrally responsible for education at the elementary level in Nigeria by the Federal Government led to the establishment of Free and Universal Primary Education (UPE) at the National level. The military head of state, General Olusegun Obasanjo launched the scheme in Lagos State on 6 September 1976; however, the handing-over of power to the civilian government in 1979 affected the UPE programme negatively due to changes in the programme. General Olusegun Obasanjo who later became the civilian president of Nigeria, reinstated positive changes in the educational system at primary and post-primary levels (Maigida, 2017).

Further, the establishment of UBE enhanced cordial relationships with the World Education Conference (WEC) in Thailand, with Nigeria being one of the signatories to the Declaration of Education for All (EFA) which stipulated that every learner is expected to be educated. In addition, the UBE is seen as having a strong relationship with National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (SEEDS). To this end, the objectives of the UBE programme, as stated in the guidelines of the Federal Ministry of Education (2000) included developing the entire citizenry with a strong consciousness for education and a resilient commitment to its vigorous promotion. This provision of free universal basic education for every Nigerian learner of school-going age reduced the dropout rate in the formal school system through improved relevance, equality, efficiency and catering for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another had to interrupt their schooling. This was accomplished through instituting appropriate forms of complementary approaches to ensure the acquisition of suitable levels of literacy, and ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning.

Additionally, Maigida, (2017) states that the main objectives of UBE was to correct the numerous shortcomings associated with UPE, and to fix them by:

- (i) Launching the UBE in 1999;
- (ii) Introducing the law supporting its operation in 2004;
- (iii) Structuring the curriculum in 2007, and implementing it in 2008; and
- (iv) Making ECCDE compulsory as a UBE component.

Considering the above, the policy of Universal Basic Education (FRN, 2004) includes goals regarding early childhood education and lower basic primary school education that focus on the language of the environment, with English being taught as a subject from the fourth year of primary school such that it becomes used progressively as a medium of instruction, while the language of the immediate environment and French should be taught as separate subjects. However, I observed the situation in the early childhood educational system contradicted the stated objectives of UBE – teachers were advancing the English language at all levels. This implies that the use of indigenous

languages as stated in the National Policy on Education, is not implemented during teaching and learning processes, and thus the enhancement and attainment of the objectives of UBE programmes in early childhood education are stifled.

3.6.4 Early Childhood Education in Nigeria

Formal Early Childhood Education in Nigeria originated from the colonial era of the 19th century when the missionaries enforced Western education; and those who were connected to missionaries benefited immensely from the early childhood education (Sooter, 2013). Fafunwa (1974) purports that the earliest form of early childhood education in middle 19th century was managed by church members, especially wives of the missionaries whose primary responsibility was to conduct the Sunday school programme for an hour where learners were cared for and monitored. However, during this time there was no clear-cut curriculum for the learners until the missionaries established formal schools that promoted consistency in the teaching-learning processes, unlike Sunday school programmes (Fafunwa, 1974). Akinbote et al. (2001) elaborate that early childhood education in Nigeria involved missionaries who used church premises as schools while their wives acted as caregivers of the learners. These teachers who were endowed with the knowledge of the scriptures influenced the learners through choruses, songs, and short Bible stories with colourful pictures to maintain learners' attention and for better understanding. Also, prayer sessions were included in line with what they had learnt, with lessons concluding with question-and-answer sessions. Sunday schools which were scripturally and educationally oriented, saw the rapid increase in the number of learners which led to the Monday-to-Friday school practice for learners.

This period (pre-independence) saw the provision of early childhood education in Nigeria being confined to the voluntary sectors and received little or no support from the Government (Onyeizu & Okosun, 2016). This changed during post-colonial times as literature indicates that in 1977 early childhood education was introduced for first-time through the National Policy on Education. The military Government of Nigeria prioritised the needs and importance of early childhood education such that it was given official recognition and linked to the primary school system. As early childhood education gradually began to gain momentum and recognition, the number of ECE institutions in 1985 grew to about 4200, while in 1992 the number increased to 8300 (FGN,

UNICEF,1993). In this regard, Sooter (2013), Nwakaego (2007) and Nakpodia (2011) state that the proliferation of early childhood education institutions was as a result of it becoming customary in every household to send early years' children to pre-primary schools, adding that early childhood education institutions are virtually in every nook and cranny of the nation. From a humble beginning, early childhood education in Nigeria today is booming in private, Government and in religious institutions as communities realise its significance as stated in the National Policy on Education (FGN 2004).

It was as a result of colonial powers' interference in the educational system in Nigeria that the indigenous languages started waning due to the Education Ordinance of 1882 (Clause10, section5) which stated that grants would only be paid for teaching and learning in the white man's language (English) and nothing for teaching and learning in the vernacular (Fafunwa, 1968). Fafunwa (1974) criticised the colonial government that believed teaching in indigenous languages was a sign of primitiveness. In Nigeria today, early childhood schools are situated in places like tertiary institutions, church premises, residential buildings, companies, industries and business organisations. This rate of expansion and development was as a result of the high demand for early childhood education by families, parents and wards (Ejeh, 2006).

3.6.5 Early Childhood Education in Some Countries

3.6.5.1 Early Childhood Education in Germany

It was German educator Friedrich Froebel, born in 1782, who created the kindergarten as an establishment complimentary to life at home. The aim was to create a special place for learners where they can develop freely; and so, the first kindergarten was opened by Froebel in 1817. Friedrich Froebel made a clarion called to German women to come together and build a sustainable kindergarten for a better future for the learners, because in his perspective learners are seen as plants and the teachers as gardeners (Moore, 2002). The name *kindergarten* originates from the two words - *kinder* meaning learner and *garten* meaning garden. According to Friedrich Froebel learners are like plants, hence they should be well cared for, nurtured, and nourished like a plant in a garden (Headley, 1965). However, the early childhood educational system was never incorporated into the national educational system in Germany, but left in the hands of private

owners and voluntary sectors where the programme was more ‘per-day’ in nature (Morgan, 2002). Additionally, Stiny (1980) states that the crucial place of play in early childhood education starts with simple activities and later progresses to more difficult games because learning is fun at the play-level. This is supported by Moore (2002) who states that more than ten years were spent by Froebel refining the concept of kindergarten, during which 20 educational toys were created in addition to songs and finger-play.

Further, “the purpose of the new kindergarten was to teach learners a rich, meaningful, and balanced curriculum of skills and information through age-appropriate activities that encourage learners to want to learn more” (Marzollo, 1987, p. 1). Moreover, Allen (2000) provides a clear outline of early childhood education programme by stating that it involved objectives, tasks, and content based on learners’ developmental stages in line with age differences.

However, the American educational system was quite different from many other nations. The history of United States public education system development can be traceable to Puritan and Congregationalist religious schools of the 1600s, while the availability of free elementary education became a product of common school reforms in the 1800s; however, this education was only restricted to wealthy people but was reformed in 1840s (Thattai, 2001).

3.6.5.2 Early Childhood Education in China

Early childhood education system in China was not a priority for a long time until recently in 2010 when Chinese parents were confronted with ‘3A’ problems. According to Xie and Li (2020) and Zhou et al. (2020), the first ‘A’ stands for accessibility (not easy to get into kindergarten), the second ‘A’ is affordability (very expensive), and the third ‘A’ is accountability (lacking substance without monitoring). Early childhood education in China plays a vital role in learners’ holistic growth which advantages the entire Chinese society because it influences socio-cultural change (Zhu, 2009). According to Zhu (2009), the concept of early childhood education in China is for learners from birth to age 6. The ECE in China is divided into three phases; nurseries for 0-3years old, kindergartens for 3–6-year-old children, and pre-school that prepares 5–6-year-old learners for primary school. Also, there are three types of public kindergartens in China: Department of Education related, state organisation or corporation related, and town or county related (Zhao & Hu, 2008). The majority of Chinese citizens resides in rural areas where there are public kindergarten schools to prepare learners for primary classes.

The rapid development in China's economy, technology, society, and culture occurred because early childhood education was not left behind but fundamentally changed systems within the country. Ling (2003) elucidates that in recent years there are new trends in early childhood education; for instance, the curriculum has taken on a new dimension in terms of pedagogical models. It is interesting to note also that the Department of Education is working rigorously to improve the standard of education at this level by establishing more kindergartens in rural areas or interior villages for children between the ages of 3 to 6 in preparation for primary education (Zhu & Zhang, 2008). However, "as China becomes more open to outside contact and influence, traditional teaching comes into conflicts with Western ideas about developmentally appropriate practices and goals of creativity, autonomy and critical thinking" (Vaughan, 1993, p. 196). Lastly, the launching of kindergartens in China acknowledged the crucial function of educational institutions in developing early childhood learners for the attainment of educational objectives within the educational system (Yu, 2017).

3.6.5.3 Early Childhood Education in South Africa

In South Africa the historical background of early childhood education is steeped in apartheid, injustice, inequalities and relegation of educational rights for non-European learners (Aubrey, 2017). Van der Merwe (2015) reports that there was no significant and sustainable development for Black children in early childhood education prior to the 1994 democratic elections. Early childhood education in South Africa started officially after 1994 for 0–6-year-old children, a period known as the 'reception year' which prepared learners for formal primary education. Storbeck and Moodley (2010) point out that the United Nations Rights of the Learner contributed immensely to the sustainable growth and development of early childhood education in South Africa through effective monitoring and supervision of learning processes by Government officials. Hence, early childhood education accelerated between 1999 and 2009 as indicated by the enrolment increase of 29% (DBE, 2011). In 2021, South Africa gazetted that the early childhood education programme should be included as part of Basic Education, so that by 2010 the learners entering Grade 1 would have completed their reception year (Grade R). There was a rapid increase in primary school enrolment and a drastic decrease in class repetition and dropout rates (Atmore et al. 2012; Heckman et al. 2010; DBE, 2001).

3.6.5.4 Early Childhood Education in Ghana

The earliest beginning of early childhood education in Ghana was when the Basel Mission introduced early childhood education in some of the existing primary schools in the 19th century (Morrison, 2001; Adam-Issahet et al., 2007). The early childhood education programmes significantly focused on caring and educating learners from birth through to age eight (UNESCO, 2000; Ministry of Women and Learners' Affairs Ghana, 2004; Frimpong, 2221). Early childhood education development and sustainability in Ghana was also in line with other African countries which expanded the educational system at the foundational level (ECCD) which started in the 2000s (Aidoo, 2008; Garcia et al., 2008). It is important to note that Ghana embraced and implemented ECCD to provide meaningful foundations for Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to enhance sustainable development (Okai & Amoah, 2016).

In addition, the adoption of early childhood education was primarily for two crucial reasons: to comply with the commitments promised to international organisations at the United Nations General Assembly meetings on learners' education in 2002, to reduce poverty to create a better life for all learners (Ministry of Women and Learners' Affairs, Ghana, 2004). The adoption of early childhood programmes was further revealed in the quality of ECE at the foundational level where learners were enthusiastic, willing to learn, punctual at school, and increased enrolment to be ready for primary school (Fischer, 2012; UNESCO, 2005). From all indications, Government was doing its best to promote early childhood education, but more efforts should be made towards policy formulation and monitoring of implementation to achieve best practice in early childhood education (Frimpong, 2021).

3. 7 HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS OF TEACHER-EDUCATION

The place of the teacher is critical in the educational system as they are responsible for the interpretation of educational policies, curriculum or course instructional materials, assessment of learning at all levels, and enacting leadership roles to influence learners' character-formation within a positive learning environment (Oduolowu, 2009). The teacher-education programme is structured in a way to equip teachers with adequate knowledge and skills for the effective delivery of their duties (FGN, 2004).

The broad objectives of teacher-education as stated in Sections 71(a) – (e) of Nigeria’s National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) are geared to produce highly motivated, conscientious, and effective teachers for all levels in the educational system. To encourage the spirit of enquiry, creativity, support for teachers to fit into the social life of the country at large, and to enhance their commitment to national goals, the Government has committed itself to provide resources to uplift ECCD. Furthermore, the policy provides for teachers’ intellectual and professional development to encourage them to be amenable to changing situations, especially in methodology. Teacher education is also concern with procedure and provision designed to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge, behaviors, altitudes, approaches, methodologies and skills to perform their tasks effectively during teaching and learning of the young learners in early childhood education and most importantly, for the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

This implies that teachers’ roles in the educational system are vital, and without them no meaningful education can occur. Hence, their roles in the enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages in early childhood education cannot be overemphasised. This is because teachers specialize in helping learners to develop proficiency in languages and focus on foundational skills that will promote equal treatment between English Language and the language of the immediate environment.

3.7.1 Excellence in Early Childhood Education and Learning (EKO EXCEL)

In Lagos State there is innovation in the educational system to enhance the professional development of teachers to address the various challenges of the 21st century to keep pace with knowledge and technological advances. This is achieved by incorporating emerging technology and tools into classroom activities at the pre-primary and primary levels in order to enhance the performance of learners (Olasunkanmi, 2020). Consequently, the initiative of the Government to improve the educational system in Lagos State gave birth to the laudable programme called the EKO EXCEL (Excellence in Learner Education and Learning) which was designed to reposition public education in the State by improving methods of teaching and learning to meet the current demands of the 21st century. The broader concept of this initiative was to transform all Government pre-primary and primary schools across the state by exposing teachers to technologically-dominated professional development workshops by using innovative data-driven platforms (Akinfenwa, 2020). Due to the dwindling quality of education at the early childhood and primary

education phases in the country, the Lagos State Government deemed it necessary to organise EKO EXCEL programmes which were launched in January 2020. This was lauded as a giant leap in the right direction to transform the educational system at the early childhood education and primary school levels.

Furthermore, this laudable programme was followed by intensive training for primary school teachers who number over 4000 from various Local Education Districts (LEDs) across Lagos State who are regarded as primary assets who utilise their skills, capabilities, and potentials to improve teaching and learning processes. Moreover, part of the success story of the programme was that over 14,000 teachers and headteachers migrated from analogue to digital teaching through using tablets (small laptops) and adhering to an updated curriculum to prepare the learners to successfully engage in the new technological world of the 21st century. However, the administration identified three obstacles obstructing quality education at the early childhood and primary levels in Lagos State: the need to upgrade the teaching profession to support learning outcomes of learners, reviewing the school curriculum to reflect present and future industry that will reshape the educational system positively, and the upgrading of school infrastructure. This implies that to enhance and effect positive transformation at the foundational level, the language of the immediate environment as a medium of instruction through teaching and learning process should be prioritised.

3.7.2 Benefits of the EKO EXCEL Programme

The following are the benefits of the programme as comprehensively discussed by *This Day* 29 January 2021, page.7. This Nigerian newspaper maintains that one of the primary benefits of the programme is to empower primary assets (teachers) and stakeholders in the education sector. The teachers who are the drivers of the initiatives are empowered to reposition service delivery in the public service and to deliver quality outcomes in line with their counterparts around the world. This will enhance capacity-building that will encourage improvement in the teaching-learning processes such that Lagos State learners accelerate their rate of reading and literacy skills to better global benchmarks. Professional development for Lagos State will capacitate teachers to become professionalised through technological-oriented workshops to enhance teaching and learning processes. In addition, it will enable teachers to become more diligent, skilful and quicker in helping learners in a conducive environment which increases learner-enrolment across the state.

Also, headteachers will be more efficient in their administrative work by using technology to support teachers and SGBs who will have adequate data to effect necessary academic adjustments and infrastructural improvements to enable the development and sustainability of education across the state.

The Governor of Lagos State, Chief Babajide Sanwo-Olu, reiterated his focus to transform the State education sector to promote economic emancipation, mobility, social improvement, and cultural growth to enhance development and sustainability. This implies that since Government is rapidly transforming the educational system, teachers as the heart of learning processes have significant roles to play which cannot be successful without engaging in effective communication through language - especially the language of the immediate environment. However, in order to actively involve all learners in the process of teaching and learning, the slogan of EKO EXCEL, *leave no learner behind*, is appropriate for teachers' understanding and enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages which should be given topmost consideration during the teaching-learning processes at the foundation phase.

3.8 PROFESSIONALISM IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

In the creation of a conducive environment for teaching and learning in early childhood education, teachers must be well-equipped to showcase their professional skills (Ndifon et al., 2020). The term *professionalism* is the ability to perform a job by teachers through enacting appropriate knowledge and skills that facilitate achieving better academic learning outcomes (Hanafie Das et al., 2020). However, some teachers in early childhood education find it difficult to effectively utilise available materials to advance meaningful teaching and learning processes (Ibok, 2020). Therefore, Khan and Du (2017) advise that the effective utilisation of resources by teachers will to a large extent determine the quality and quantity of information that the learner will imbibe. Ndifon et al. (2020) elaborate on aspects of teacher-professionalism by advocating that teachers need classroom managerial skills to equip them for the effective utilisation of resources and methodology during teaching-learning processes. In concurrence, Adeyemo (2019) confirms that effective management skills by teachers will have a positive influence on learners' performance. In support, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) state that in the course of making recommendations regarding professionalism and how to support teachers for effective teaching and learning

processes, we must also include all that it takes to assist teachers to improve by re-evaluating current professional programmes. Lastly, the policy on ECE varies from one country to the other; however, it is evident from literature that the education of learners requires various levels of specialized skills including the understanding of core concepts to design teaching and learning strategies to enhance learner-performance (Urban, 2008).

3.8.1 Professional Development in Early Childhood Education (ECE)

The early childhood education is concern with the process of preparing and training individuals to effectively become capable teachers who possess the requirement like knowledge, skills and abilities to teach and care for children in pre-primary schools (Rafiq, Kamran, & Afzal, 2023). It is internationally recognised that the improvement in the performance of learners is a product of investment in professionalising teachers (UNESCO, 2016). Professional development in the context of early childhood education is described as a number of experiences that promote education, training, and development opportunities for early childhood practitioners (Ige et al., 2020; Dardanou, Hatzigianni, Kewalramani, & Palaiologou, 2023). Peleman et al. (2018) affirm that professional development is highly effective in knowledge development, skills, and practices that will further enhance effective teaching and learning at the early childhood level. Moreover, Parkhouse et al. (2019) opine that professional development entails ongoing sessions of learning experiences a teacher engages in for professional and cognitive growth. Therefore, the values of early childhood education cannot be overstated, and roles of teachers in shaping the future of children is immensely significance that would contribute meaningfully to teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages

In recent years the educational system is facing many challenges and conflicting pressures. Hence, teachers who are the driving force in education, are relied upon for educational improvement, sustainability, and development in early childhood education through meaningful interactions with the learners for the attainment of desired objectives (Peleman et al., 2018). However, irrespective of the quality of pre- and in-service teacher-training, it is still challenging to prepare teachers in all aspects of ECCD as they are confronted with unique obstacles that emerge daily throughout their careers. Therefore, there is the need for in-service professional development to maintain high standards by implementing strategies that resolve classroom challenges to empower the teaching workforce to enhance learner-performance (OECD, 2005). The OECD (1998, p. 50) updated teachers' knowledge in ECD areas in the light of recent advances in the field; it enhanced skills,

attitudes, and approaches through the introduction of innovative teaching techniques, revised objectives, new circumstances, and new educational research which enabled teachers to initiate changes made to curricula or other aspects of teaching practice. Also, this enabled schools to develop and apply new strategies concerning the curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice. The advocates of the professionalism agenda strongly believe that professionalization in early childhood education could lead to a strengthened position and increased respect for those who work in early childhood education system (Fenech, & Watt, 2023). Meanwhile, concerns abound that a process of professionalization could be used as a means of control and provide beneficial consequences of heightened professionalism for practitioners in early childhood education, and for the children and families that they serve in the teaching profession.

Moreover, the exchange of information and expertise among teachers, academics, and industrialists at OECD level assisted in enhancing learner performance.

Additionally, ECCE policies and practices vary from one country to another; however, there is general consensus that early childhood care and education requires some levels of specialised skills and understanding of important concepts as embedded in professional epistemologies. To this end, studies reveal that early childhood care and education is still in its infancy, considering the different approaches in different countries, and that the concept of professionalism is still misunderstood in some countries, especially in developing countries where there is inadequate training for pre-service teachers (Amadioha, 2018; Oberheim & Hoyningen-Huene, 2009; Shakeel, 2020; Urban, 2008; Yoshikawa, Wuermli, Raikes, Kim, & Kabay, 2018). Consequently, Moss (2006) opines that there is a need for restructuring, rethinking, and re-envisioning of ECCE such that training must focus on challenges during the teaching and learning processes to promote professionalism in early childhood educational education. This is because early childhood education is essential for holistic development of children as the quality of education depends on the quality of teachers to impact the children positively during teaching and learning process.

3.8.2 The Prospect of Early Childhood Education in National Development

The critical role of education as the foundation for all-round development politically, economically culturally, educationally, and technologically to transform society is invaluable (Agbowuro et al., 2017). Because education is the process of engendering positive change in human behaviour (Ike, 2017), its importance in early childhood education in most countries have to be prioritised to enhance national development (Biersteker et al., 2015). I concur with UNESCO (2015) that it is

through education that employment will be available to all without discrimination of colour or race; hence, teachers are perceived to be invaluable assets to deliver quality education even in the face of barriers. Accordingly, the teachers in ECE have a greater role to play in the education of the learners at this level. Therefore, the use of indigenous languages is central to the holistic development of any nation as it serves as a catalyst for national progress and development (EmekaNwobia, 2015). This implies that for national development and sustainability in Nigeria, focus should be on indigenous language as a language of learning and teaching in early childhood education.

3.8.3 Origin of Socio-cultural Education in Nigeria

Education still remains a vibrant instrument through which the development and sustainability of a nation can be attained since it is a tool for transformation to eradicate of all forms of social discrimination and deprivation in the society (Okafor et al., 2018; Usmanova, 2022). Before the

introduction of Western education in Nigeria, there were rules and regulations that guided the operations of the educational system which promoted the adherence and maintenance of law and order within communities (Umar & Yusuf, 2019). This implies that before the advent of colonial rule there were well-organised systems for traditional development (Ojo, 2020).

Nwagu et al. (2017) state that to a large extent socio-cultural norms and values of people determined their way of life. Hall et al. (2017) contend that social-cultural transformation occurs in a community when there are evolving structures of community, language, behaviour, and lifestyle.

Further, beyond the norms and values of the community, healthy lifestyles of the learners are paramount which must be promoted through indigenous songs and rhymes via lessons in the classroom. Titus and Oyelola (2019) state that indigenous songs during teaching and learning sessions contribute to the wellbeing of humans. Iyabode (2018) adds that indigenous dental health songs educate learners to enhance hygiene behaviour. Alade (2016) confirms that most indigenous songs and rhymes warn learners to be careful about their health by ensuring cleanliness; for example, regular tooth-brushing and constant washing of hands. Moreover, Bakare (2019) affirms

that Yoruba indigenous songs are rooted in the Yoruba language which communicates respect for parents, elders, and teachers, while other songs communicate punishment awaiting disobedient learners, and encouraging the learners to work hard with a likely reward. This implies that the place of socio-cultural education in early childhood education is critical.

3.8.4 Sociocultural Norms and Values of *Omoluabi* in Early Childhood Education

Omoluabi is a Yoruba word used to describe an individual within a society who is well-cultured, upstanding, morally upright, intelligently sound, and places a high value on being industrious (Badru, 2021; Starkman et al., 2006). In other words, *Omoluabi* connotes responsibility, so we need to promote *Omoluabi* through indigenous languages (Busari et al., 2017). Akinwale (2013) adds that the term *Omoluabi* was coined from the phrase *Omo ti Olu Iwa Bi* which means the offspring of *Olu Iwa* (Creator of character) such that the Yoruba see good character as real beauty within the community as good character cannot be bought (Akindele et al., 2020). This can be promoted via the use of mother-tongue during teaching and learning process in the classrooms.

I am of the opinion that Yoruba culture places a high premium on learners that leads to the development of responsible learners who respect parents and elders due to norms and values embedded in indigenous songs, folktales, stories, and proverbs which focus on character-building aligned to responsibility (Lekan, 2017). This rich culture cannot be imparted without teachers spreading it through the use of indigenous languages. The *Omoluabi*, in another perception, represents both the good and the bad dispositions in the community (Akanbi & Jekayinfa, 2016). From another perspective, Packer and Goicoechea (2000) maintain that sociocultural forces emphasise the relationship that exists between the social and individual construction of meaning, and that character development in learners is compulsory which can be fostered through imbibing the values preached through *Omoluabi* (Camarata-Seale, 2015; Meiners, 2016). In addition, Awóníyì (1978) and Fafunwa (1983) state that character-training is part of teaching ECCE learners *Omoluabi* principles. Adebisi (2015), therefore, highlights the pivotal role of character-building for learners through proper teaching-learning channels.

I believe that cordial interactions between learners and teachers through the use of indigenous languages will promote cognitive justice in native languages. Majebi and Oduolowu (2017) state

that we can use learners as a channel to transform societies through the cultural values of our community during interactive teaching-learning situations. Learners at the foundational level are most prone to imbibe the values of *Omoluabi* through teaching in a Yoruba indigenous language. Trunk (2008) adds that learners acquire this knowledge through interactions with members of the family who are also representatives of cultural values. Vygotsky (1978) claims that the situation is also applicable in the school system where learners do not merely imbibe knowledge, skills, and values from teachers, but rather transform what they have learnt into practice. This implies that early childhood education teachers should prioritise *Omoluabi* and its social values to mould learners' character. Lastly, the concept *Omoluabi* is extracted from the Yoruba indigenous language, and cannot be imbibed by learners through using a foreign language; hence, the urgency to promote cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided a comprehensive review of current literature focusing on teachers' understanding and enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages in early childhood education. It aimed at presenting an in-depth understanding on how cognitive justice can be promoted in indigenous languages. I also discussed cognitive justice in indigenous languages by exploring the current situation in Nigeria. I exposed the fact that ECCE institutions marginalise indigenous languages in favour of English in teaching and learning processes. The next chapter (4) explains the data generation process through AR as the research design and methodology adopted to explore ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA GENERATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter three (3) dealt with scholarly literature on teachers' enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages relating to ECE through a comprehensive review of relevant literature from international, national, and local contexts. Chapter 4 focused on teachers' understanding and enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous language; hence, Action Research (AR) was considered as being the most appropriate research design. This chapter also provided details regarding the research approach, research paradigm, and participant-selection including their profiles. Further, methods of data generation and the analysis of data were explained. Lastly, the aspects of trustworthiness and ethical considerations were outlined and justified.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research design is a plan of how the researcher will systematically collect and analyse relevant data that was needed to answer the research questions (Méndez et al., 2015) including the following:

- (i) How will the researcher collect relevant data?
- (ii) What will the researcher do with the data collected?
- (iii) How will the researcher analyse and make-meaning of the data?

Yin et al. (2015) note that research designs include logical relationships that exist between the data generated and the anticipated conclusions in line with the aim, objectives and critical questions of the research study. Maree (2018) asserts that the adoption of an appropriate research design is a road map to direct research to its logical conclusion. Also, it is noted that a research design explores *how* and *when* data is generated and analysed (Harrison et al., 2020; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018). This means that in developing a research design the researcher must first confirm the purpose of the research, then the paradigm that informs the study, and lastly consider the context within which the research will be conducted. These steps must be explicit, and the researcher must also include the justification for choosing the research

methodology and instruments adopted to generate data for analysis and interpretation. Lastly, the researcher should discuss the reasons for adopting the chosen critical paradigm including why action research was the most suitable research design for the study.

4.3 THE CRITICAL PARADIGM

A paradigm is regarded as a world view or how individuals view the world (Mertens, 2015). Bertram and Christiansen (2015) define it as a set of beliefs or world view of the researcher who decides what is acceptable research, and how it should be conducted. Antwi and Hamza (2015) reiterate that it is the researcher's choice of what kind of questions should be asked, what can be observed and investigated, how to collect data, and how to interpret the findings (Spaull & Taylor, 2015). In short, a paradigm is the lens through which researchers see the world (Hua, 2015; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Scott-Samuel & Smith, 2015). Higgs (2016) adds that it reveals that reality is a function of individual perspectives as knowledge unfolds in the process. In my opinion, this is an indication that to have a better understanding of a problem, one needs to focus on individual interpretations of the problem. In this study, I view a research paradigm as a framework to dissect an issue through structured processes with clear procedures to follow while being guided by the research questions and theoretical context of the study. It is pertinent to note that the research paradigm focuses on epistemology which is based on how to uncover knowledge that can be investigated, which brings the researcher closer to the participants because the longer they are on the field, the more they know what they know (Wolcott et al., 2010).

Additionally, in educational research there are different types of paradigms: positivist, post-positivist, interpretivist, critical, constructivist, and Afro-centrist (Lukenchuk, 2017). Thus, this study employed the critical paradigm as its worldview which is regarded as a social justice political economy instrument against the abuse of power (oppression, hegemony, conflict, marginalisation, and racism) to fight injustice; hence, this paradigm is also known as the transformative paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). To this end, Pillay (2016) concurs with Woods et al. (2015) that the critical paradigm is one of the most interesting tools for an in-depth construction of a transformative model to deal with societal challenges. Accordingly, the critical paradigm is concerned with the issue of power relations such that meaningful interactions may contribute immensely to the social system in terms of education, economy, gender, class, race, and religion (Asghar, 2013). It is for this reason, I concur with Thomas (2018) and Lukenchuk (2017) that critical paradigm is concerned with the analysis of power and ideology, consciousness-raising,

advocacy for human emancipatory-participatory approaches, politically-oriented, and confronting social injustice. Therefore, I employed the critical paradigm to gain a better understanding of the roles of teachers in enabling cognitive justice in indigenous language in early years' education. Hence, a critical paradigm “assumes translational epistemology in which the researcher interacts with the participants and of historical realism, especially as it relates to oppression; a methodology that is dialogic, and an axiology that respects cultural norms” (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 35). The main objectives of the critical paradigm are to promote fundamental human rights, address issues of human oppression, and accelerate social change that will benefit the oppressed by embracing the cultural norms and values of the communities (Cram & Mertens, 2016). Moreover, Le Roux (2017) states that a critical paradigm uncovers hidden truths within a particular phenomenon; thus, the critical paradigm emphasises freedom from oppression and deliverance from intellectual fetters (Chalmers, 2017). Drawing from the above, it is crystal clear that the critical paradigm was the most suitable for this research study, while the action research tool was selected to amply explore the phenomenon under investigation in terms of generating valid and authentic data.

4.3.1 The Nature of Reality (Ontology)

Setiawan and Syamsuddin (2022) and Scotland (2012) assert that the term *ontology* originates from the branch of philosophy based on a belief that reality is something to make-sense of, or a social phenomenon that requires investigation. Cohen et al. (2018, p. 53) define ontology as “the nature that is concerned with reality or of a phenomenon” that include politics and interests that shape a multitude of socially constructed beliefs and values, privileging some and under-representing others. Gen et al. (2018) concur that ontology is about assumptions made about social reality that enhance credibility and adds to the body of knowledge.

Moreover, ontology's focus is on the existence of people in a social context, who could also be critical realists conscious of knowledges which can influence research based on investigation. This implies that people have the ability to solve their own problems within their community without external intervention (FitzPatrick, 2018; Grygiel, 2022; Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013). Nxumalo-Mabuza (2019) confirms that ontology as science of being, primarily deals with existence and the reality of the research. Also, Ormston et al. (2014a, p. 4) elucidate that ontology involves questions based on “whether or not there is a social reality in place that exists independently from human

conceptions and interpretations and, closely related to this, whether there is a shared social reality or only multiple, context-specific ones”.

Since this research was underpinned by the critical paradigm, it involved a critical discourse analysis of reality in a natural setting for the effective construction of knowledge based on accessing the realities of an issue that needs solving (Dube, 2023; Killion & Fisher, 2018; Kumar, 2019). The place of ontology in research is crucial as it provides a true picture and understanding of what constitutes the world (Scott, 2012). To obtain a sense of reality, data generation through focus group discussions were helpful to understand teachers’ experiences of enabling cognitive justice to promote indigenous languages. Moreover, the principles contained in the critical paradigm point to the nature of being, seeing the world shaped by the nature of reality, and numerous ways of assessing realities. Thus, Mertens (2015) and Thomas and Albright (2018) opine that a critical paradigm focuses on the issues of power- relations within the community. Henry and Foley (2018) elaborate that people are fraught with uncertainty due to constant change; hence, they cannot be separated from their reality.

4.3.2 The Perceived Relationship with Knowledge (Epistemology)

The term *epistemology* is defined as “how we come to know multiple realities influenced by communities of practice which counts as acceptable ways of knowing (Cohen et al. 2018, p. 53). Epistemology emanated from two Greek words *episteme* meaning knowledge and *logia* meaning science or study (Marinopoulou, 2017; Niebauer et al., 2020). Guyon et al. (2018) purport that epistemology in research is concerned with a deeper understanding and explanation of *how we know what we know* as it is expected to be the eye-opener for scientific enlightenment. Colucci-Gray et al. (2013) and R’boul (2022) reiterate that epistemology constitutes general assumptions that are made about the nature of knowledge in a field of study.

Similarly, Carrasco (2018) states epistemology is based on the nature of human knowledge and comprehension that a researcher utilises in a field of study that will broaden and deepen the understanding of a subject under investigation. In concurrence, Rindova and Courtney (2020) confirm that epistemology is purely based on knowledge and beliefs. Bhattacharya and Kim (2020) and Burns et al. (2018) add that epistemology constitutes what counts as knowledge through differentiating between what is authentic or adequate, and what is false or inadequate in a specific field of study.

The researcher constructed knowledge in this study through the epistemological perspective by articulating the voice of the teachers who are assets within the community which has been marginalised; hence, teachers were critical agents in the enablement of cognitive justice concerning indigenous languages. Therefore, it is evident from literature that critical discourse is also concerned with building knowledge extracted from marginalised communities (Paul, 2018). Since epistemology is a way of looking at the world and making sense of it (Chamberlain, 2015), it is important to note that critical theorists are of the belief that knowledge is a function of what interest's humans, and that knowledge enables humans to break loose from their current struggles to gain freedom (Mertens, 2016). It is clear that critical educational researchers do not only aim to understand hidden knowledge or truth or to explain human behaviour in societies, but to enable transformation (Fedyk et al., 2019). This is supported by Williams and Wynn (2018) who confirm that the reality of knowledge is valued when it is transformed into practice which should result in positive changes in the lives of individuals within the community.

4.3.3 The Nature of Norms and Values (Axiology)

Axiology is a branch of philosophy that studies judgement about values (Soomro, Rajper, & Koonthar, 2023; Sensen, 2017). According to Cohen et al. (2018, p. 53), axiology refers to the “principle and meaning of conducting research, and the ethics that governs these such as beneficence, respect, and the promotion of social justice”. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) similarly view axiology as values that guide the reasoning of all human action where ethical issues are prioritised during research. Bourne, Crossfield, and Nicholas (2017) maintain that the place of value is very crucial in research; and axiology is concerned with the study of values, or one's values. I ensured that the research was conducted in a socially just, respectful, and peaceful manner to minimise risk or harm to all involved in the research process (Chesky & Wolfmeyer, 2015; Xiangdon, 2022). In line with Heron et al. (2012) position, the place of axiology in research cannot be overemphasised; hence, the researcher plays a vital role in the credibility of the outcomes of the research study. In concurrence, Scotland (2012) and Saidkulovich (2023) confirm that the choice of methods of data generation that reflects our values is regarded as a world view which is guided by the researcher's reasoning and communal values. Therefore, I ensured equal treatment of all participants in this study, regardless of their social status and economic background, which was reinforced by cordiality, trust, and professionalism as advocated by cognitive justice principles.

4.3.4 The Strategies for the Adoption of Knowledge (Methodology)

The research methodology refers to how we embark on discovering knowledge in a systematic way - it is more specific and practice-based than epistemology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It is all about how the knower goes about obtaining knowledge and understanding for practice (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). It can also be defined as a mode that reflects relationships that exist within data sets, coordination, and the coherent system of analysis of data by the researcher (Wellington, 2015). In this study, the qualitative research approach was adopted to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Cohen et al. (2018, p. 643) elaborate that the qualitative approach “focuses on in-depth, context-specific, rich, subjective data and meanings by the participants in the situation with the researcher herself/himself as principal research instrument”.

This study was conducted according to the prescripts of the qualitative research approach which also gives information on participants. Gray et al. (2015) concur that qualitative data is elicited in natural settings and not founded on preconceived assumptions. I adopted the qualitative research approach because it facilitated a better understanding of the phenomenon being investigated while enabling me to interpret meanings attached to participants’ lived-experiences by virtue of the information provided by them. Creswell and Poth (2016) illustrate that in qualitative research, researchers begin with a worldview which may entail social problems. This means that the qualitative researcher draws insight from what the research participants ascribe to the research problem. Hence, qualitative research is concerned with phenomena as they occur, and circumstances as they are constructed during the daily course of lived-experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Moreover, the reason for choosing the qualitative approach, as advocated by Eisner (2017), was not for quantification purposes, but to create a strong base for community educational research. It assisted me to gain an in-depth understanding of how cognitive justice could be enabled to promote indigenous languages in early childhood education by applying participatory visual methods such as drawings and focus group discussions to elicit participants’ views and voices concerning the phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, this study was embedded in the assumption that meaning is constructed in different ways by different people (Scotland, 2012). Lastly, scholars agree that qualitative researchers aim to make-sense of peoples’ perceptions, opinions, feelings,

experiences, and situations exactly as they happened in their natural settings (Coghlan et al., 2019; Yin & Buck, 2019).

4.4 ACTION RESEARCH (AR)

It is evident from literature that the term *action research* is widely used as an approach in research, as evidenced in numerous academic journals whose titles include the words *action research* (Cohen et al., 2018). Action research is empowerment-oriented as it instils confidence in participants to engender positive change in their own practice through dialogue and collaboration (Marsevani & Habeebanisya, 2022). This implies that the primary aim of adopting action research as an approach was to gain a better understanding and wider knowledge of practice through participants' reflections. The father of action research, Kurt Lewin (1946), primarily intended to eradicate the marginalisation of people by transforming the lives of the oppressed in terms of better opportunities like housing, employment, prejudice, socialisation, and training. Additionally, Dewey is credited as the first author to use action research principles in his research studies in education. Stephen Corey, who was also as one of the first to apply action research in the field of education, emphasised that it involves combining research with practice. This could be attained by affording the oppressed the opportunity to acquire knowledge to put into practice through collaboration of individuals of similar interests within a community to who would evaluate, plan, act, and transform (Bendtsen et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Lewin's (1946) research demonstrated the use of 'spiral steps' during research; each step comprised of a circle outlining planning, action, and fact-finding. McTaggart (1999) emphasises that the spiral of action is a function of commitment to social enquiry where the outcome proceeds to further social action. As a result, social management and social engineering become imperative.

In recent years, much literature related to action research that came into existence as an opposition to traditional and scientific ways of conducting research as it seeks to change and transform practitioners (Adams et al., 2022). Similarly, McAteer, (2013) posits that action research comprises a methodology for researchers focusing on teachers to understand and generate knowledge about educational practice at all levels. Therefore, the use of action research was attractive to researchers, teachers, academics, and the school community, which ceased the culture

of ‘spectator research’ (Guy et al., 2020).

Additionally, the evolution of action research encompassed the Marxist philosophy which emphasised that action research went beyond an understanding of the world, but to changing it positively through theorising for a more sustainable and reformed society (Bradbury et al., 2019). This suggests that action research is about problem-solving within the community, implying that conducting research in the context of teaching and learning enabled cognitive justice in indigenous languages. This may yield positive changes as the participants found it opportune to share their opinion and experiences without any influence from the researcher. In support, Robinson (2020) maintains that each contribution in action research is relevant and vital to other action researchers who share the same commitment to enhance transformation in the community. Therefore, McNiff (2017, p. 16) advises researchers to become proactive to improve situation(s) by ensuring an understanding of what was done, and using knowledge to explain *how* and *why* it was improved it. This implies the generation of a new theory at the end of the study which contributes to new knowledge.

4.4.1 Conceptualising Action Research

Action research involves a process of inquiry that integrates theory and actions to combine scientific knowledge in a bid to address problems and proffer solutions within the community (Coghlan, 2017). Also, Yigit and Bagceci (2017) confirm that action research is problem-solving-oriented based on a certain process for unravelling a specific problem. Similarly, Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon (2014) assert that AR is described as a form of self-reflective enquiry that involves interrogations of participants’ actions in order to enhance their understanding of natural settings for positive change. Cohen et al. (2018) confirm that action research can be used in almost any settings where the challenges confronting the people or task demand actions that will engender positive transformation. McNiff (2014) agrees that the attention may not only be on the problem, but rather on other areas of interest that will enhance development within the communities. In addition, Piggot, Irvine, Ferkins and Cady (2018) define action research as a collaborative transformative approach entailing data generation, knowledge generation, reflection, and distinctive actions leading to positive transformation. McNiff (2014) adds that action research also combines diagnosis, actions, and reflection by focusing on critical issues identified by the participants which may lead to societal transformation. Martell (2014) affirms that AR is an

enquiry process that empowers practitioners everywhere to investigate and evaluate their work, while Masoud (2019) adds that action research in a study is concerned with teachers' self-reflections on their performance based on certain procedures or steps.

McNiff (2014) contends that AR is a process where practitioners study areas for scientific development so that they can evaluate, improve, and drive astute decisions. Further, Asirifi (2018) questions whether action research is a science, and what are the likely implications of this concerning action research. In response, AR requires systematic planning, action, observation, and reflection that is more demanding and difficult than in the everyday course of research (Kemmis, 2009).

Moreover, Ferguson and Clow (2017) and Calhoun (2019) claim that AR is the process of going over one's work to check if it is according to stated objectives. Accordingly, I repetitively checked my work in line with practitioner-based research which included thinking and reflecting. Creswell and Poth (2016) also view action research as a base for action and enquiry by the researcher on the researched. This is in a bid to understand, improve and transform the normal practice by reflecting on the problem for the purpose of change. Based on this, Vos et al. (2014) confirm that the primary objective of action research is to facilitate transformation in the lives of the participants and the researcher through the effective utilisation of latent talent of individuals to strengthen them in the areas of weakness. In addition, Rapoport (1970) provides a definition of action research as a cyclical process of five stages: diagnosing, action planning, action taking, evaluating change, and specifying learning (Figure 4.1 below).

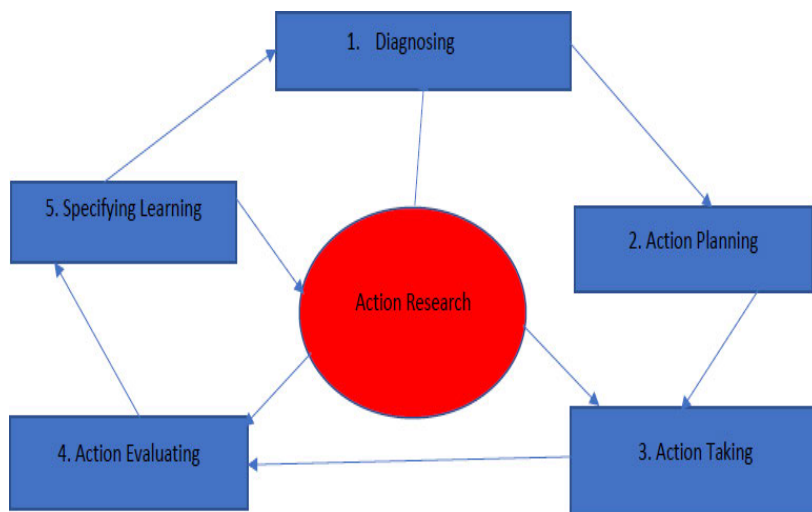


Figure 4.1: Stages in Action Research (Adapted: Rapoport, 1970)

4.4.2 The Significance of Action Research (AR)

The AR approach is significant to this study as it facilitated positive change in the community that enhanced teachers' understanding and enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages (Manfra, 2019). Nazari (2020) and Manfra (2019) posit that successful efforts to transform practice through action research processes demonstrated the value of engaging the teachers as core participants in educational research. Hence, AR is emancipatory for technical and practical improvement by enhancing participants' understanding, transforming practices within existing boundaries and conditions, and changing the system itself where conditions impede improvement in the organisation (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996, p. 5).

Further, the significance of AR to this present study is because education is rooted in the assumption that teachers are well-equipped to know best what is happening in the school environment. Hence, the best people to be involved in classroom research are teachers. It is noted that AR's primary objective is to find solutions to the challenges encountered by teachers in their classrooms, which is evidence of transformation. The significance of action research, therefore, is to improve educational practice which is often associated with the critical paradigm of researchers Bertram and Christiansen (2015). Ivankova and Wingo (2018) add that action research is a unique approach to research involving both 'action' and 'research'. It is possible to act without conducting research, and conducting research without acting. Meanwhile, the unique combination of action

and research makes AR outstanding as a distinct form of enquiry. Notwithstanding this, AR is considered as playing a crucial role in the professional learning of teachers, where they are seen as agentive actors within their social contexts (Bhatti et al., 2022; Burns, 2019). It is noteworthy that according to Power and Naysmith (2005), action research is not conducted on other people, but by people on their own work to seek how it can be improved.

There is also the multidimensional approach to AR which makes it different from other scientific methods use in teaching and learning processes as it embraces many methods - not only one perspective of doing things (Corcoran & Duane, 2017; Mathieson, 2017). There is no doubt that action research enjoyed tremendous growth in educational systems as catalysts for teachers' professional learning for sustainable development (Edwards & Ellis, 2020). Similarly, Burns and Westmacott (2018) purport that action research embraces systematic enquiries that is of great interest to teachers as it focuses more on their practice to enhance meaningful transformation. Based on these reasons I concur with Kinskey (2018) Banegas and Consoli (2019) on the significance of action research as a catalyst for sustainable practice for both teachers and the entire education system because AR has the potential to propel transformation (Dikilitaş & Yaylı, 2018; Hardy et al., 2018).

4.4.3 Application of Action Research in this Study

The application of action research as the design for this study (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 47) was useful in that it involved organising a group of action researchers as participants. Even if the group was small, being prepared to start and expand over time while focusing on long-term issues were laudable (e.g. whole-school issues). The short-term and immediate issues illustrate that AR is concerned with setting timeframes followed by action which involves:

- (i) building tolerance, engaging all participants, and supporting them to learn-by-doing;
- (ii) reflecting on what is happening, taking responsibility for action and consequences, and meticulously recoding developments and progress timeously;
- (iii) disseminating information beyond the group of action researchers by reporting clearly on the progress that has been accomplished;
- (iv) commenting further on the application of AR which may include enlisting outsiders (e.g., external consultants) to provide legitimation for the action research process; and
- (v) ensuring that action research enabled the participants to successfully enact educational

values in their practice.

Considering the above, it is obvious that action research is a blend of practical and theoretical aspects. In this study, therefore, the instruments for the generation of data involved focus group discussions and drawings. Lastly, Esau (2017) affirms that action research is simply about learning-by-doing with a view to improve a particular practice after identifying a problem and being responsive to circumvent it.

4.4.4 Emancipatory Action Research

The term emancipatory action research implies an agenda which is political and educational to render social justice within the communities (Gibbs et al., 2020). It is also referred to as the enhancement approach that can be transformative for an individual or groups (Gilbertson & Nicolaides, 2023). According to Masters (1995), the emancipatory action research (EAR) is also known as critical emancipatory action research (CEA) or the critical action perspective. It is noteworthy that EAR seeks to develop participants' understandings of illegitimate structural and interpersonal constraints that are preventing their autonomy and freedom. The constraints are based on repression, domination, and control. When participants develop a consciousness of these constraints, they begin to move from marginalisation to freedom, autonomy, and social justice (Grundy, 1994, p. 146). This implies that during data generation processes the consciousness of the teacher will be raised towards prevailing challenges. Accordingly, Edwards et al. (2002) focus on the primary objectives of emancipatory action research which assist practitioners to identify major problems through collective consciousness. Since action research is concerned with promoting teachers' professionalism by focusing on social justice, it will enhance making astute decisions towards emancipation.

In addition, Kincheloe (2009, pp. 138-139) clarifies emancipatory action research as the involvement and construction of a meaningful system that enhances the understanding of a dominant research method for embarking on a study with a variety of research procedures to garner comprehensive information to gain awareness and consciousness of 'silent' theories and assumptions which guide practice towards emancipatory, praxis-based orientations.

Praxis can be referred to as action informed through reflection to emancipate via a morally committed action (Kemmis, 2009). Pedller (2011) elaborates that praxis involves working with theory and practice which should involve the process of building theory that is reflection-oriented that informs our practice and our actions. In other words, action research constitutes a form of praxis concerned with reflection and action in one's practice. Kemmis (2009, p. 470) contends that emancipatory critical action research is part of a collective and collaborative enterprise to transform social formations, structures and practices that are built into societies. Hence, that which are deemed to be unsustainable on moral, social, ecological, material, ideological, personal, political, and economic grounds, should be eradicated. Accordingly, action research empowers the individual and social groups to be in control such that their voices can be heard without fear of oppression and domination. Hence, action research can be presented as an enquiry in educational research to promote positive change in the system as a whole (Day et al., 2002; Evered & Roger, 2022). I concur with Banegas and Cad (2019), Wyatt and Dikilitaş (2016) and Giroux (2011) that the critical dimension of AR seeks to challenge oppression and hegemonic practices by empowering and emancipating teachers to become agentic changers within the community in order to enhance social justice.

4.4.5 Action Research as a Cyclical Process

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) and Zuber-Skerritt (1996) assert that action research as a cyclical process, consists of action and reflection which comprises of four steps:

- (i) Planning
- (ii) Action
- (iii) Observation, evaluation, and self-evaluation
- (iv) Reflection and making decisions for the next cycle of action research

Power and Naysmith (2005) maintain that the action research process is cyclical with four interrelated steps: planning, taking action, observing/analysing, and reflecting. Yigit (2016) structured an action research cycle (Figure 4.2 below) by dissecting literature, attending action research workshops, and through practice:

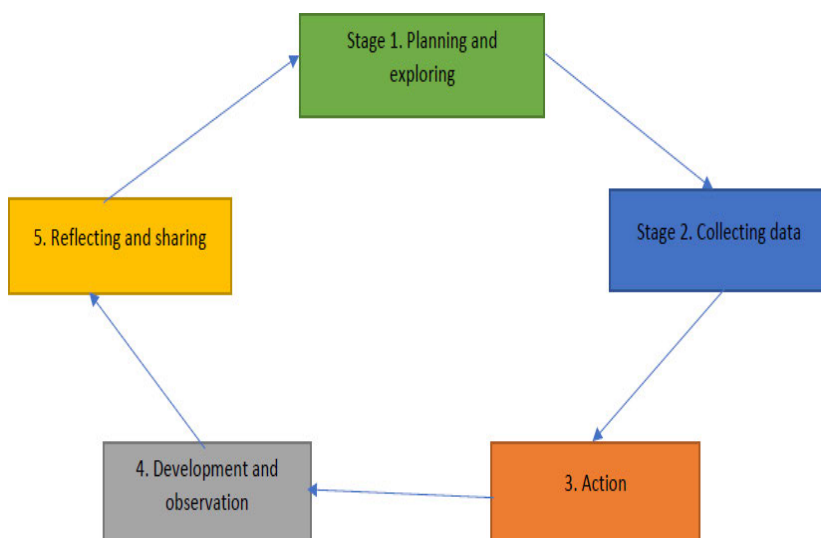


Figure 4.2: Action Research Cycle (Yigit, 2016)

These steps are briefly explained:

Stage 1: Several tools are employed to specify the problem, set the goal, and find necessary tools to enact it.

Stage 2: Literature is surveyed, and data collected with respect to the problem.

Stage 3: Action is initiated through several tools to solve the problem, and drawing an action research proposal/plan.

Stage 4: Action plan is revised after gaps are identified, and observation is repeated regarding the problem.

Stage 5: Teachers reflect on the results of the action research, and inform their colleagues and/or shareholders.

Action research is reflective-oriented by implementing specific actions to improve learning practices in the classroom, and to also determine the quality of research results (Pambudhi, 2021; Putra, 2023). Putra et al. (2023) state that AR is collaborative and encourages professionals to communicate effectively to promote relationships which consist of two cycles; each cycle consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. This is also in line with John Elliot’s (2003) version of the classroom action research model as presented in figure 4.3 below

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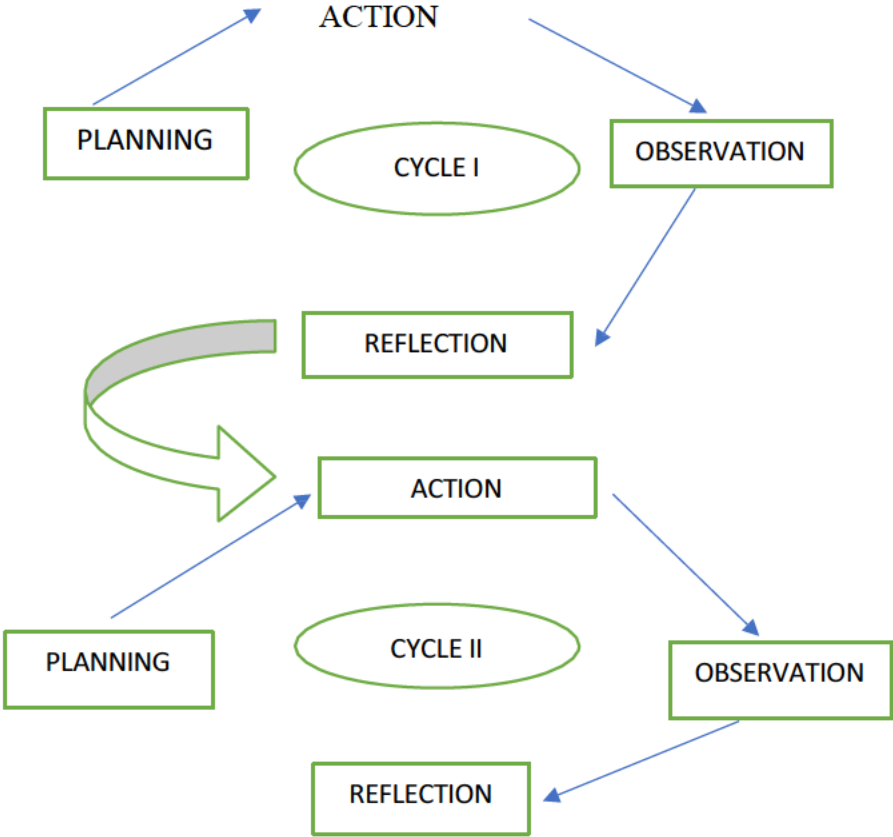


Figure 4.3: The Action Research Cycle (Arikunto et al., 2016)

The above model (figure 4.3) consists of four phases of AR: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. On completion, if problems persist or the objectives are not achieved, then there is the need to embark on the second cycle in the same way as the first cycle until the problem can be solved. Further, Marsevani and Habeebanisya (2022) posit that action research is an educational instrument where practitioners in the field could formulate hypotheses to be assessed in certain contexts. Riel and Lepori (2014) elaborate that AR is a systematic enquiry which solves problems through actions by asking questions that direct actions. In this manner, the cycle is completed focusing on the reflection frame after which a new cycle of enquiry begins. Action research is often referred to as one of the learning tools for the enhancement of teachers' knowledge and commitment to teaching and learning in the classroom (Haryani, 2023). Hence, the backbone of the action research process is reflection because it generates new platforms and makes provision for further enquiry (Coghlan et al., 2019). It is evident from literature that the process of action research enables practitioners (teachers) to view their actions from different perspectives based on critical assessment that refines actions, and consequently leads to a substantial improvement in teachers' classroom practices by adhering to transformational teaching-learning methods (Yon et al., 2022).

Since this study was informed by literature, the action research process was based on the four steps (planning, action, observation, and reflection) concerned with developing knowledge and skills in line with the desired aim and objectives of the study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015; Gilbertson, Nicolaidis, 2023). However, Yan (2017) and Banegas and Cad (2019) assert that there is no prescribed number of cycles to be restricted to; it could be one, two or more cycles. This suggests a systematic way of providing solutions to problems with the possibility of re-planning to discover better solutions to enhance transformation. This is in line with Monem and Cramer's (2022) view that action research seeks and makes provision for people within the community to develop personal identities and empowerment for sustainable development. Figure 4.4 below is the action research cycle illustrated by Kemis et al. (2014).

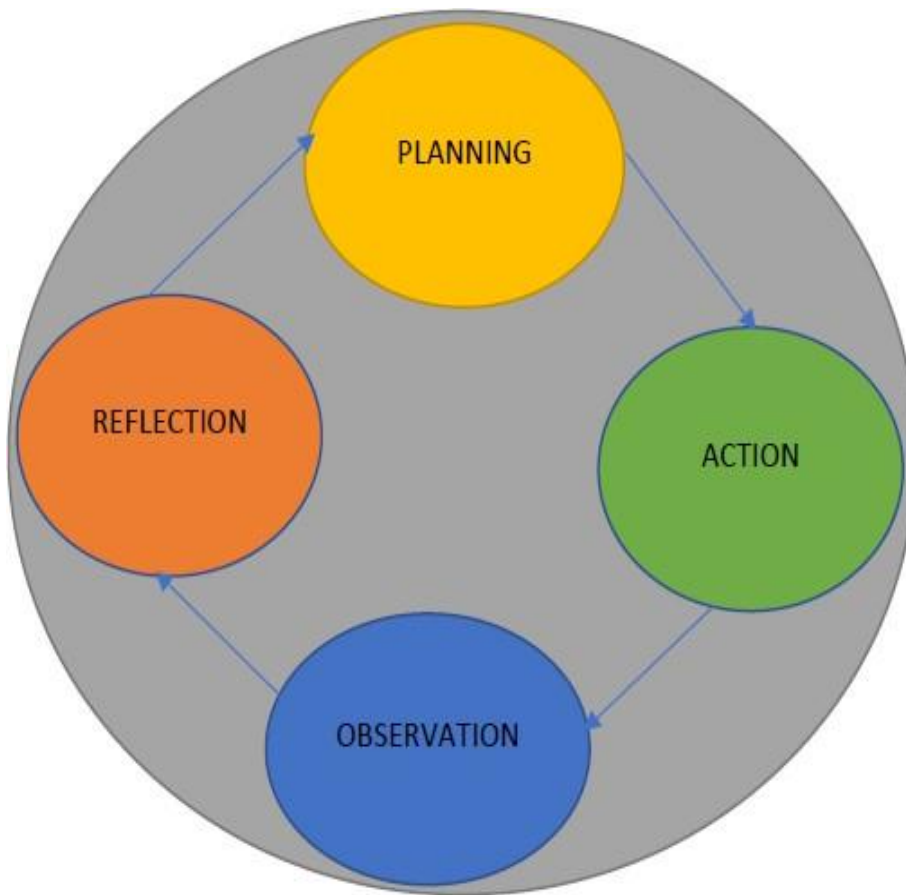


Figure 4.4: The Action Research Cycle (Adapted: Kemmis et al., 2014)

There are four phases of AR as illustrated in figure 4.4 above: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Phase one is planning when the researcher prepares everything needed for the research including all the required equipment. The second phase is when the participants take action as they engage in the data generation process. The third phase is conducting and observing data generation processes because action research is activity-oriented. The last phase of reflection examines the results obtained from the research. The results will determine whether to continue or stop the cycle (Ruslan et al., 2021).

4.4.6 Why Action Research?

From its historical background, action research is committed to a democratic way of working which involves systematic reflection on practice which may reveal an uncomfortable truth (Edwards-Groves & Ronnerman, 2022).

Since AR is an influential tool to promote teachers' professional development, it inevitably enhances better all-round understanding of phenomena by providing incisive insight (Agbagbla, 2018; Dogan & Kirkgoz, 2022; Lombardo, 2019; Pardede, 2019; Shahri, 2018; Van der Linde & Goede, 2023). In other words, and according to Hathorn and Dillon (2018), conducting AR enhances deep commitment, critical reflection, responsiveness in teaching and learning, and provides ample opportunities for teachers to develop more confidence to proffer solutions to problems in the classroom. Moreover, literature provides numerous reasons for the application of action research that enhances teachers' consciousness of their capabilities, potentials, strengths, and weaknesses which lead to empowerment. Further, AR enhances teachers' professional knowledge and practice by inculcating right attitudes towards teaching and learning processes that positively influence efficacy, commitment, and productivity. It also provides teachers with a framework to systematically check on their teaching practices while promoting professional development, critical-thinking, and reflection (Hathorn & Dillon, 2018).

In sum, action research is intended to engender change since it motivates those who are directly involved in initiating transformation (Cohen et al., 2018). This indicates that when practitioners participate in action research, they become motivated by virtue of their position and experience to act purposefully to improve their practice. Action research also helps teachers to focus on their practice to better manage problems because they are also influenced by the changes and improvements they make based on their positive attitudes (Hei & David, 2017; Lucini, 2022).

4.4.7 Reflecting on the Use of Action Research

Muawanah et al. (2022) point out that action research is a method to successfully utilise the inexhaustible resources of human creativity to enable practitioners to evaluate and improve their work. Reflective educational practices in action research involves practitioners' systematic process of generating data based on their practice in order to make informed decisions for positive transformation (Van der Linde & Goede, 2023). Cohen et al. (2018) and Haryani (2023) emphasise reflection in action, or critical reflection that is entrenched in top-down or bottom-up processes since reflection occurs in every phase of action research. Much literature on action research

involves informal reflection where the practitioners are encouraged to work as a team to share experiences and meaningful ideas towards solving a particular problem. It is noteworthy that beyond informal reflection, formal reflection is also considered in AR by instituting phases of AR towards solving a particular problem to improve practice within the system (Bertram & Christiansen 2015; Cohen et al., 2018; Esau, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; McNiff, 2015; Putra, 2023). This suggests that AR is rooted in personal reflection where practitioners are involved in reflexive processes dealing with injustice, oppression, and hegemony (Bergrot et al., 2023).

In addition, reflexivity is central to action research, because the researchers are also the participants and practitioners in action research which enhances the development of capacity- building for appropriate structure-building (Marsevani & Habeebanisya, 2022). Similarly, the use of action research goes beyond formal and informal reflection; it also embraces personal reflection because it is concerned with processes of enquiry, and guides the way forward (Yon et al., 2022). This suggests that action research includes the involvement of the researcher where research is personally done in one's own setting to improve one's personal practice for positive transformation.

Reflections in action research seek to understand the real process concerned with a unique way of problem-solving that can be used by professionals to recommend solutions to a particular problem (Azkiya, 2023). Bergroth et al. (2023) view the involvement of the co-participants as being highly essential to undertake each step in self-reflection to collaborate during activities while implementing plans. This highlights the vital role teachers play in problem-solving for positive change. Hence, teachers as professionals and primary assets within the community, should draw from their experiences by engaging with available research information to provide meaningful transformation (AlShamsi et al., 2022; Dervent, 2015; Madsen et al., 2023). This implies that the medium of instruction during teaching and learning processes should primarily be in the indigenous language of the school-community.

4.4.8 Principles and Characteristics Guiding the Use of Action Research

Action research is defined as a form of enquiry undertaken by the researcher as a practitioner to change and improve the educational system through the processes of problem-solving (Evered & Roger, 2022). Importantly, one of key principles of action research is its primary objective to

impact the educational system positively by initiating changes through the teaching and learning processes (Lestari, & Widayati, 2022; McDonnell & McNiff, 2016; McTaggart, Nixon, & Kemmis, 2017). Moreover, Altrichter (2020) notes that AR is the coherent integration of various methods. Additionally, Bartels and Wittmayer (2018) call attention to principles and features guiding the use of AR, arguing that it is based on the fact that action research is critical and relational oriented to address the immediate problems within agreed framework. However, considerable number of literatures has provided detail account on the principles and the characteristics guiding the use of action research, which are to make provision for practical problem posing and proffering solution through expanding scientific knowledge process and by enhancing competence of the participants during data generation process as well as making practitioner more confidence, deliberately monitors and records the aftermath of actions, revolving around action and reflection, uses feedback in a cyclical way through collaborative and emancipatory oriented process (Maretti, Russo and Lucini (2022); Haryani, 2023; Ferrance, 2000; McTaggart et al., 2017; Salo and Ronnerman, 2023; Evered and Rogger, 2022). Subsequently, it further equips professional with systematise reflections and rich data process to improve or change practice in a systematic way within the system (Fox, & Macleod 2023; Adams, Bittner, Lavay, & Silliman-French, 2022). Another essential point is dialogical and celebrates discourse within agreed framework of ethics by seeking to promote quality of human actions and empowering professionals to take full control. In the same way, it focuses on those problems that are of immediate concern to practitioners and tends to avoid paradigm of research that isolates and controls variables. More importantly, includes evaluation, constant reflection, contributes to a science of education and has a critical dimension that seeks to challenge hegemonic practices. Also, Transformation oriented in practice through synergistic process.

Moreover, the above principles and characteristics of action research seek teachers' understanding and enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous language in early childhood education in order to improve educational practice. This suggests that principles of action research were observed in this study. As such, it should be noted that the key principle of action research is participatory and collaborative since is the type of research that seeks practitioners (teachers) to work together with the primary aims to improve their own practice in the school system (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The researcher and teachers in ECE were involved in all the phases of the action research by reflecting on teachers' understanding and enablement of CJ (cognitive justice) in IL (indigenous languages). The aim and objectives of the above principles in this study is basically to create a systematic way of developing strategies to problem-solving to improve the quality of human actions in the school

through self-reflections of the practitioners (Bendtsen et al., 2023; De Vos et al., 2014; McAteer, 2013; Madsen et al., 2023).

4.4.9 Understanding AR from the ABA perspective

Monem and Cranmer (2022) claim that AR has strong implications for classroom practice because research at this level is purposeful with great benefits for teachers, learners and the educational system as a whole. Cohen et al. (2018) describe AR as a useful tool for change and positive improvement in communities and society at large. Similarly, Piggot et al. (2018) claim that action research is a collaborative transformative approach that seeks solutions through emancipation. Also, Yigit and Bagececi (2017) confirm the important role of action research by emphasising problem-solving techniques for utilisation by teachers. This implies that action research advocacy is based on instilling change in the behaviour of society. This suggests that conducting AR in the context of teachers' understanding of cognitive justice in indigenous language, may lead to positive intervention (Gilbertson & Nicolaides, 2023). Hence, this study explored the experiences and potentials of teachers across the four main phases of action research; namely, planning, action, observation and reflection (Derakhshan & Nazari, 2022).

4.5 THE RESEARCH AREA

The research area of a study consists of the geographical boundaries or a specific location in which research is conducted (Kumar & Nayak, 2019). This research project was conducted in one school within the community.

4.5.1 The Community

The term *community* consists of a group of people with the same ideology, interests, and attributes which enhance the sense shared identity within the same location (Chow et al., 2023; Brown et al., 2022). It also refers to the group of people that are different from one another by virtue of their relationship, but exist among other groups in the community (Hlalele et al., 2015; Hlalele & Tsotetsi, 2016). Hlalele and Mosia (2020) add that the ultimate needs of the people within the community can be fulfilled through individual commitment to the needs of the group. Therefore, this study was conducted in one school in the Ojo Local Government area of Lagos State, Nigeria. Lagos State University and the Lagos State University of Education are located in Ojo which is on the eastern section of the Trans-West African Coaster Highway about 37km West of Lagos. Ojo

is part of the Lagos Metropolitan Area, a primarily residential township. The Ojo Local Government was founded by the Esugbemi from the Awori subgroup of the Yoruba.

In addition, the western (Otto-Awori) and northern (Iba and Igboelerin) areas are parts of Ojo that developed independently as a result of incoming Awori migrant settlers from Ile-Ife. It is interesting to note the migrants first settled in Obadore in Iba before the expansion towards the west and southwest. Presently Otto-Awori is ruled by a king known as Ikuyamiku. Transportation is primarily by road, ferry, and speedboat which are available through Badagry Creek and the Ojo River with the main jetty situated at Ojo District off Olojo Drive. Construction of a railway line by the Government from Lagos to Badagry through the Ojo Local Government area is under construction. Since the indigenous language is Yoruba, culturally Ojo is known for its Olojo Festival when the king celebrates with the people. Other festivals include Egungun (masquerade) Sango and Ogun, among others.

4.5.2 The school

The school (research site) is situated in the Ojo Local Government area of Lagos State, Nigeria. It is a public pre-primary school managed by the Lagos State Government. The two schools situated in the Ojo Local Government area are predominantly occupied by the Yoruba ethnic group, where the language of communication is Yoruba which is mostly spoken in the area as well as in neighboring communities. I have a detailed understanding of the research site since it is very close to my workplace which I often visit as a supervisor as the pre-service teachers in my institution always use this school for teaching practice. Ten (10) participants, both males and females, residing within the school-community were selected for the study.

4.5.3 Problem Identification

There are numerous problems in the school system. In line with the research design (AR), this study entailed “learning by doing with a view to improving a particular practice [which involves] the problem being identified, something being done to improve the process, the outcome is evaluated, and if the outcome is not satisfactory, further attempts are made” (Esau, 2017, p. 446). This research involved the process of problem-identifying and solving to improve practice to eradicate marginalisation, oppression, and hegemony. Similarly, McNiff (2016) elucidates that solving identified problems depends on the social experiences of both the researcher and the researched in real-world settings.

4.6 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim and objectives of this research study focused on exploring ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. To achieve the aim there were objectives to consider which have been stated in chapter one of the study.

4.7 PROFILE OF THE RESEARCH SITES, RESEARCHER, AND RESEARCH TEAM

4.7.1 Research Sites

The selection of a research site is crucial to a research study because it should be executed on the basis that it would yield rich and in-depth information relevant to the study (Myende, 2015). Therefore, this study selected a suitable site and participants within it by meeting, conversing, collaborating, and observing the school environment to gauge the sites and the participants' suitability in terms of understanding and enabling cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages.

4.7.2 Profile of the Researcher

I, the main researcher, am a lecturer at a college of education situated in close proximity to the research site. I have been working at the institution for over fifteen years. I possess a master's degree in educational management and early childhood education, and work in the Department of Early childhood Care and Education. I teach pre-service teachers in early childhood education. I also attended national and international conferences including seminars and various workshops in early childhood education and educational management. I served as a facilitator for the state (Province) and Local Education Districts (LED) involving the training for private and Government nursery and primary school teachers. At the international level, I was part of the Community Participation for Action in the Social Sectors (COMPASS), a programme organised by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Nigeria. In addition, I served on various committees at college, school, and departmental levels. This included the supervision of teaching practice in various schools (including the research site) which was of great advantage to me, especially regarding data generation processes. In addition, as a facilitator for seminars and workshops organised for public nursery and primary school teachers in Lagos State, I was greatly privileged. Drawing from my experiences and exposure to research, a platform was created to

promote harmonious rapport between the management of the schools, the teachers, and the researcher which led to a conducive collaborative environment for teachers' understanding and enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

4.7.3 Profile of the Teachers

Ten (10) teachers from the school were involved in the generation of the data for this study. These teachers were permanent staff members of the school who have been stationed for more than five years at the school.

4.8 DATA GENERATION AND ACTION RESEARCH

The data generation methods enabled participants to actively collaborate to access rich data (Challis, 2018). According to Ruslin et al. (2022), data generation involves applying techniques to elicit data from a specific information source in qualitative and quantitative studies. MacDonald (2012) and Cohen et al. (2018) provide ways of data generation in qualitative research: semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires, observation, document analysis, and focus group interviews. Musari et al. (2022) and Silverman (2017) add that the use of two or more data generation methods enhances the understanding of the research phenomenon under study. Accordingly, I adopted the collage and focus group discussion (FGD) techniques to elicit information in line with the research questions. The data generation methods adhered to the research design and qualitative approach to unveil ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. It must be noted that the choice of applying the action research methodology increased the engagement of primary assets and stakeholders within the community which enhanced participation through evoking their voices which were previously stifled. Since emancipatory action research has a comprehensive agenda to promote social justice (Gibbs et al., 2017), it is paramount that it embraces AR guidelines such that participants within the community are regarded as equal players (Hawkins & Erickson, 2015).

4.8.1 Preparation for the Research Project Meetings

I obtained all the required documents for the research project (e.g., permission letters). These included the ethical clearance certificate from the University of Kwazulu-Natal Ethics Committee, and the consent letters from the Executive Chairman of Lagos State Government Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), the executive secretary of Lagos State Government State Universal Basic Education Board, the Local Government Education Authority of Ojo, nursery and primary

school headteachers, and from the 10 co-researchers.

4.8.2 Data Generation Methods

The study adopted two data generation methods: collage and focus group discussion. These were selected to address the key research questions based on the AR approach.

4.8.2.1 Collage Construction

The use of the participatory collage technique in qualitative research is invaluable as it helps to reveal what co-researchers cannot necessarily express in words during data generation processes (Culshaw, 2019). Incorporating the collage technique in data generation serves as a useful method to actively engage the participants to enhance their understanding of cognitive justice in indigenous languages (Lupton & Leahy, 2021). Literature reveals that the use of collage in data generation provides a great opportunity to engage the participants in the construction of alternative realities, in addition to accessing meaningful and different levels of consciousness where communication depicts the reality of an experience that leads to transformation (Kagola & Khau, 2020; Nomakhwezi et al., 2015; Summers, 2016) Similarly, Roberts and Wood (2018) maintain that collage construction allows participants to engage physically, and capitalise on the opportunities to explore their experiences in various ways. This implies that the collage method allows individual participants to unravel their experiences, and provides a voice for those who would ordinarily be silent. It is noteworthy that participatory collage is highly-rated as a method for data generation because it is comparatively more expressive, action-oriented, committed, and maintains participants' attention during the data generation process.

Additionally, the analysis of the collage representation, complemented by individual and group discussions based on teachers' understanding of cognitive justice in indigenous languages, has the potential of eliciting vital information through engaging in deeper and richer reflections (Dinham et al., 2017). McKay (2019) adds that the collage method is valuable as it helps in the exploration and dissection of thoughts that enhance consciousness and logical reasoning.

4.8.2.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The FGD as a research instrument for data generation in this study, is meaningful as a group interaction because it is streamlined by size, composition, and conversational styles (Creswell,

2017; Colom, 2022). Salo and Ronnerman (2023) who elaborate on Creswell's (2017) and Colom's (2022) discussion, state that the focus group discussion provides the opportunity for researchers to discourse with various participants concurrently and systematically during research. Similarly, Ngozwana (2017), Crossman (2017) and Bernard et al. (2012) maintain that FGDs are concerned with groups of participants collaborating to prompt discussions on a particular topic between participants within the community. Johnstone (2017) adds that focus group discussions involve systematic discussions which allow individuals to express their views in a group setting during research processes. Basnet (2018) emphasises the advantages of focus group discussions that include exploring opinions and enabling participants to think deeply, and to agree and disagree with one another on controversial issues. This is also supported by Nyumba et al. (2018) that focus group discussions produce comprehensive and incisive information that is difficult to access through interviews and questionnaires. Anabel and Simanjuntak (2022) note that a focus group discussion could also be referred to as a tool for data generation where a group of people is selected and asked about their views concerning a particular topic. During such a research process participant constructively debate with one another on a particular issue (Kufakunesu & Dekeza, 2017; Lee, 2023).

4.8.2.3 Field Notes (FNs)

The field note technique has its origin in ethnographic anthropology of the 1900s, which is often referred to as being essential to qualitative research (Emerson et al., 2011). Tatham-Fashanu (2022) asserts that generating field notes during a research study simply involves going to a research site, observing what occurs, keeping track of the process, writing how the process was conducted, taking photos, sketching drawings, or videoing on site. It is for this reason I concur with Hernández-Hernández and Sancho-Gil (2018, p. 1) who state that “field notes is a common research strategy not only to capture and amass instantly what researchers listen to, observe, think and feel, but also to make explicit their reflexivity, based on their observations and experiences”. Hence, the importance of field notes in qualitative research lies in the documenting of much-needed contextual information.

Furthermore, it is clear that field notes are essential for researchers embarking on qualitative research methods to enhance data and provide rich contexts for analysis (Creswell, 2014; O'Brien et al., 2014; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018; Mehta & Fessell, 2022). Martin et al. (2019) concurs with Roberts (2015) that using field notes in the process of data generation enhances accurate and

detailed record-keeping of events as they occur in order to provide rich and expansive information of *where*, *how*, and *when* the conditions of the observation were made during the research process. Therefore, in this study, it was imperative to use field notes to enable the researcher to thoroughly check the data elicited from drawings and focus group discussions. This was supported by Gràcia and Fendler (2017) that documenting something specific in the field such as participants’ interests and activities makes the research meaningful as it allows the researcher to cross-check the data generated through collages and focus group discussions (Mehta & Fessell, 2022).

4.9 The Research Phases

Table: 4.1 Phases of Action Research (AR)

	Phases of Action Research	Description	Action Research	Activities and Methods
1,	Planning	Clarifying the focus of enquiry in terms of purpose, content and what needs to be achieved. >Mapping the community assets >Identifying and mapping challenges, assets, and potential assets in the school. >Individual assets identified (talents, capabilities & potentials)	Enabling devices for the expression of participants’ thoughts and opinions. -Teachers share their identified assets to be mobilised in the process	Collage and focus group discussion. >Gathering information on the process through the research instrument
2.	Action	>Implementing the plan >Identification of assets is	Theoretical justification for	Collage and focus group

		<p>followed by action. The participants are engaged in answering pre-determined questions for discussion.</p> <p>>Mobilisation of assets: Information-sharing purposes initiated by the researcher</p>	<p>action.</p> <p>Mapping of all the activities to be conducted</p> <p>-Individual will have the opportunity to utilise assets</p>	<p>discussion.</p> <p>-Forum for sharing and voicing experiences</p>
3.	Observation	<p>>Evaluation and self-evaluation. The participants are allowed to speak individually and as a group, while the researcher take notes and observes.</p> <p>>Observing mobilisation and being empowered in the process.</p> <p>>Observing sustainability of assets, mobilisation and development in the process.</p> <p>>Evaluating identified assets in terms of their usefulness to the system.</p>	<p>Simultaneously the moments the researcher begins to ask probing questions from the participants.</p> <p>The researcher will begin to observe positive change and transformation that take place in the process</p>	<p>Dialectical critique of truth based on consciousness and logical reasoning through discussions on construction of collage and their experiences.</p>

4.	Reflection	<p>The participants are prompted to discuss ideas about their most desired future for their school from the results of points 1-3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide opportunity for effective utilisation of assets identified through asset-mapping >Individuals take responsibility to sustain actions that have been initiated. >Continuous revising and reflecting on the various phases. 	<p>The participants will be asked to write self-reflective essays on their experiences during participation. Researcher works collaboratively with the participants for reconsideration and reflection</p>	<p>After construction of the collage, participants embark on two types of reflection (written and verbal), and focus group discussion. The participants will be required to compile</p>
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		<p>>Revising steps where necessary.</p>	<p>of the utilisation and mobilisation of assets, and also to identify newly discovered assets in the process.</p>	<p>reflective diaries. This will be based on their self-critical reflection on the results of the cycle of action research for the next circle of action. The essence is to reflect on the whole experience and develop a strategy that could be used for enhancement of CJ in IL.</p>
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4.10 DATA GENERATION INSTRUMENTS

This study adopted collage and focus group discussion as data generation instruments. In addition, field notes, observation, and audio-recording were utilised. “Field notes are not only a method of generating evidence, but a reflection of the ontological, epistemological, methodological, and ethical personality that guide the researcher’s gaze” (Hernandez-Hernandez & Sancho-Gil, 2018). In order to ensure the proper generation of data, I ensured reaching a point of data saturation where adequate data was collected from various groups of participants (Creswell, 2015). Although the researcher might not be able to capture some aspects through field notes, the use of audiotaping was of a great advantage to this study. Harding, (2018) states that the use of audio- and video-recording is essential to minimise levels of interruption and distractions during the data generation process, and that it would strengthen the credibility of data as there is the possibility of the researcher omitting vital information during the data generation processes.

4.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Cohen et al. (2018) emphasis that ethics are rules and regulations that a researcher needs to adhere to before, during, and after the research process. The researcher was conscious of the ethical issues as stipulated in chapter one of this study. Crespi-Abril and Rubilar (2021) clarify that participants’ interests should be of paramount importance and their wellbeing should be high-priority during the research process. Simkin (2020) highlights the wellbeing of the research participants during data generation processes as top priority. In occurrence, Williams and Anderson (2018) agree that the place of respect for participants cannot be over-emphasised as part of ethical considerations during research processes. Hoover and Green (2018) and Žydzīūnaitė (2018) highlight three principles that are important for ethical considerations in research: mutual respect for the participants, justice, and beneficence. Magumise and Sefotho (2020) add that the interest of the participants should never be jeopardized at the expense of the research study. In addition, permission was obtained from the participants in this study, and I clearly explained the research in order to get their consent. The research purpose was clearly explained to the participants as they were issued consent letters in order to achieved or get accurate and valid data analysis. I ensured that the anonymity and confidentiality of the research context and participants were guaranteed with the use of pseudonyms. This implies that all ethical considerations must be adhered to by

the researcher during all research process. In addition, the transcriptions of picture collages and focus group discussions must be effectively enacted, locked away safely in cabinets of the University, to be destroyed after 5 years in storage.

4.11 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis plays a crucial role in qualitative research as it examines and categorises facts generated from the participants in order to make-sense of the information through analysis for others to understand (Chidarikire et al., 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2016). Thus, Kumar et al. (2019) explain that data analysis is a process of transforming data generated through evaluation with the primary objective of adding value to the research study. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was applied by the researcher in this study to uncover power relations in order to challenge social inequalities, unequal treatment, and hegemony. Hence, CDA is primarily a form of discourse analytical research that studies social injustice, abuse of powers, oppression, hegemony, conflict, and marginalisation of people in a political setting (Van Dijk, 2015). McLoughlin (2017) and Fairclough (2013) add that CDA is concerned with socialisation which is a product of effective communication and interaction on textual matters aimed at discouraging abuse of power promoted by such texts. I concur with Foss (2018) that CDA's primary objective is freeing the marginalised through encouraging their engagement in discourse in order to transform the society positively. Therefore, this transformative and emancipatory nature of CDA suits the transformative agenda of ABA and AR in this study.

4.12 VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

The issue of trustworthiness is the qualitative equivalent of validity in quantitative research. It can be understood by ensuring four aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Taylor et al., 2015). Trustworthiness is an aspect of qualitative research which is appropriate for quality researchers for establishing validity and reliability to confirm truthfulness in data generation and analysis (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Korstjens and Moser (2018) also highlight key points on trustworthiness for qualitative research which are embedded in principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability:

(i) Credibility

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2015) credibility is described as the analysis that reflects the participant's reality. Shenton (2004) maintains that credibility in qualitative research is internal validity that deals with question: How congruent are the findings with reality? Also, Bertram and Christiansen (2015) and Shenton (2004) contend that credibility is one of the crucial factors to be considered for the establishment of trustworthiness. This means that the qualitative researcher endeavors to establish truthfulness by adopting a research method that is rooted in qualitative investigation and transparency (Smith et al., 2017). Therefore, to establish the credibility in this study, I embarked on three major strategies: firstly, video- and/or audio- recording and field notes were used to record all discussions between me and the participants during focus group meetings and drawing sessions; secondly, I solicited the assistance of a professional field worker who transcribed (verbatim) all discussion/responses as recorded in the video/audio recorders; thirdly, the transcription of the data would be returned to all the participants for verification to ensure they were authentically represented, in addition to member-checks for accuracy. This credibility check enabled participants to verify the authenticity of the information elicited from them (Cohen et al., 2018).

(ii) Transferability

Bertram and Christiansen (2015) and Merriam and Tisdell (2015) state that transferability is concerned with the extent the research can be transferred to other contexts or situations such that a particular finding from one study can be applied to other situations. Amin et al. (2020) purport that transferability is concerned with the degree of congruence regarding the context in which the research was conducted. There are aspects to be completed by researcher to increase the level of transferability; hence, I ensured that the findings maintained the level of internal validity which would make the data credible and transferable (Yin et al., 2015).

(iii) Dependability:

The quality of dependability refers to addressing the issue of reliability to account for variation in the study. It determines if the study was to be repeated in the same context, with similar methods and participants, the findings would not be different from the previous study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015). Fabijan et al. (2019) confirm that dependability is concerned with the extent to which the study could be repeated or transferred to another context. Therefore, dependability in

qualitative research involves assessing the quality of combining data generation, data analysis, and theory generation (Hadi & Closs, 2016). It is important to note that the process involves a comprehensive methodological description to determine the level of acceptance of the data, in addition to providing an audit trail (Shenton, 2004). This implies that qualitative research is concerned about trustworthiness, reliability of the original data, and how data was interpreted. However, in order to address the issue of dependability in this study, I explained in detail the methodology applied in this study which included focus group discussion, the drawings of participants (collage), and field notes.

(iv) **Confirmability:**

Confirmability involves the continuous improving of the quality of the analysis, showing how well the findings were supported by the generated data. This concept is the qualitative investigator's concern to verify objectivity in order to reduce the effect of bias (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015). This implies that confirmability ensured that the findings of this study were not based on my personal biases or opinions (subjectivity), but rather on authentic data collection. Furthermore, the researcher focused on enhancing the accurate interpretation of the data (Dale et al., 2019). Therefore, I provided a relevant and authentic audit trail to strengthen the trustworthiness aspect of this study.

4.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the research design and research paradigm that were adopted to conduct this study. This qualitative inquiry also adopted action research as its methodological approach with reasons for choosing it. I also discussed how the participants were selected, and the data generation methods informing teachers' understanding and enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages through collage constructions and focus group discussions. The discourse analysis approach (CDA) was applied to interpret data. Participation was voluntary, and all gate-keeping permissions were applied for and obtained. All the participants consented in writing by appending their signatures to the informed consent form after I had explained all the finer details of the research process. The chapter further clarified that ethical issues will not be taken for granted. The next chapter (5) presents the results which emanated from the analysed data that was generated through collages and focus group discussions.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter (4) centred on the research design and methodology used to generate data on ECE teachers' understanding of cognitive justice in indigenous languages to answer the research questions that guided this study (see sub-section 1.6.1). This chapter (5) focused mainly on the presentation of data, data analysis, and the interpretation of data generated from ten research participants which was analysed through CDA procedures (see sub-section 4.10). The AR approach which underpinned this study, dissected the collective voices of participants through picture collages and FGDs which was supported by field note-taking. Lastly, this chapter was guided by three research objectives (below) with the aim of presenting, analysing, and interpreting the results emanating from the collected data.

5.2 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research study was to explore early childhood education teachers' understanding and enhancement of Cognitive Justice (CJ) in Indigenous Languages (IL).

The following are the objectives of this study:

- ❖ To explore ECE teachers' understanding of CJ within IL;
- ❖ To explore how ECE teachers' understanding shape their enablement of CJ in IL;
and
- ❖ To understand why teachers' in ECE need to enable CJ in IL in certain ways.

Therefore, the above stated research objectives were effectively adhered to to present, analyse and interpret data generated for the study. The following section explored the three research objectives which centred on exploring the current situation regarding the research topic.

5.3 PREPARING FOR DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF MAJOR THEMES

The data was gathered in line with the study’s three objectives Table 5.1 below illustrates these objectives and procedures to facilitate data generation.

Table 5.1: Objectives Restated, and Procedures for Data Gathering

1.	ECE teachers’ understanding of cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages
	Data was generated via picture collages and FGDs to achieve this objective. The four phases of AR (planning, action, observation and reflection) were strictly followed and utilised to achieve the objective. The participants’ written and verbal reflections based on their understanding of the research topic were also utilised.
2.	Addressing how ECE teachers’ understanding shape their enablement of CJ in IL
	Data was generated and questions were raised during FGDs. The identified primary assets were utilised to determine how ECE teachers’ understanding shape the enablement of CJ in IL when they voice their lived-experiences.
3.	Understanding why teachers in ECE need to enable CJ in IL in certain ways
	Data to address this objective was generated by means of FGDs. The identification, mapping of assets, and mobilisation of assets were conducted to achieve the objectives.

5.3.1 Collating the Generated Data

The above-mentioned objectives (Table 5.1) were achieved through the identified themes. Achieving each objective led to a theme and sub-themes. Since the data generation process through the participants’ verbal and non-verbal information might convey multiple meanings, I discussed themes that were well-crafted which enabled flexibility to reveal accurate findings. The data was presented, analysed, and interpreted according to the aim and objectives of the study. In addition,

to ensure rich data generation from constructive arguments that strengthened findings, I used verbatim quotations (with pseudonyms) to dissect participants' recorded voices. This was because the participants used the language that they were most comfortable with, hence allowing free-flow of expression without any disruption. Lastly, the emerging themes were grouped into sub-themes as illustrated in table 5.2 below:

Table 5.2: Major themes and sub-themes

S/N	MAJOR THEME	SUB-THEME
1.	5.4 Theme 1: Adverse impressions inform ECE teachers' understanding of CJ in IL	5.4.1 Sub-theme one: 5.4.1 Oppression of Indigenous Languages
		5.4.2 Sub-theme two: Relegation of Cultural Heritage
		5.4.3 Sub-theme three: Lack of Critical Fairness
		5.4.4 Sub-theme four: 5.4.4 Unfavorable Atmosphere
		5.4.5 Sub-theme five: 5.4.5 Relationship between Teachers and learners
		5.4.6 Sub-theme six: 5.4.6 Absence of Cognitive Justice
2.	5.5 Theme 2: ECE teachers' various ways of enhancing CJ in IL	5.5.1 Sub-theme seven: 5.5.1 Revitalising and Reclaiming of Yoruba Indigenous Language
		5.5.2 Sub-theme eight: 5.5.2 Cancellation of the IRI
		5.5.3 Sub-theme nine: Implementation of policy
		5.5.4 Sub-theme ten: Lack Freedom of Expression
		5.5.5 Sub-theme eleven: 5.5.5 Dealing with Teachers' Lack of Commitment
3.	5.6 Theme 3: Enablement of Cognitive Justice Languages	5.5.1 Sub-theme twelve: Promotion of Sociocultural Norms and Values
		5.5.2 Sub-theme thirteen: Language Acquisition and

5.4 THEME ONE: ADVERSE IMPRESSIONS INFORM ECE TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF COGNITIVE JUSTICE IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

This section presented the findings emanating from the data on the ECE teachers' understanding of CJ in IL. In addition, co-researchers facilitated by drawing pictures as part of a collage relating to teachers' understanding and enhancement of CJ in IL. The theme one above (see 5.4) was the first theme that emerged from the findings of the study which responded to research question one: *What are ECE teachers' understanding of CJ in IL?* The ECE teachers' construction of collages and FGDs were based on their understanding of CJ in IL (see Table 5.2). It was evident from the construction of the collages that learners experienced various challenges during teaching and learning processes (see appendix 1). Figure 5.1 below, presents the findings and sub-themes that emerged from the first major theme:

5.4.1 Oppression of Indigenous Languages

During the construction of collages and the conducting of focus group discussions, participants were asked to share their understanding of CJ within IL; their responses indicated that they all believed that the English Language consistently overshadowed the indigenous languages of their community/school especially during teaching-learning processes in the classroom. The following articulations on the current language situation from the participants were enlightening:

Adura:

English Language today has grown to become language of education even at the early childhood education level that supposed to be language of the immediate environment. Mmmm..., [pauses]...the Yoruba indigenous and other languages that are not EL are recognize as vernacular and we refer to it as such....

Baba Ode:

Mmmm... [pauses] In fact, the usage of the English language is so pronounced in the school to the extent that the learners would be strongly scolded or asked to keep quite...for communicating or making attempts to answer questions in Yoruba indigenous during teaching and learning in the classroom.

Bola: I think from observation most public schools [pauses] that belong to

government are operated like private schools that belong to private individuals. In ~ most of the classes it is boldly written and pasted on the classroom wall and beside the chalkboard: NO VERNACULAR ...Kemoh:

... once a visitor enters the classroom the learners greet in English Language simultaneously by saying: Good morning, sir/mam we are happy to see you. God, bless you amen.

HM

Emmm.... [laughs]...honestly speaking, I have never seen or yet to see a situation where I enter any classroom and the learners will rise to greet in YIL in this manner, E ka ro oluko, inu wa dun lati ri yin.ki oluwa bukun yin amin [Good morning ma'am, we are happy to see you, God bless you, amen]. This is because classroom environment that supposed to be added advantage to learners lack classroom decoration which also served as instructional materials.

Toyin:

... where there are opportunities for teachers to improvise in the IL, this often arrest learner's attention and interest in the course of teaching. For example, the picture illustrated in the collage reflected various activities to be discussed in foreign language with the teacher as comprehension passage on expression of self for effective communication skills on Jegede's family...

Kemoh:

I think [smile]... foreign based IM are more colorful, and beautiful that could easily arrest the attention of learners during lessons compare with the local indigenous materials within the community that could make teaching and learning bore to the learners.

Alhaja:

...[smiles] Learners are more exposed and oriented towards EL and not the mother's tongue. For example, all the test books for all the subjects are written in EL for learners at the ECE except for Yoruba as a subject. Poems, rhymes, songs and stories are all in foreign language. This also reflected in the rhyme titled: 'Sprinkled, Sprinkled' for the learners.

As the construction of the picture collage and focus group discussions progressed, negative perceptions informed ECE teachers' understanding of CJ in IL. It also revealed how learners were being oppressed during teaching and learning processes. The above responses also show the attitudes of teachers towards the indigenous language, and how it is being referred to as a vernacular in the classroom. One of the participants also indicated the lack of indigenous instructional materials which could also help to concretise ideas and stimulate learners' imagination to be more active in IL classroom activities. As the participants shared their experiences and ideas based on their understanding of the phenomenon, it was evident that learners experienced various forms of challenges which depict the oppression of IL in the classroom. Lastly, the participants felt that they needed to explore ways to reduce and deal with the injustices and inequalities of the marginalised learners through enablement of CJ in IL.

5.4.2 Relegation of Cultural Heritage

As the participants brainstormed while constructing the picture collage and engaging in FGDs, their articulations indicated that the cultural heritage of the indigenous people within the community is relegated to the background during teaching and learning processes. They remarked as follows:

Bola:

Our medium of instruction which is the colonial master's language did not allow promotion of our cultural heritage, which could have enhanced good relationship between teachers and learners and also inculcate morals that will make learners understand their cultural heritage of the community better...

Baba Ode:

Emmm... I think... the oppression of the native language stands as hindrances to effective learning activities as learners are to follow the rules and regulation guiding teaching and learning in the classroom that mandated the learners to be polite, be prepared, be positive, be productive, be prompt and no vernacular.

Baby:

Emmm... [pause] it is quite unfortunate that.... The general notion is that anything that is not foreign based is regarded as been inferior hence the native dressing is not recognized as parts of the dressing to be encouraged.

Muskino:

Mmmm... [pause] there is what we refer to as official dress and that is why a teacher's mode of dressing in the classroom is often in foreign dress styles on the belief that it is smarter and better, during teaching and learning processes.

Baby:

There indigenous dressing for different occasions like traditional wedding, naming ceremony, birthday celebration, royal dressing for obas /queens. 'Asa ati ise wa ko gbodo pa re...' [The norms and values of our society must not be forgotten].

Baba Ode:

... to promote our indigenous language in the classroom, we should also be a model to be emulated by learners in our mode of dressing and beyond indigenous mode of dressing, learners are not exposed to most of the delicious native food that are very rich and highly nutritious to the body.

Toyin:

I think, learners should also be taught how to greet appropriately in English Language and Yoruba IL for example, our mode of greetings is quite different from mode of greetings in English language ...A boy we prostrate and a girl will kneel down.

The above excerpts evidenced how the IL is being marginalised during teaching and learning processes in the classroom. It was expected that the culture, norms and values of the community become evident within the system. Appendix 2 is a collage depicting the promotion of culture, norms and values of the community. From the construction of the picture collage and communication during FGDs, the participants indicated their understanding of CJ. The culture,

norms and values of the community were presented as one collective voice from the entire group who indicated that ILs were relegated and oppressed due to Western education's dominance. The

participants revealed that appropriate forms of greetings at home, school and community ought not to be restricted to a foreign language alone, but also through a local indigenous language. The data also indicated that the relegation of indigenous languages led to learning difficulties during teaching and learning process

5.4.3 Lack of Critical Fairness

The participants' responses indicated that indigenous languages were marginalised without conscious efforts to revive them. The findings on this sub-theme pointed to ECE teachers' negativity which affected their understanding of CJ in IL. In addition, the participants reported that indigenous languages were confronted with numerous obstacles, especially as medium of instruction. Further, due to the lack of critical fairness, equal treatment of languages is a pipedream as revealed by the inadequate provision of textbooks in the Yoruba indigenous language for learners in ECE. The participants' construction of picture collage and interactions in focus group discussions depicted that there was a threat to the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous language during EKO EXCEL teaching and learning processes in the classroom (see Appendix III). Some of the participants commented as follows:

Baby:

There are limited available novels or text books in indigenous languages, animations and cartoons that are available are not tailored towards our cultural heritage. For example, the story titled 'ENI A WI FUN' [Be warned and listen to instruction].

Adura:

The absence of Yoruba textbooks that will make the work easier, are not available for learners as the new programme provides for more textbooks in English.

The researcher probed: Which programme has sufficient textbooks in EL?

Baby:

The programme is known as EKO EXCEL launched in 2019 by the Governor of Lagos State. To provide quality education for learners through the teachers which is technology-driven programme for teaching and learning is strictly guided through the use of the tablets that is English language inclined. For example, the teaching and learning process on body parts flash cards (Hair, Tongue, Teeth, Arm, Eyebrow) and color mixing of red, orange, yellow are all in foreign language.

H/M:

Dialogue and discussion on the direction of reading, labelling, pictorial reading and production of vocabulary book are mainly in English Language.

Ore:

I think we are able to identify some of the challenges affecting the promotion of CJ in IL. However, we have vital roles to play for the enablement of IL during our classes.

Baby:

We need to explore our strength on how to ensure the inclusion of the language of the immediate environment during teaching and learning in the classroom. For example, our mode of dressing in the classroom should not be foreign inclined only.

Baba Ode:

Maximum support will be given to the Eko Excel programme as usual, and at the same time efforts will be intensified on the use of YIL during all the lessons in the classroom.

The above evidence indicated that the majority of the participants saw threats that may hinder the enhancement of CJ in IL by reporting that most of the topics taught during teaching and learning in the classroom were Western-oriented; for example, greetings, health, food, and good citizenship,

among others. Some participants responded that there was no regard for the language of the immediate environment because the teaching and learning process were tailored towards the English language only. For instance, some participants mentioned that the absence of Yoruba indigenous language textbooks that will make the work easier, are not available for learners but the new programme provides for more textbooks in the English language. Participants affirmed that their strengths needed to be explored on how to ensure the inclusion of the language of the immediate environment during teaching and learning sessions in the classroom.

5.4.4 Unconducive Atmosphere

Most of the co-researchers displayed their negative perception of their understanding of cognitive justice in indigenous languages by raising other serious concerns such as healthy living and hygiene conditions. The following responses illustrate this:

Adura:

The IL songs stand as one of the outstanding tools that could be used during teaching and learning process in the classroom. There is a general saying that cleanliness is next to Godliness.... there are some songs in the past that were in indigenous languages that are very good to teach the learners hygiene and cleanliness.

Baby:

Attainment of desire objective during evaluation of a lesson has to do with proper comprehension and understanding of the lesson by the learners.

Toyin:

When the learners are lost during teaching and learning process there is no way they could understand and comprehend the lesson.

Ore:

Yes... [silent]. In the absence of proper comprehension and understanding there can never be a change in the behavior of the learners. Change could only occur when learning has taking place in the learners and in a situation where they find the lesson difficult to

understand there would be problem. As for me, I think, the use of indigenous language will assist the learner to put into practice what they learn in the classroom.

Muskino:

For example, there are indigenous Yoruba songs and rhymes that make sense where the learners would learn a lot from; for example, ‘Imo toto lo le segun arun gbogbo, Imo toto ile, imo toto ara, imototo oun-je, imo toto e-yin, imo toto lo le segun arun gbogbo’ [The only medication to cure all diseases is good hygiene of the body, food, and clean teeth]

Kemoh:

I think the value of learning songs and rhymes in IL could also instilled in the learners moral and respect apart from the hygienic and healthy living. For example, this song on sacrifice made by mothers: ‘Omo to mo iyare loju ebini o naomona pa’ [The learner that disobeys his mother that made sacrifices for him, would put an end to his life].

The participants revealed that YIL is not just a way of communicating with learners in the classroom, but of inculcating norms, values, experiences, and expectations of the community. The responses also inferred that some of the learners found lessons difficult to comprehend in a foreign language. I deduced that learners were able to learn much through the use of foreign and native songs and rhymes which promoted good health care and enlightened the learners on the need to keep safe and healthy. The majority of the participants commented on the negative impact of foreign language songs and rhymes that would not help in the inculcation of norms and values of the society in which the learners reside. It can be deduced that cultural heritage will be promoted via the promotion of CJ in IL.

5.4.5 Relationship between Teachers and learners

There were many issues that arose during the construction of collages and interactions during FGDs. The participants exposed various challenges due to the lack of effective collaboration between teachers and learners. Also, the co-researchers reported on positives that could be promoted if equal treatment was prioritised in the education sector (see appendix iv).

Toyin:

Oooo! My participation helps in the awareness and usefulness of including the IL and EL as medium of instruction in ECE. It also improved my knowledge and understanding on collaboration that could exist between teachers and learners in the process.

Kemoh:

To me, it made me feel so exposed to unidentified skills that could be used to achieve smooth and effective teaching and learning process as we encourage the use of YIL.

H/M:

The good relationship that exists among learners and teachers for using both English language and YIL cannot be quantified. For example, the rhyme in YIL: ‘Eropilane o dabo ba mi ki iyami eleko, Eko meji o yomi...’ [Goodbye Aeroplane, Goodbye Aeroplane].

Baby:

Nothing can be compared with the learner’s state enthusiasm as they learn with fun when teacher incorporate the YIL. Most of the rhymes/songs are loaded with meanings.... she [pauses] and sang... ‘Iya ni wura iye bi ye, Iya ko se fowo ra, Oloyun mi fosu mesan, O pon mi fun...’ [Mother is a precious gift that cannot be bought with money].

The above evidence indicated that most of the participants supported the fact that learners would participate more during teaching and learning when the teacher is enabled to promote equal treatment between the Yoruba language and the English language. Most of the participants also reported that there was the possibility to exploit the best in learners during teaching and learning if the teacher incorporates the language of the immediate environment (mothers-tongue). In my view, learners acquire native intelligence through some of the indigenous folktales, stories, songs and rhymes conveyed via the Yoruba indigenous language.

5.4.6 Absence of Cognitive Justice

Injustice and the absence of cognitive justice were concerns raised by the team of participants who were primary assets and stakeholders within the community. The participants revealed various threats that adversely affected the freedom of expression and self-realisation of the learners during teaching and learning processes. The co-researchers, through their picture collages depicted injustice between the foreign language and the IL (see appendix v). The participants also raised issues such as low self-esteem, injustice, and satisfying the emotional needs of learners.

Baby:

Mm, for me I think our YIL is loaded with many interesting literatures, stories and folktales that enrich our culture which the learners could learn a lot from. The learners are restricted only to foreign-based stories in the classroom.

Toyin:

Some tends to believe that the foreign stories are more superior, rich and interesting than the Yoruba indigenous stories... [pause] Hence, they are of the view that is better to embark on foreign based folktales stories in the classroom.

Muskino:

Personally, for me now... [smiles], often times most indigenous language stories are superstitious and obsolete in which will likely waste a lot of time during teaching and learning process. That is why Tom and Jerry cartoons are very interesting.

Alhaja:

Mmm ... [pause]. I quite disagree with Muskino's comment and observation that most indigenous language stories are superstitious and obsolete. In fact, some of the stories we were told then many years ago in IL are relevant today.

Baba Ode:

There are cartoons now in Yoruba IL that are very educative in which learners can learn a lot of things rather than running after them as it is in Tom and Jerry. Some learners would find difficult to comprehend or understand what they are saying in FL.

H/M:

I think there is need to create more awareness for the indigenous language cartoons and also incorporate them for watching in an early childhood education school.

Adura:

I think is serious injustice to shout on learner to keep quite just because a learner could not express himself fluently in a foreign language as expected, learners' right must be observed. For God's sake, the English language is not our father's and mother's language.

The above excerpts revealed participants' different views on the use of the foreign language instead of the indigenous language. Some participants were of the view that indigenous language stories are rich with allusions and superstitious beliefs, while others differed. Since the majority of the participants view language as the foundation on which human development is based, findings revealed that the indigenous language should not be isolated as a result of the domination of foreign languages. It could be inferred from the picture collages that the majority of participants had positive attitudes towards the use of Yoruba indigenous folktales, stories, and cartoons, and agreed that the view of it being 'inferior' was unjust. The data elicited from participants also indicated that they were enabled to voice what they had never thought was possible by building positives rather than dwelling on their challenges. The evidence also created an awareness to use YIL cartoons and storybooks to enhance CJ in ILs. Lastly, I think learners should be assisted when it comes to developing their self-esteem for self-realisation through the use of their indigenous language during teaching and learning opportunities.

5.4.7 Synthesis of the Theme

The ECE teachers' adverse impressions inform the understanding of CJ within IL. It was evident that learners experienced various forms of challenges in the classroom which hindered the enhancement of CJ in IL. Further, the negative perceptions of teachers centred on the relegation of indigenous languages that added to the learning difficulties of learners. Also, the participants expressed the need to explore their strengths to assist in the inclusion of the Yoruba indigenous language in teaching and learning sessions. It was further observed that enhancement of CJ in IL could help in the inculcation of norms and values of the local society of the learners. The findings

pointing to the collaboration between teachers and learners suggested that learners would participate more during teaching and learning processes if the teacher is able to promote equality between the YIL and the English language. The findings also revealed various threats that contradicted the principle of critical fairness, which affected the equal treatment and self-realisation of the learners. The next section deals with various ways of enhancing CJ in IL.

5.5 THEME TWO: PERCEPTIONS OF ECE TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING AND ENHANCEMENT OF COGNITIVE JUSTICE IN INDIDENOUS LANGUAGES

This section responded to research question two, which was how ECE teachers' understanding shaped their enablement of CJ in IL. This session included six sub-themes. The participants deliberated extensively through focus group discussions (FGDs). The four phases of AR were strictly adhered to in this session which addressed the obstacles confronting the enhancement of CJ in IL. Moreover, the research team agreed that there was a dire need for the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The research team identified six major strategies to implement for the enhancement of CJ in IL.

5.5.1 Revitalising and Reclaiming of Yoruba Indigenous Languages

The findings of this study revealed that the Yoruba indigenous language was gradually going into extinction. Participants' responses indicated that the medium of instruction (LoLT) of the classroom environment was English. The following excerpts articulate participants' views:

Muskino:

...You see, here in this community the language of the immediate environment that is the medium of instruction for teaching and learning is not the Yoruba IL.

Toyin:

...YIL is generally referred to as a vernacular; learners are not allowed to speak their native language in the classroom. However, during lessons, learners that

could not communicate fluently in EL are usually laugh at by their colleagues because vernacular is forbidden in the classroom and those that could not express themselves in English language are being seen as local and dull learners by their colleagues even by some of us that are teachers.

Adura:

Most of the learner's songs and rhymes at this level are in EL. There are limited rhymes and songs in IL because most of the songs are in EL. However, the songs and rhymes shall be translated to Yoruba for better understanding for example rain, rain go away, come again another day little learners one's to play and the Yoruba version of is: "Ojo nro, sere ninu ile, mawo nu ojo, ki aso re ma ba tutu, ki otutu maba mu oo. [It is raining, play indoor, don't enter the rain, in order for your dress not to wet and not to contact cold or flu].

Muskino:

The above interpretation is very explicit as the interpretation is emphasized on the reasons why the learners must not play inside rain and the consequence if they do or disobey.

H/M:

'E mi o ni fi owosi juwe ile baba mi...' [pause]... [I will not give a description of my fathers' house with the left hand].

HM:

Mmm ... [smiles] In the Yoruba culture left symbolises negative, pointing to my father's house with left hand simply means I am ashamed to be part of that family. In fact, a Yoruba learner must not to give the elderly person something with a left hand.

Adura:

I think, it is general assumption that anything that has foreign touch is seen as original and t h e best. That is why virtually all decoration in the classroom are foreign inclined in order for the learners to belong. Meanwhile, to belong simply means a class of those that are well exposed, sound and intelligent. In fact, simply means those that can communicate fluently in English language. Personally, my participation has really enhanced my critical thinking and perspective...

Baby:

Mmmm. From all indications, there is need for collaboration between the EL and IL. I think... [pause] there should be equal treatment, without looking as if one language is the best and the other is not necessary or should not be considered for learning.

I, the main researcher, probed: “What do you mean by justice?”

Baba Ode:

Smile.... [pause] We learnt a lot during workshop organised for us. It means equity, without cheating. Emmm... [pause] that is to treat the EL and IL the same way. Which means conscious efforts will be made during teaching and learning in the classroom by communicating or teaching in both EL and IL through which we can enhance and improve the performance of the learners and also for them to gain mastery of all their subjects.

Alhaja:

The time allotted to lessons is too short and the short duration must be adhered to. [pause] because of the use of tablets since English Language and Mathematics subjects are only allotted more time (40minutes) per period, while other subjects are allotted between 25 and 30 minutes per period.

The responses suggested that the participants were ready to revitalise, and reclaim YIL from going into extinction despite various factors hindering the attainment of the desired objectives. The above extracts revealed how the construction of collage helped them improve their critical- thinking on how to revive YIL. The co-researchers further agreed that their potential could be harnessed towards fulfilling the enhancement of CJ in IL. It was suggested that the survival of a community is rooted in their language, and the best way to retain it, is to speak it. The results in this study

showed that teachers navigated these challenges to develop various strategies that could shape the enhancement of CJ in IL. The majority of the participants revealed positive moves in the right direction for the revitalisation of YIL - the easiest way was to trigger equal interest on both the English and the indigenous languages. Also, the promotion of YIL will also speedily improve the academic achievements of the learners while inculcating the norms and values of the community that prepare learners for the future. The data further revealed that there is need to embrace the IL during teaching and learning processes to promote cultural heritage.

5.5.2 Cancellation of the IRI Programme

During the FGDs, participants were asked to share their views on a programme for learners that would support the enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The participants responses follow:

Bola:

Presently, there are no programmes that support enablement in CJ in IL. Although, there was a programme in the past that encouraged it but that is no longer in operation. It was known as the IRI programme.

The main researcher probed: “What is the meaning of IRI?”

H/M:

It was a programme organized by USAID in conjunction with Lagos state government. The full meaning of IRI is Interactive Radio Instruction. The teaching and learning were only in Yoruba indigenous language where learners and teachers listened attentively and the teachers instructs the learners based on radio teacher’s instructions.

Adura:

The Interactive Radio Instruction programme was known as ‘Kokoka’. The programme engaged learners in many activities, and they always looked forward to it every week. The IRI class was very lively and learners were encouraged to speak and sing in YIL songs during the teaching and learning process.

The above evidence indicated that the majority of the participants were unhappy with the cancellation of the IRI programme as they believed it enhanced the promotion of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The findings revealed that learners were deprived during teaching and learning processes because of the non-availability of programmes in school that promoted the enhancement of CJ in IL. Hence, the participants indicated the need for the reintroduction of the ‘Kokoka’ programme that would allow learners to learn arithmetic and other subjects in YIL that would enhance academic performances.

5.5.3 Implementation of Educational Policy on Language of the Immediate Environment

Gauging by the interactions in the FGDs, the general feeling was that education delivery suffered from many years due to inadequate attention to policy implementation. The participants reported that the Policy on ECE was poorly implemented such that the rate at which indigenous languages were declining in the school system, especially at the foundational level, was alarming. Further, no conscious effort to salvage the situation was instituted despite the National Policy on the medium of instruction at the pre-primary level (ECCE). The participants commented on the policy as follows:

Muskino

I think teachers are strong factors in the promotion of IL during lessons in ECE. What I mean exactly is that... [pause] we have all that it takes as professionals to teach the learners in the language of the immediate environment which is the Yoruba language despite various challenges, we are facing...

H/M:

[Sings] ... Gbo gbo wa la lowo nbe x2, bi education se da yi gbo gbo wa la lowon be ... [We are all involved without exception the in the state and its flaws in the educational system]

Bola: *Therefore, we have an important role to perform as regards inconsistency of the of national policy on education which stipulates that the medium of instruction in early childhood education should be the mother tongue of the immediate environment.*

To make this effective, we need to be time conscious during teaching and learning process in order to accommodate YIL and the English language would enhance better

HM: *understanding of the learners and would also make lesson interesting and effective.*

Baba Ode:

We need to play our part in the implementation of the NPE that stipulate the use of mother's tongue for the learners at the pre-primary level. This has to be done without expecting motivation and supervision from outside.

Kemoh:

... [laughs]... This is because we acknowledge the fact that teachers are major role players in the educational system beginning from ECE to higher institution.

The above evidence reveals that despite there being a language policy in place, it was not strictly followed in the early years which is regarded as the most crucial period in a child's development when cognitive, language and motor skills are needed the most for their future achievement. The mother-tongue or language of the immediate community is largely marginalised in ECE. There is no motivation and monitoring of the National Policy on Education so that it could be strictly implemented.

5.5.4 Lack Freedom of Expression

According to the majority of the participants, freedom of expression is a strong stimulant for knowledge acquisition. The right of the learners to express themselves in their native tongue was also restricted. The participants responded to the principle of freedom of expression as follows:

[The main researcher: “I am grateful for your participation. I have learnt so much from you all during the construction of picture collages and from the FGDs, and I hope you have also learnt a lot. Drawing from your experiences, we all can overcome the challenges confronting YIL?”]

Kemoh:

Sometimes, it has to do with us as teachers. For example, I was in workshop and a teacher who is also one of the participants said in our group “Mo fe lo to” in YIL [That she is going to ease herself] during the course of the training and others started making jest of her that within the group that she is a shameless woman and that how could she be speaking her indigenous language in the public and a formal setting.

Adura:

Some teachers are of the view that it is wrong and not polite to communicate in your indigenous language. Such people will definitely never attempt to use indigenous language during teaching and learning in the classroom.

Alhja:

I think the general assumption here is that, if you communicate often in IL and you use it most of the time as a medium of instruction in the classroom and outside the classroom, it is then visualized as evidence of weakness on the part of such a teacher that he/she is not sound academically and he/she is also local without any exposure.

Baba Ode:

Forget it, I am not ashamed any more to use an indigenous language during my lesson in the classroom, and as a medium of communication generally within the community. It might interest you to know that my slogan now is ‘Ohun to ba wun elenu lo le fi enu e so’ [are you entitled to say what you like within and outside].

I, the main researcher, probed: “How many of us are still ashamed to incorporate the YIL in all our activities, and mostly during teaching and learning in the classroom, now that pedagogy is technology-oriented through the use of Eko Excel tablets and mostly in EL? [All the participants loud responded NO ... we are not ashamed.]

Drawing from the participants’ verbatim responses, it was evident that the lack of freedom of

expression had a more negative influence on teaching and learning. Based on their expressions, I realised that most were proud to express themselves in the YIL which is the language of the immediate environment. In addition, it was reported that CJ would also be enhanced in IL to facilitate understanding in classrooms. The participants reported that the use of IL would improve academic performance.

5.5.5 Dealing with Teachers' Lack of Commitment

As illustrated in the following responses, findings revealed a lack of commitment and cooperation during teaching and learning processes exhibited by some teachers which negate the promotion of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The following extracts bear testimony to this:

Ore:

Since the indigenous language could also add more emotions and commitment to learning processes, it makes the explanation simpler and easy to understand for learners to respond and learn faster.

Moskino:

Mmmm ... [pause] We have discovered that the enhancement enables learners to learn more about their culture which promotes excellent academic performance.

H/M:

In addition, the collaboration will further promote the IL as it erases the fear in the minds of some learners that are not well rooted in the foreign language. However, it enables learners to express themselves and with rapt attention during teaching and learning.

Alhaja:

I think lack of commitment by some teachers towards the use of indigenous languages during teaching and learning of the learners must also stop.

Drawing from the above statements, the participants indicated the importance of enacting equal treatment between the foreign language and the indigenous language during teaching and learning

processes. The participants advocated for halting nonchalant attitudes to the use of indigenous language during lessons. It was also unanimous that the enhancement of CJ in IL will not only be of a great benefit to the learners, but also to stop the disappearance of the Yoruba culture they represent. Therefore, the participants reported that the separation of ECE learners from their indigenous language is to separate the learner from life. Similarly, the participants indicated that the enhancement of CJ in IL will further help the learners in ECE to maximally benefit from the unearthing of latent potential of the caregivers. It was further agreed by the participants that the effective utilisation of this potential will be reinforced by the willingness of the learners to actively participate in IL activities during teaching and learning processes. I deduced that this will get learners out of boredom as well as quell teachers' disinterestedness in delivering lessons. It is pertinent to also note that, the supremacy of the English language in during teaching and learning process has unsurprisingly downgraded indigenous language usage and has deep-rooted cultural and linguistic consequences on the nation's identity. For instance, indigenous language conversations in early childhood education particularly among children, have declined.

5.5.6 Synthesis of the Theme

This theme validated the various ways of enhancing cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The findings under this theme exposed the injustice existing during teaching and learning. The study identified hindrances to the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages, and how learners were left behind during teaching and learning processes. Lastly, the results in this study revealed how participants navigated these challenges by implementing various strategies that shaped the enhancement of CJ in IL.

5.6 THEME THREE: ENABLEMENT OF COGNITIVE JUSTICE IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

This was the third theme that emerged from the findings of the study which speaks to research question three. This session focused on teachers' understanding, perspectives, experiences, and knowledge of answering the third research question: Why do ECE teachers' enable cognitive justice in indigenous languages in certain ways? The findings from the FGDs produced four ways of enablement or promotion CJ in IL in certain ways.

5.6.1 Promotion of Socio-cultural Norms and Values

Most of the participants involved in the current study discussed various possible transformations that occur in a learner such as values, lifestyles, and transformative attitudes based on quality of socio-cultural norms and values of the community. Some of the participants responded to this aspect:

Ore:

You see, when we talk of culture it has to do with our community, where the school is also the environment, including the indigenous language of the community, mode of dressing, and other socio-cultural activities within the school system.

Adura:

To me, this sociocultural connectivity with teachers and learners is better. The IL does not work in isolation. When you promote IL, you are indirectly promoting the cultural heritage of the indigenous community. I think, if the members of the community embrace the culture and pass it on to the learners, it would promote the cultural.

H/M:

Yoruba people cherish culture and one of the primary objectives of Yoruba traditional

education is to make the learners 'Omoluabi' [Good character]. The Omoluabi is an embodiment of 'iwa rere' [good character]. Therefore, the concept Omoluabi can only be embedded through the use of an indigenous language as medium of instruction.

Baby:

To me, [pause] ... this socio-cultural connectivity with teachers and learners will transform the learners to be of good character within and outside the classroom if we teach them using the mother-tongue. It would also improve performance.

Muskino:

I think as teachers we should not be discouraged by the time allotted to the lesson, which seems to be too short to complete the teaching process in both English and in the IL. However, all we need to do is to be more conscious of the time while using the tablets, and be more passionate and committed to using the mother-tongue during lessons.

Bola:

Emmm.... [pause]... We have an important role to play and as teachers we should not relent in giving the Yoruba version of most of the rhymes, songs, folktales, and stories, because I have strong faith that if we teach the learners through the indigenous language, they will have the capacity to do well.

The participants' responses revealed that socio-cultural norms and values of the community do not operate in isolation; hence, the need for the enhancement of CJ in IL during teaching- learning sessions. They further suggested that the introduction of YIL would promote modern pedagogical and technical skills introduced in the early childhood and primary education system which has tremendously improved learning outcomes and professional competencies. The responses also point out that, regardless of various challenges and shortcomings confronting the teachers in the course of teaching in the classroom, they believed that if they intensify their efforts with higher commitment and passion, better performance of the learners will ensue, while the values *Omoluabi* will be ingrained.

5.6.2 Language Acquisition and Learning

A significant number of participants gave detailed accounts on how teaching and learning processes could be enhanced through the use of indigenous languages in early childhood education. The participants specified teaching-learning activities that could enhance the quality of lesson delivery.

Muskino:

IL revitalisation in ECE is a welcome development which must be a gradual process because an average Nigerian parent is not interested in the learner being taught in the IL.

Baba Ode:

... [pauses] it is quite funny that some parents believe the earlier their learners start to learn the English language at the foundational level, the greater will be the performance of the learner in his/her studies; this is far from the truth.

Adura:

We should not be disturbed by the ignorance of parents in discharging our duties as some have negative attitude towards the IL as they prefer their learners to be taught in English.

Baby:

I think parents should also be enlightened on the importance of IL by emphasising equal treatment without relegating either EL or IL to the background.

Alhaja:

I think we should not shy away from the truth, where indigenous languages are referred to as vernacular. No restriction will be placed on the use of indigenous languages while the learners are in the classroom and outside the classroom. The learners will be

encouraged to communicate in the language of the immediate environment. The Yoruba indigenous language is our dialect and with this new understanding initiatives need to be encouraged and supported.

Ore:

Emmm.... [pause] ... preserving our dialects or IL is a collective responsibility. We must embark on activities that will make the learners enjoy what they are taught through the IL. Learners must be interested and willing to learn when they are taught in the YIL.

H/M:

Classroom activities should be all-encompassing, where the pedagogy should be more learner-centred to facilitate full involvement and interaction between the learners, with willingness to learn and participate in all the learning activities and follow instructions given by the teacher in the classroom in the IL and EL.

Baby:

For example, when learners are taught through practical demonstration counting numbers, stories, songs, rhymes in counting, and also by guiding learners to construct shapes and objects with expression of self in the indigenous language.

The responses exposed the ignorance of parents on the language of the immediate environment for teaching and learning. The participants were determined to utilise all the available resources at their disposal to enable learners to learn in their indigenous languages alongside the English language so that policy can be adhered to. In addition, many of them emphasised the importance of indigenous languages as the inheritance of the learners, and a way of life. The participants reiterated that when a learner is exposed to knowledge in the indigenous language in the classroom, the development of such learners becomes greatly enhanced academically. Lastly, the participants observed that the knowledge of the learners of their culture was very superficial, so I deduced that CJ in IL should be enhanced.

5.6.3 Collaborations of Primary Assets/Shareholders within the School

From the empirical data, it was deduced that there was a lack of collaboration between teachers and parents with reference to indigenous languages. The participants were unanimous in their support for the promotion of CJ in IL. The following responses substantiated this:

Adura:

The learning of indigenous language in the classroom becomes very easy when literacy in the home language has been set by parents...

Kemoh:

Exactly ... [pause] ... exposing learners to foreign language alone at home causes a lot of frustration to learners when the learning activities are mixed with the indigenous language in the classroom.

Muskino:

From all indications, most parents often believe that the language of wider communication is English, as it would lay a solid foundation for them in the future and in all their endeavors academically.

Baby:

Some parents are of the view that the enhancement of CJ in IL will not only affect learners' proficiency, but also their socio-economic conditions on how to get lucrative jobs in the future....

Adura:

I think we should not be silent about parents' ignorance as stakeholders. We have to sensitise them regularly on the importance of learners acquiring IL first at their various homes before that of a foreign language at the foundational phase. More

importantly, sensitise them on the essence of enhancing CJ in IL. It would be of great benefit to learners.

Baba:

Efforts should be intensified by ensuring that parents are acquainted with NPE in order to have for them to gain adequate information and knowledge that IL is the medium of instruction at ECE.

Ore:

The use of the IL in the classroom will not only make the learners to be actively engaged in our learning, but will also mould their character, change attitude, and improve their academic performance.

In sum, the research team reported that the enhancement of IL depends on different intervention strategies to assist in the revitalisation of the native language through encouraging existing collaborations between the home, school and the community. Moreover, the participants also indicated that their engagement and participation in the FGDs unearthed different ways in which cognitive justice could be promoted within the community without assistance from secondary and outside assets. The findings also suggested that the teachers as primary assets within the community could be powerful agents for success enhancement through the use of IL as the language of instruction in the classroom. Lastly, the participants suggested that inspiring collaborations could keep the native language alive because it needed support and protection withing the community to survive and enjoy equal treatment with the EL.

5.6.4 Dealing with the Issues of Language Hegemony

The responses from the team of participants indicated that it was well recognised that the improvement in the performance of learners was a product of investing and improving the quality of teachers. The participants identified the linguistic hegemony of English language within the school as an issue to be deliberated on.

Baby:

The dominant role of EL is so evident as it is the official language in the country. Despite the important role of the IL, it is disappearing gradually from the system.

Baba Ode:

As earlier said teachers plays a vital role in teaching and learning processes, most especially in the use of IL. Emmm.... [shaking head].... Ose ni lanu [is a pity] some teachers are not competent in the use of IL and they prefer to use only EL during their lesson.

Adura:

Teachers without pedagogical competence in the native language would never be able to teach in the Yoruba indigenous language successfully which will limit the enhancement of CJ within IL, and then contribute to the disappearing of the IL gradually within the system.

Ore:

In fact, I agree with Baba Ode because some teachers find very difficult to teach using Yoruba indigenous songs and rhymes, not to mention teaching the learners on how to express themselves through play, music, drama, singing and teaching the learners good manners and morals of the community.

Muskino:

In addition, some also are more comfortable with the use of EL strictly throughout their lessons on a daily basis except when teaching Yoruba IL as a subject in the classroom.

Baba Ode:

I think teachers that are very good and better in the Yoruba IL and they should endeavour to guide other teachers on an individual basis on some of the indigenous songs, rhymes, folktales, and others that are necessary to ensure competence to use the IL of the immediate environment effectively during teaching and learning.

H/M:

Low cost and no cost instructional materials simply mean the materials that have no financial implication, and where money will be needed it would be very small and insignificant. For example, clean bottle tops, small stones, and used matches sticks could be used as counters during arithmetic for addition and subtraction.

From the above articulations, it became evident that the participants were responsible for domination of EL over the IL. However, participants acknowledged that there is a need for the equal treatment of EL and IL to ensure liberation from language oppression. The team also suggested strategies that could be adopted internally to solve some of the problems identified as obstructing the effective enhancement of CJ in IL. The participants reported that the predominant use of the language of colonialism is detrimental to IL development where the culture, norms and values of the native people are subjugated. To this end, the research team reported that empowering the IL will promote the enhancement of CJ in IL in ECE classes. Furthermore, a significant number of participants raised concerns regarding the important function of the teacher on the enhancement of CJ. Teachers' hidden talents could be activated to ensure that learners are taught in the YIL to promote a better understanding of lessons. Learning through the medium of YIL will develop them to a stage of readiness to preserve the norms and values of the community.

5.6.5 Synthesis of the Theme

The responses emanating from dissecting this theme revealed the lack of cooperation between the primary assets and parents within the school system. However, teachers within the school revealed and believed that as they intensify their efforts with higher commitment and passion through the utilisation of available resources, they may promote the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages to produce better learner academic achievements.

5.8 CHAPTER SYNTHESIS

This chapter focused on data presentation, analysis, and interpretation which emanated from the generated data guided by the thematic data analysis. The results of the study also revealed how the co-researchers through their collective views, knowledge, experiences, participation and engagement in picture collages and FGDs, envisaged different ways in which ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of CJ in IL could be promoted and successfully integrated into teaching and learning processes. In addition, the two types of reflections were effectively utilised in this study. The next chapter presents the findings linking it with the literature review and their implications to the study.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter (5) presented the analysis and interpretation of data that was generated in line with the themes that emerged from the thematic breakdown. This chapter (6) discussed and synthesised the findings drawn from these themes. The findings were analysed and presented in three broad themes aligned to the research questions. This chapter focused on the summary of the findings as well as the discussion that was generated from the themes by comparing them with existing literature that was reviewed for the study. The literature review, theoretical framework, and research methodology were used to strengthen the results presented and interpreted in chapter five. Lastly, the sections in this chapter are aligned with the objectives of this study and the themes that emerged.

6.2 PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings, followed by the related discussions, were guided by the three objectives of the research study:

- (i) To explore ECE teachers' understanding of cognitive justice within indigenous languages;
- (ii) To explore how ECE teachers' understanding shape their enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages; and
- (iii) To understand why teachers in early childhood education need to enable cognitive justice in indigenous languages in certain ways.

6.3 EXPLORING THE SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF ADVERSE IMPRESSIONS

The following subsections discuss co-researchers views on ECE teachers' understanding of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

6.3.1 Knowledge of the Oppression of Indigenous Languages

The study commenced by examining early childhood teachers' understanding of the enhancement of cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages. The findings revealed that early childhood education teachers possessed different skills and capabilities within them that enabled them to be fully involved during the data generation process to share their understanding, experiences, knowledge and ideas. The findings discussed in subsection 5.4.1 revealed that the participants understood the complexities related to the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. In line with existing literature, the participants of this study identified the challenges affecting the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. Literature reviewed in chapter three noted that scholars in the humanities, social sciences, and Human Rights Education criticised the colonial marginalisation of the indigenous languages of the people through oppression and subjugation of communities which is contrary to the rules and regulations guiding the Western and Eurocentric philosophical foundations (Coysh, 2014; Keet, 2017; Khoja-Moolji & Society, 2017; Mbembe, 2016; Yang, 2015; Zembylas, 2017).

The findings are aligned to Shava and Manyike's (2018) study that exposed the negative impact of the colonial language hegemony over indigenous languages. This penetration of foreign language into society and the school community was an act of suppression and marginalisation of indigenous languages in teaching and learning processes at the foundational phase. It was then suggested that indigenous languages be used alongside the English language. This view also corresponds with HRE practice where efforts to redress the past injustices are implemented by discouraging the imposition of foreign language 'dictatorship' during teaching and learning processes in the classroom (Al-Daraweesh & Snauwaert, 2017; Keet, 2017; Khoja-Moolji & Society, 2017; Mbembe, 2019; Yang, 2015; Zembylas, 2017). I contend that the use of the Yoruba indigenous language as a Human Rights Education practice, allows ECE learners to thrive when fair and equal treatment regarding languages is encouraged within the school community.

6.3.2 Cultural Hegemony

The findings in subsection 5.4.2 indicate that the loss of culture is the loss of people's identity which includes dressing, greetings, dance, music, food, folktales, myths, heritage, and norms and

values of the community. This is supported by Ikoba and Jolayemi (2021) who agree that the loss of the indigenous language is the loss of people's heritage which blots out valuable parts of a nation's history. The findings also indicated that modernisation and technology contributed to learners' new ways of life which affected learners' socio-cultural values. Appiah John (2021) claims that the importance of an indigenous language in socio-cultural development lies in its promotion of cultural norms and values which enhances educational standards.

Further, the findings revealed that the values that are expected to be inculcated through teaching and learning in the classroom are dominated by Western culture. Olanrewaju (2020) concurs that the Yoruba people are culturally-conscious of their values; hence, at every gathering, the elderly do not hesitate to instil norms and ethics in the younger ones who are the future leaders of tomorrow. In accordance, classroom teaching and learning should also adopt an indigenous language as the language of learning and teaching in order to ingrain norms and values in learners.

Moreover, the findings in subsection 5.4.2 revealed that the participants expected that the norms and values of their society to be ingrained through modern education processes, and by the elderly. However, Olajoke and Oluwapelumi (2018) assert that the majority of the indigenous languages speakers is old and infirm, thus the younger generation is not exposed to the local indigenous language which is exacerbated by the dominance of the English language at schools. This implies that to avoid the decline of the indigenous language, it is imperative to promote cognitive justice in indigenous languages at the foundational level of the educational system.

In addition, it was demonstrated that beyond the mode of dressing as a part of culture, learners were not exposed to most of the delicious nutritious indigenous food to enhance teaching and learning in the classroom. Therefore, the primary assets within the community suggest the need for conscious efforts to promote teaching and learning processes. This is in line with Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) statement that the asset-based approach is embedded in the understanding that stakeholders in any community are endowed with potentials, gifts, skills, and capacities that could be mobilised and to advantage the community without intervention from outside. This implies that the participants who were primary assets and stakeholders within the community, were now empowered and conscious of their innate gifts, and ready to activate the resources that are already available in the community in order to build a stronger and functional community through

the promotion of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. This is also supported by Hlalele and Mosia (2020) who claim that the urgent needs of the people can be fulfilled through individual commitment and the promotion of cognitive justice.

6.3.3 Valuing of a Foreign Language in Teaching and Learning

The findings also indicated that teachers are confronted with numerous challenges concerning the medium of instruction language of teaching and learning in early childhood education; for example, the Yoruba indigenous language in the teaching and learning process is largely marginalised. The study's findings revealed that there was threat to the enhancement of cognitive justice within indigenous languages during EKO EXCEL classes. This is supported by Marnewick and Worksheets (2015) that teaching and learning processes without communicating in the indigenous language of the learner might affect the educational grounding by subduing participation which might bore and frustrate learners; this can also make teaching-learning teacher-centred. I also observed as a supervisor during teaching practice sessions that when pre-service teachers use the local indigenous language to describe objects, learners become lively and interested in the lesson.

Lamentably, it was also reported by the participants that inadequate textbooks in the Yoruba indigenous language discouraged learning. This contradicted the Lagos State Government's policy on the EKO EXCEL programme meant to transform all Government pre- and primary schools; the provision for technological materials, resources, professional development workshops on innovative technology, and data-driven platforms were lacking (Akinfenwa, 2020).

6.3.4 Promoting a Healthy Conducive Atmosphere

The findings presented in subsection 5.4.4 demonstrated that the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages will promote positive change and healthy lifestyles of learners. The findings also revealed that learners would be able to learn much more through the introduction of

Yoruba indigenous songs and rhymes, especially when learners are not restricted to interference by a foreign language. This would create a conducive atmosphere for learning while promoting good health-care, enlightenment, and security. Titus and Oyelola (2019) reiterate that the singing of indigenous songs plays a vital role during teaching and learning situations. Iyabode (2018) adds that indigenous dental health songs promote sound hygiene habits in learners. Alade (2016) elaborates that most indigenous songs and rhymes ‘warns’ learners to ensure personal cleanliness, such as correct methods brushing teeth and constant washing of hands.

The findings in sub-section 5.4.4 revealed that the use of songs and rhymes extends beyond healthy living; it also imparts sound morals to respect the learning environment which promotes a conducive schooling atmosphere. Halliday (2004) notes that teaching and learning cannot occur in the absence of language because teaching-learning is facilitated by language, most importantly the indigenous language of the native people in the community – in this case, the Yoruba language. Bakare (2019) affirms that Yoruba indigenous songs are rooted in Yoruba tradition which includes respect for parents, elders and teachers, while other songs imply punishment awaiting disobedient learners, or encouraging learners to become industrious with a likely reward to create a conducive learning environment.

6.3.5 Effective Teacher-learner Collaboration

The findings in subsection 5.4.5 highlighted various advantages that occur as a result of the collaboration between the teachers and learners. Since teaching in the English language side-by-side with the indigenous language promotes conducive learning spaces, learners get the ‘best of both worlds’. This is in line with Burges (2015) who notes that cognitive justice vehemently opposes the oppression and marginalisation of people’s fundamental human rights; languages must be given equal opportunity to uplift the local people. The participants further revealed that this collaboration enhances the performance of learners through active participation in the classroom.

This aspect of collaboration between teachers and learners justifies the view of O’Byrne et al. (2018) that the role of teachers is critical; it goes beyond teaching as teachers also inspire learners to perform at their best whether in kindergarten, crèche, physical education or special education, among others. Hence, a teacher is someone who learners look up to as a role model. This is in line

with the ABA principle that teachers feel empowered and ready to perform at their best if motivated to utilise their skills and experiences positively within the community. Therefore, all stakeholders in education should exploit their strengths by mobilising available resources that will enhance sustainable development in the school community through collaborative frameworks (Khanare et al., 2019).

In addition, the study's findings point to ambiguous and disinterested attitudes of some teachers towards the use of indigenous languages during teaching and learning which must also cease.

Owojecho (2020) states a change in attitude of the indigenous people towards their native language will assist in determining the progress of the local community. This implies that the right attitude of teachers will successfully promote and enhance cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

Further, the findings revealed that the empowerment of the participants was based on their understanding, knowledge, capacities, and the harnessing of their latent potentials. Starkman et al. (2006) maintain that the identification of assets is of immense benefit as it supports teachers in many ways by entrusting learners with more responsibilities. In this regard, Chidakwa and Hlalele (2021) found that teachers are endowed with special qualities to guide learners; hence, the effective utilisation of such resources should promote the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

6.3.6 Promoting Cognitive Justice within the Community

The findings, as set out in subsection 5.4.5, suggest that the research team acknowledged the great advantages of teamwork within the school community which instilled a positive attitude towards the use of Yoruba indigenous language folktales, stories, and cartoons during teaching and learning processes. However, some teachers believed that foreign stories were superior to Yoruba indigenous folktales and stories. This supports Disbray's (2016) observation that some parents and teachers are of the notion that learners' success is fostered by teaching and learning in a foreign language (see 3.5). Interestingly, one can infer from participants' comments that cartoons expressly encourage and facilitate effective teaching and learning processes in early childhood education. This resonates Simpson's (2017) position that indigenous languages play important roles if learners are taught in the indigenous language. This further revealed that there are cartoons

now in indigenous languages that are very educative as learners find them interesting and humorous.

The majority of the participants also reported that it is a great injustice against the Yoruba indigenous language for a teacher to criticise a learner for not being fluent in the foreign language. This finding also emanates from literature which reveals that teaching and learning without using the indigenous language of the learner might not only affect the educational progress of the learner, but also the standard of participation which makes the quality of learning processes to nosedive.

Furthermore, it was suggested that there should be equal treatment in the use of the English language and the indigenous language in the classroom. This statement was supported by the principle of cognitive justice. Rodríguez and Inturias (2018) claim that many of these injustices arise through the marginalisation of the indigenous peoples' values, customs, languages and traditions.

6.3.7 Synthesis of the Discussion on Findings

The above section discussed findings in relation to ECE teachers' understanding of cognitive justice within indigenous languages. The discussion revealed participants' knowledge of the marginalisation of the indigenous languages during teaching and learning processes. This suggests that the language of the indigenous people should be allowed to thrive, and that we should promote the principle of equal treatment, especially during teaching and learning processes within the school community.

6.4 MULTI-DIMENSIONAL WAYS OF PROMOTING ENHANCEMENT OF COGNITIVE JUSTICE IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

This section discusses the study's findings on multidimensional strategies of enhancing cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The findings presented in subsection 5.5 identifies six sub-themes, which reveal ECE teacher's understanding and enhancement of CJ in IL. These were addressed to prevent the Yoruba indigenous language from going into extinction through the non-implementation of the language of the immediate environment, lack of the freedom of expression. Strategies to turn around this situation included inspiring collaboration of primary assets, and leaving no learner behind [EKO EXCEL].

6.4.1 Recognition and Support for Reclaiming the Yoruba Indigenous Language

The findings in subsection 5.5.1 revealed that the participants were not comfortable with the neglect of indigenous language during teaching and learning processes. Therefore, the participants supported preventing the Yoruba indigenous language from going into extinction. This is in line with Nwanyanwu (2017) observation that sustainable development in education is possible through the promotion of indigenous languages for the successful attainment of educational objectives and to combat illiteracy in the community. Also, in support, Obanya (1999) agrees that the promotion of indigenous languages as the medium of instruction in basic education, includes teaching them as subjects at all levels which will prevent them from going into extinction. Wallace (2010) states that the wisdom of humanity is promoted through language, and when a language is threatened with extinction, knowledge dies with it. Renganathan and Kral (2018) concur that the loss of an indigenous language is destructive to the community.

The findings further revealed that there is a dire need for the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. Odora Hoppers (2009) states that cognitive justice enables epistemic pluralism which results in the activation of other knowledges in a democratic and dialogical sense such that indigenous languages allow the survival of cultural values in indigenous communities. Visvanathan (1997) states that the negative impact of westernisation affects the progress of developing countries; hence, this should be replaced by cultivating justice to draw attention to different ways of knowing as being central to daily life through instituting equal treatment and dialogues to eradicate marginalisation and domination of the foreign language in decision-making processes. However, Fogg-Rogers et al. (2015) contend that this does not mean relegating the

scientific approach to knowledge, but rather promoting equity for the treatment of traditional knowledges which is embedded in the indigenous languages that should co-exist cohesively with the English language.

The participants also noted that the Yoruba language was generally referred to as a *vernacular* and that learners were not encouraged to speak their native language in the classroom which is the language of the immediate environment. The participants concurred with Kwao et al. (2021) that speaking in an indigenous language during teaching and learning enhances critical-thinking and the literacy skills of learners. Moreover, UNESCO (2015) advises that embarking only on the use of foreign language to teach in early childhood education is likely to create controversies and cultural boundaries that will expose teaching and learning to many obstacles. Therefore, the team through conscious efforts determined to revitalise, support and reclaim the Yoruba indigenous language from going into extinction despite various hindrances. This is also in line with ABA, and in accordance with Eloff and Ebersohn's (2001) view that mobilising available assets and resources by exploring people's strengths rather than focusing on external support solves challenges. In support, Mathie and Cunningham (2008) and (McKnight, 2010) confirm that the asset-based approach as a community development tool which is not reliant on external agencies, rather it is community-driven to exploit people's capabilities, gifts, and talents for community-empowerment.

6.4.2 Interactive Radio Instruction Programme (IRI)

The study findings point to the lack of continuity of educative programmes in indigenous languages that could have been incorporated into teaching and learning processes to support the enhancement of cognitive justice. Nkonde et al. (2018) concedes that teaching and learning the learner in a foreign language is a disruption of cognitive ability and interruption in the learning process. Similarly, Marnewick and Worksheets (2015) emphasise that the teaching and learning process without using the indigenous language of the learner might not only affect the educational foundation of the learner, but also effective participation in the classroom which leads to teacher-centredness of lessons. It was further revealed that the teaching process through IRI in the past was strictly in the Yoruba indigenous language where learners and teachers listened attentively while the teacher facilitated by utilising radio programmes. El-Kanemi (2019) advises that successful teaching and learning processes in early childhood education is through language, and that the

easiest way in which wisdom and knowledge can be safeguarded is when the indigenous languages are simultaneously used with the foreign language.

It was also reported that participants' potentials could also be harnessed towards fulfilling desired objectives by promoting the language of the immediate environment as the primary medium of instruction. In line with Kasonga's (2019) suggestion, the ABA principle is based on the utilisation of internal or local resources to address issues from what the community has, rather than what it does not have. This ABA principle contradicts Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) Needs Based Approach (NBA) that it is more of consumer-driven rather than the producer of solutions. In the NBA approach members of the community see themselves as being incapacitated, deficient, helpless and powerless victims of their circumstances. Massingham (2019) adds that there are procedures guiding identifying assets such as a call for massive participation by instilling confidence in the people to discover their hidden potentials to recognise and resolve challenges by themselves through asset-mapping to empower indigenous communities. Therefore, based on the findings of the co-researchers it was suggested that programmes that will promote the enhancement of cognitive justice should be encouraged within the school system. The participants/stakeholders who are also primary assets within the community, should constantly utilise the indigenous language together with the English language for the benefit of the learners.

6.4.3 Effective Formulation and Implementation of Policy

The findings presented in subsection 5.5.3 indicate that teachers feel it very easy to formulate policy, but shortcomings exist in policy-formulation concerning the use of the language of the immediate environment as medium of instruction at the early childhood education level. The participants reported that policy on early childhood education has also been poorly implemented, due to the rate at which the indigenous languages are declining in our school system, especially at the foundational level. There are no conscious efforts to salvage the situation despite the fact the National Policy advocating that the medium of instruction at the pre-primary level (ECCE) should be the language of the immediate environment. Maigida (2017) and Arop et al. (2018) assert that if policies are well implemented then the Nigerian educational system will experience a dramatic turnaround in terms of quality to attain educational objectives. Hence, the move for quality in the educational system of Nigeria led to the formulation of various educational policies, including that

of early childhood education, to uplift education at all levels.

The findings revealed that the participants acknowledged the fact that all stakeholders, including the primary assets within the community, should be involved in solving the challenges confronting the implementation of educational policy at the early childhood educational level. The team believed it could be successfully addressed by the primary assets without external intervention. The identification and mapping of assets is the first phase of the asset-based approach where every individual is identified as having capabilities to offer for the development and sustainability of the community (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001). Ebersohn and Mbetse (2003) concur that the use ABA as a theory helps to acknowledge the readily available resources and potential within teachers, societies and organisations to enable cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The ABA promotes teachers' self-determination that develops school-community partnerships that enables teachers' inner-innovation, self-control, and power.

Moreover, the findings revealed that teachers are critical role-players in the educational system. However, the absence of effective monitoring, supervision, and resources hinders the effective implementation of Government policy regarding the language of the immediate environment as the medium of instruction at the foundational phase. This resonates with Kazeem and Suleiman (2020) suggestion that the national policy on education should include the language of the environment as the medium of instruction during teaching and learning at the early childhood and lower primary levels. Boateng (2019) adds that learners learn their native language primarily from those who are close to them; namely, caregivers, siblings, and immediate and extended family members. Therefore, as primary assets in the community, teachers need to implement the policy of Government on indigenous languages to promote equity.

6.4.4 Fundamental Human Rights of Learners

The findings in subsection 5.5.4 revealed that the rights of the learner were marginalised and regarded as unimportant. NAEYC (2019) emphasises that the early childhood education stage is crucial because of the rapid development and growth of the learner where the brain develops faster than any other period in life. Shava (2013) asserts that using an indigenous language fundamental is a human right of the indigenous people in that it promotes the culture of the environment. Santos (2018) states that human rights need to be considered based on the following: first, human rights education cannot be detached from its natural community and environment; second, it is plural and diverse and circulates in a society of difference, rather than in a homogeneous state; third, human

rights education should be learned in terms of different context, cultures, people and experiences; and fourth, it is rooted in people's everyday experiences, aspirations, concerns and needs rather than in abstract and intangible concepts. While UNICEF (2019) admits the right of the learner must not be ignored since early childhood education is the foundation of a learner's journey to greatness in life, inequalities and conflict in societies prevail.

Additionally, the study revealed that some teachers preferred the use of a foreign language for teaching and learning processes in the classroom. However, the majority of the participants were not averse to utilising their identified potential regarding the English language and the Yoruba indigenous language during teaching and learning processes. Van der Velden (2006) concurs that cognitive justice provides an avenue for dialogue which promotes meaningful relationships and recognises the principle that all knowledges should have the equal rights to co-exist with other forms of knowledge. Van der Velden (2006) cautions that we should not relegate the scientific approach to knowledge, but rather seek equal treatment for traditional knowledge which is reliant on indigenous languages. It is evident from literature that efforts have been made to redress the situation by discouraging hegemony and the domination of colonial knowledge.

Moreover, the participants also reported the negative attitudes of some teachers towards the use of the indigenous language as they see it as being 'backward'. This contradicts ABA principles, such that Nicholas and Prisca (2020) comment that the situation of indigenous languages in Nigeria is not encouraging, and that the foreign language as the language of pedagogy and the attitudes of the native people towards their indigenous languages are also worrisome. Owojecho (2020) cautions that the attitude of the indigenous people towards their indigenous languages will determine the progress and the fall of the indigenous language within the community. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the participants felt empowered and willing to teach or communicate in the indigenous language within and outside the community. Chikoko and Khanare (2012) and Myende (2017) advocate the mobilisation of the community to instil positive change. Guanah (2018) adds that presently there have been growing concerns about the decline in the use of indigenous languages in homes, schools, and communities. Hence, the conscious promotion of cognitive justice in indigenous language by teachers could improve learners' academic performance.

6.4.5 Strengthening Collaborations within Primary Assets

The findings in subsection 5.5.5 revealed participants, in the majority, were in agreement to strengthen collaborations among primary assets within the community. They reported that the possibility of success in strengthening the collaboration of primary stakeholders within the school-community will yield positive results to promote better learner-achievement. Chikoko and Khanare (2012), Massingham (2019) and Sudhakar (2019) affirm that The asset-based approach is centred on embracing strategies that will instil confidence in the people to come together to discover hidden potentials to recognise and resolve challenges themselves through asset-mapping by empowering the indigenous community to agitate for positive change to promote the use of the indigenous language (subsection 2.10.1). Vines (2018) and Brabant et al. (2016) point out the pivotal role of collaboration, good networks, relationships, and harmony in the school community could also enhance successful community engagement for positive transformation.

However, the findings in subsection 5.5.5 revealed the lackadaisical attitude of some teachers towards the use of indigenous language during teaching and learning processes. Smith (2017) notes that where there is the right attitude in place, there is the possibility for rapid improvement in learners' performance that could enhance development and sustainability. Hathorn and Dillon (2018) emphasise that right attitudes towards teaching and learning processes positively influence teachers to excel in their work which enhances commitment to change within the community.

6.4.6 Education Reform Programme through EKO EXCEL

The findings in subsection 5.5.6 revealed that there was a dramatic change in the educational system as a result of implementing the EKO EXCEL initiative where teaching and learning processes were ICT-based. However, the participants complained that they had more work as a result of teaching and learning through the use of tablets in the classroom. They added that despite the advantages of the programme, it did not promote the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages as expected. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) point out that the primary assets within the communities have what it takes to be problem-solvers through what they possess in terms of potentials, capacities, skills, resources and assets which can be refined and utilised to manage and solve issues without external intervention.

Drawing from the above, Garven et al. (2016) reiterate that through the adoption of the asset-based

approach everyone has what it takes for the creation of an enabling environment that will facilitate the effective utilisation of resources based on individual and community strength. Therefore, the participants were enthusiastic to exploit their resources/assets to promote cognitive justice in indigenous languages in early childhood care and education for sustainability and development. Furthermore, the findings revealed that some learners struggled with the English language because of their backgrounds, while some were poor in speaking the indigenous language. Van der Westhuizen (2015) notes that the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages involves rethinking purpose, content, and processes of teaching and learning in ways that would accept the English language as well as the indigenous language during teaching and learning processes for the enhancement of daily life. Visvanathan (2009) also maintains that cognitive justice can be considered as the democratic tool to recognise the right of different forms of knowledge to co-exist in harmony with foreign languages and indigenous languages.

Moreover, the participants identified their workload being increased as a result of the use of tablets within limited time for each subject which indirectly affected the use of indigenous languages during the teaching and learning processes in the classroom. Ude, Anyanwu and Osuagwu (2020) concur that indigenous languages are products of indigenous knowledge that build solid foundations on which knowledge systems are rooted to enhance development and sustainability.

6.4.7 Synthesis of the Discussion of Findings

The findings discussed in this section proffer various multi-dimensional strategies that could be employed to facilitate the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The identification and mapping of assets is the first phase of the asset-based approach where every individual and every system is recognised as a unique combination of assets and capabilities for the development and sustainability of the community. Lastly, the study revealed that the effective utilisation of primary assets and potentials during teaching and learning processes promoted emancipation, transformation, and empowerment.

6.5 ENHANCEMENT OF COGNITIVE JUSTICE IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

6.5.1 Considering and Valuing Indigenous Sociocultural Norms

The findings presented in subsection 5.6.1 revealed the primary assets within the community which included socio-cultural norms and values in relation to the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. This also demonstrated that the indigenous language did not work in isolation. Bamgbose (2016) asserts that communities have their own sociocultural norms and values which are reflected in their indigenous language. This is in line with ABA which focuses on positive traits and behaviour of individuals that include human strength, sound nurturing, enriching communities, and exhibiting positive emotions such as joy, happiness, optimism, hope, confidence, and contentment such that the individual is seen as a decision-maker rather than as passive individual within the community. Teachers are assets within the community who could benefit learners if they promote the Yoruba indigenous language.

The findings in subsection 5.6.1 indicated that the Yoruba people cherished culture, and most importantly the value of *Omoluabi* to develop sound character. This is in line with Olanipekun (2017) view that the Yoruba traditional education through *Omoluabi* promotes character-building. Akindele et al. (2020) and Lekan (2017) note that most of the folktales, stories, rhymes, and songs encourage adopting good character traits which also enhances success in academic performance due to the use of the indigenous language during teaching and learning.

Additionally, it was revealed that most of the participants concurred with Majebi and Oduolowu (2017) that learners are channels of transformation through which any society can experience change through imbibing *Omoluabi* principles. Agbowuro et al. (2017) agree that education indeed as the foundation for development politically, economically, culturally, educationally, and technologically to transform a society. Nwagu et al. (2017) note that to a large extent socio-cultural norms and values determine and influence people's way of life. Umar and Yusuf (2019) warn that failure to inculcate *Omoluabi* principles during teaching and learning will not only result in negative behaviour, but also admit the inferiority of the local culture.

6.5.2 Revitalisation of Indigenous Languages

The findings in subsection 5.6.2 point to the need for improved teaching and learning that would immensely benefit learners which can be through revitalising YIL to assist learners in understanding lessons that would enhance successful academic development. Adebite (2021) and Aboh (2017) observe that YIL enhances better understanding of lessons. Ibrokhimovich (2022) and Mangila (2018) state that the indigenous language that is familiar to the learners facilitates better reading, writing, and learning of new concepts during teaching and learning processes which lead to reading faster with understanding. However, the findings in subsection 5.6.2 revealed parents' perspective that learners' academic performance and future could only be enhanced through the use of a foreign language at the foundational phase, but UNESCO (2015) contradicts parents' perspectives and asserts that teaching only in a foreign language in early childhood education is likely to create controversies and cultural boundaries that will expose teaching and learning to many obstacles in the process. Kwao et al. (2021) advise that the best approach at the ECE level is the adoption of a bilingual approach to teaching and learning.

Lastly, the study's findings showed that parents should be enlightened on the importance of equal treatment between the English language and the indigenous language as emphasised by Fogg-Rogers et al. (2015) that the English language and the indigenous language should co-exist. Bishwakarma (2019) observes that since teachers play a crucial part in the grooming of learners to become successful adults in the future, the effective utilisation of resources will to a large extent promote cognitive justice in indigenous language. Ndifon et al. (2020) elaborate on the positive aspect of teachers' professionalism to enhance the implementation of policy through the effective utilisation of resources. Owojecho (2020) states that positive attitudes of parents and teachers towards the indigenous language will alleviate the challenges and promote the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

6.5.3 Collaboration of Primary Assets within the Community

The findings in subsection 5.6.3 indicated that teachers as primary assets within the community could be agents to enhance success through the use of the indigenous language as the language of learning and teaching. Myende (2017) notes that the application of ABA principles in community involvement could be harnessed and utilised for school improvement by engendering positive change within the communities. In addition, Chikoko and Khanare (2012) maintain that the school management team (SMT) and the teachers form a unique combination of assets to provide a better future for all learners. This study found that efforts could be intensified by ensuring that parents are acquainted with rules and regulations that guide the understanding and implementation of the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) forms the pillar of early childhood education in Nigeria.

However, some participants in this study felt that to enable cognitive justice in indigenous languages, the assistance from secondary and outside sources was necessary. This is in line with Kretzman and McKnight (1993) and Myende and Hlalele (2018) view that the needs based-approach is more of a consumer than a producer of solutions where the members of the community see themselves as been incapacitated, deficient, helpless, and powerless. In my view, the full collaboration of parents might be difficult to achieve; however, the teacher possesses potentials for the attainment of desired objectives. Therefore, the ABA approach which consists a series of procedures for building opportunities that will explore people's strength rather than their challenges is suitable for transformation (Bates et al., 2019). Hence, Omodan (2023) and Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2003) note that professionals who are primary assets within the community are resources with potentials that could be harnessed through the bottom-up approach for the benefit of the entire community.

Additionally, the findings revealed that exposing learners to largely a foreign language at home causes a lot of frustration for learners when the learning activities involve an indigenous language in the classroom. Goding and Mabadeje (2021) states that due to educational advancement through the English language, respect for indigenous languages has waned. Hence, most parents prefer their children/wards to communicate only in the foreign language. Oladimeji and Olorunfemi found that there is significance reduction in the number of people who can speak the Yoruba Language fluently without codeswitching to the English Language. Nkonde et al. (2018) warn that communicating with learners/wards at home in a foreign language is a mere disruption of cognitive ability which interrupts the learning processes of the learners.

6.6.4 Promoting Equal Treatment of Languages

The findings in subsection 5.5.4 revealed that there are teachers without pedagogical competence to teach in an indigenous language which negatively impacts learning in the Yoruba indigenous language. This contradicts the ABA principles Myende (2017) that advocate for sustainable initiatives to build opportunities that empower communities to create sustainable livelihoods. Participants reiterated that teachers with pedagogical competence in YIL should collaborate with others to capacitate them to use the indigenous language. Bhatti et al. (2023) emphasise that the asset-based approach as a community development tool is not externally oriented, rather it is community-driven and propelled towards exploiting people's capabilities, gifts, and talents on how the community can be empowered to solve their challenges. The capacity-building needs to be skillfully facilitated so that stakeholders within the community will be encouraged and empowered to harness all their available assets (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Myende & Chikoko, 2014; Oakley, 2002). Myende (2015) advises that school community members must become more engaged with each other in ways that will facilitate relationships and the exchange of information to improve learners' academic performance. Massie et al. (2018) also reveals that exploiting one's skills and potentials gives people a voice within the community.

Additionally, the study's findings indicated that the indigenous language is disappearing from the system especially during the teaching and learning processes in various classrooms. Herman et al. (2020), Ojonugwa and Emah (2020) and Olajoke and Oluwapelumi (2018) concede that the rate of extinction of native people's languages is alarming because the majority of speakers of indigenous languages are old and infirm, and that the younger generations are not influenced through the indigenous language. Although this study revealed that early childhood education learners perform better when taught in the indigenous language, the leaning towards teaching in a foreign language of learning and teaching is pronounced (Gorenflo & Romaine, 2021). Therefore, to avoid the extinction of the indigenous language, the enhancement of cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages must be promoted for the development of early childhood education.

Furthermore, the findings presented in subsection 5.5.4 showed that some teachers are more comfortable and prefer to use the English language during teaching and learning in the classroom, except when teaching the Yoruba indigenous language as a subject. This contradicts the notion that efforts are afoot to discourage hegemony and domination of the Western languages (Al-Daraweesh & Snauwaert, 2017; Keet, 2017; Khoja-Moolji & Society, 2017; Mbembe, 2019; Yang,

2015; Zembylas, 2017). Emeka-Nwobia and Ndimele (2019) claim that the death of a language is attributable to the decision of the community to stop using the indigenous language for some reason. However, this study found that the predominant use of the colonial language is detrimental to indigenous language development within the community. Régulus (2020) highlights that the essence of cognitive justice is to question the hegemony of the foreign language to pave ways for equal treatment of all languages. I think ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages could promote the equal treatment of the English language and the Yoruba indigenous language during teaching and learning processes.

6.6.5 Synthesis of the Discussion on Findings

This key finding emanating from the themes revealed that ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages are possibilities to be explored to promote Yoruba as the medium of instruction in ECE in Lagos State schools. The findings confirmed that teachers are major stakeholders and primary assets of the school. The participants' discussions revealed that the successful promotion and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages yields positive results on teachers, learners and the school community. This study revealed that the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages has the potential to emancipate, transform, and empower learners and teachers to engender positive change in communities.

6.6 CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study revealed adverse elements concerning ECE teachers' understanding, of implementing an indigenous language as the language of teaching and learning. This suggests the need to adopt an approach that promotes understanding within the school-community on the enhancement of cognitive justice regarding the promotion of indigenous languages. In addition, the need for multi-dimensional

strategies of promoting cognitive justice in indigenous languages should be intensified. The participants' responses that indicated that once cognitive justice is enhanced, learners will develop a commitment to participation, a sense of belonging, high motivational levels to learn, and the creation of an atmosphere conducive to facilitate interesting learning activities. Furthermore, the

findings of this study revealed community-commitment towards instilling confidence in the people by activating resources available within the community. However, it was reported that learners experienced various challenges (e.g., lack of resources, teacher-attitudes, time restrictions etc.) in the classroom which hindered the enhancement of CJ in IL.

Moreover, the study identified a high level of marginalisation of learners who speak in an indigenous language which is referred to as a ‘vernacular’. Teachers as primary assets within the community advocate for the coexistence between the indigenous language and the foreign language. Also, it was revealed that there is need for Government intervention to make necessary adjustments to the EKO EXCEL programme where time allotted for each subject could be increased to accommodate the use of the indigenous language alongside the foreign language during to teaching and learning process so that teachers could easily utilise their potentials effectively.

Importantly, when questioning why ECE teachers’ enable cognitive justice in indigenous languages in a certain way, several dynamic strategies emerged from the participants. These could be applied to promote the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The findings led to considering the indigenous sociocultural norms of the of the community that could promote modern pedagogical and technical skills in early childhood and primary education as they tremendously improve learning outcomes and the development of professional competencies for the effective management of the teaching-learning process. Also, by adopting ABA as the theoretical framework for this study, assisted in revealing people’s hidden potentials which could be utilised to revive the indigenous language, and promote the equal treatment of the foreign language.

6.7 CHAPTER SYNTHESIS

The chapter presented the findings that emanated from the discussions of the participants’ which were thematically analysed as raw data in conjunction with the literature that was reviewed. The findings were revealed in relation to the theoretical framework (ABA) which was adopted for this study. Similarly, findings that emerged from the situational analysis with a view to explore ECE teachers’ understanding of cognitive justice within indigenous languages, were discussed. The

participants also suggested multi-dimensional strategies of enhancing cognitive justice in indigenous languages by supporting the reclaiming of the Yoruba language, strengthening collaborations, and agitating for the reform of the EKO EXCEL programme. Also, considering and valuing the indigenous socio-cultural norms of the community to revitalise the indigenous language, resulted in better academic performance. The next chapter (7) discusses the proposed framework on ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter (6), I discussed the study's findings in relation to the literature reviewed, this chapter summarised the findings, outlined the contribution of the research to new knowledge, explained the implications for further research, proposed of a framework on ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages, listed recommendations, and lastly stated the conclusion to the study.

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The findings revealed negative perceptions regarding ECE teachers' understanding of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The findings which pointed to a variety of understandings emerged from participants' collage construction and focus group discussions. In addition, the results revealed numerous challenges confronting the use of indigenous languages, especially the Yoruba indigenous language as a medium of instruction within the school-community. The oppression of indigenous languages, marginalisation of cultural heritage, and negative perceptions of parents and teachers obstruct the promotion of indigenous languages in the teaching and learning processes in the classroom.

Additionally, it was found that the majority of participants experienced the absence of critical fairness that threatened the equal treatment between the foreign language and the indigenous language as most of the textbooks for teaching and learning were written in English which affected the promotion of a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning. The responses also indicated that some learners found lessons difficult to comprehend as there were insufficient books for learners to engage with at the foundational level. Moreover, the results also revealed the absence of cognitive justice as foreign stories and folktales dominated classroom activities instead of the richer and interesting Yoruba indigenous stories.

Furthermore, it was revealed that good relationships exist between teachers and learners through the promotion of cognitive justice in indigenous languages, but this could not be quantified. Also,

it was found that the Yoruba language was used occasionally via translations to explain difficult concepts and terms during classroom instruction. Lamentably, the results also pointed to a disconnection between policy formulation and implementation which revealed the lack of monitoring and supervision in ECE classrooms.

7.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study indicated that the primary assets within the community were endowed with potentials that could be effectively utilised for the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. They've transpired various understandings on the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages by ECE teachers who had diverse views, perceptions, knowledge, ideas, experiences, values, and identities – all affected the interpretation of cognitive justice and its applications. The inheritance of people includes their native language acquisition, and when it is marginalised, it would affect academic performance, traditions, norms and values of the society, beliefs, and their way of life; but when learners are exposed to the indigenous language at the foundational level as medium of instruction in the classroom, the development of such learners is enhanced in all ramifications.

Therefore, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge as it was observed that most studies dwelt on the importance or impact of indigenous languages at early childhood and primary school levels. However, little was researched in the Lagos State of Nigeria about how ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages promote the quality of teaching and learning processes. This study focused on primary assets' strengths, gifts, and potentials to empower communities to become liberated from oppression, especially learners who are marginalised by the use of a foreign language in lessons. Lastly, this study contributes to the pool of knowledge that promotes the enhancement of ECE in Lagos State (Nigeria) by applying cognitive justice to institute equality and fairness for indigenous languages in early childhood education.

7.4 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The asset-based approach which framed this study provided insight into the numerous advantages of indigenous languages. It further advances that individuals within communities have the ability to find solutions to the challenges confronting them by creating opportunities to solve issues rather than dwelling on particular problems. This led to indigenous communities preferring to utilise their skills and experiences for the development and sustainability of their own community rather than depending on outside assistance.

Furthermore, this study aligns with research conducted by the following scholars: Massie, Machin, McCormack, and Kurth (2018); Rippon and South (2017); Hlalele (2012); Chikoko and Khanare (2012); Chidakwa and Hlalele (2021); Khanare et al. (2019); Myende (2015); Myende and Chikoko (2014); Kretzmann and McKnight (1993); Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006); Flores and Kyere (2020); Epstein et al. (2018); Briggs and Huang (2017); Hornby-Turner, Peel, and Hubbard (2017); Whiting et al., Maynes, (2012); Ebersöhn, Loots, Eloff, and Ferreira (2015) Emery and Flora (2006); Braithwaite et al. (2009); Foot and Hopkins (2010); Massie, Machin, McCormack, and Kurth (2018); Myende and Hlalele (2018); Pretorius and Nel (2012); Foot and Hopkins (2010); Kretzmann and McKnight (1996); Kivunja (2018); Agovino, Cerciello, and Musella (2019); Shava & Manyike (2018); Flores and Kyere (2020); Ferreira (2013); Nel (2015); and Taliep et al. (2020).

I noted that all the above scholars selected ABA to conduct meaningful research on a different phenomenon and context. Moreover, this study provided a clear picture on how ABA can be utilised effectively through the exploration of primary assets' strengths by empowering individuals to decide their future and that of their communities to promote sustainable development through ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

In addition, ABA unearths the voices of the people through association, passions, and interests related to indigenous traditions that can enhance transformation within communities based on available resources to improve society's wellbeing. I am of the opinion that good relationships and neighborliness might also be a contributing factor to gain freedom from hegemony and marginalisation. To this end, the ABA also facilitates the creation of an enabling conducive environment that facilitates the effective utilisation of resources based on individual and community strengths.

7.5 CONTRIBUTION OF METHODOLOGY

The selected methodology was critical in guiding the research processes, while validity and trustworthiness strengthened the authenticity of the study's findings. This study's qualitative research approach facilitated the collection of information from the participants and allowed them to freely address the issues that militated against the enhancement of cognitive justice concerning indigenous languages. Hence, I was able to access firsthand information from participants during the data generation processes.

Additionally, the research design that was selected for the study entailed action research (AR) because it enhanced participants' consciousness of their capabilities, commitment, critical reflections, and practice to promote positive change. In other words, the use of AR provided participants with opportunities to reflect and address issues of marginalisation, injustice, oppression, and hegemony within the system. The research team was fully involved in their own settings to empower themselves and improve their own personal practice towards positive transformation. As such, AR aimed at emancipating those who were marginalised by the non-adherence to educational policy in ECE settings.

Lastly, the contribution of this study's methodology lies in its appropriate research processes that ensured that the participants (primary assets) were fully involved as drivers of ECE education who assisted the data generation processes through research instruments such as collages and focus group discussions.

7.6 CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

This study contributed positively to ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages by proving the significance of indigenous languages. Since the indigenous language is the strongest and most reliable means through which learners can imbibe cultural heritage, pride, norms, and self-actualisation, this led to collaborations between learners, parents, and teachers within the community. The learners benefited immensely from the teachers' latent potentials which were discovered through applying ABA principles. This study encouraged

individuals, families, and communities to develop problem-solving skills as assets to solve problematic issues in the community without external intervention.

In addition, through community asset-mapping the utilisation of resources was judiciously managed. Several studies, including that of Loots et al. (2012), advocated for the building of a strong relationship between the school and the community - this was accomplished through community asset-mapping processes which commenced with awareness-creation where participants' potentials within the community were identified as an available resource that could be tapped and mobilised. This study envisaged encouraging stakeholders to identify potentials embedded in the community to assist them to solve community problems by applying their strengths and latent talents.

7.7 CRITICAL EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH: REFLECTING ON ITS RELEVANCE

For the atmosphere to be conducive for teaching and learning processes in a school-community, research should embrace a 'revolutionary stance' towards eradicating marginalisation, oppression, disempowerment, and hegemony to promote indigenous languages by establishing and implementing interventions to engender transformation, community development, and the sustainability of the entire community. Accordingly, critical emancipatory research (CER) has techniques to transform and empower through the effective utilisation of primary assets within the school-community. Therefore, CER leads to discovering solutions to challenges through critical consciousness and knowledge acquisition. The adoption of CER assists in dissecting ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice to solve social justice and political economy issues (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

In addition, Le Roux (2017) maintains that the critical emancipatory research paradigm uncovers hidden truths within a particular subject. As such, CER tackles freedom from oppression and deliverance from intellectual fetters (Chalmers, 2017). Cram and Martens (2016) concur that CER promotes fundamental human rights to address issues of human oppression to accelerate social

change that will benefit those who want to promote the cultural norms and values of their communities. The application of CER for this study contributed immensely to epistemology which assisted in the flow of interaction between the participants and the main researcher during data generation processes which entailed collages and focus group discussions.

7.8 PLANNING THE PROGRAMME

The pivotal role of an action plan in preparation for an AR study cannot be overemphasised. This is influenced by factors related to cognitive justice and indigenous languages. Alosani and Yusoff (2019) state that planning is one of the significant processes that determines the quality of performance. Planning can promote (or disturb) the attainment of the desired aim and objectives of a study. Therefore, innovation and planning are considered as the most important drivers that enhance the overall performance of individuals (Nel, 2015; Thomas & Albright, 2018). Similarly, Massie et al. (2018) are of the view that the utilisation of existing skills and experiences of stakeholders gives them a voice to agitate for the improvement and sustainable development of the community through collaboration, planning, implementation, and evaluation. I concur with Korstjens and Moser (2018) that to keep the vision of a study on track, the planning processes are crucial to develop trustworthiness through adhering to principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability for the production of reliable and verifiable results.

7.9 EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME

The evaluation of a programme determines its effectiveness through monitoring and assessing all the activities that were implemented. If the implementation process of the study was not well designed, then participant-cohesion and interest would decrease, and participants may absent themselves from subsequent data generation processes. Similarly, Crespi-Abril and Rubilar (2021) state that participants' interest and wellbeing should be of paramount importance to the researcher during research processes.

Further, Hathorn and Dillon (2018) maintain that conducting AR enhances deep commitment, critical reflection, and action in teaching and learning which promotes ample opportunities for teachers to develop confidence to proffer solutions to problems confronted in the classroom environment. This study found that learners were marginalised and oppressed during teaching and learning in the classroom as a result of injustices and inequalities regarding the absence of indigenous languages in teaching-learning processes. The findings also revealed that most of the subjects were taught in the foreign language, which was compounded by the gross shortage of indigenous language textbooks. Clearly, the indigenous language was sidelined in favour of the foreign language. The survival of the people's traditions and culture is rooted in language. Hence, indigenous languages play a crucial communicative role in promoting culture, knowledge, wisdom, and norms and values of the communities (Shava & Manyike, 2018).

7.10 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this research study led to various implications for teaching and learning processes in ECE:

- ❖ Cognitive justice in indigenous languages should be allowed to prevail to challenge the marginalisation and oppression of mother-tongue instruction at the preschool level.
- ❖ The Federal and State Ministries of Education should monitor and ensure that all schools comply with the directive to teach in the language of the immediate environment as stated in the NPE. Also, the indigenous language should not be referred to as 'the vernacular', and no teacher/school should place a ban on the use of indigenous languages by learners in and outside the classroom.
- ❖ The primary assets within the community should be seen as highly skilled professionals and knowledge-producers capable of effectively utilising their potentials, innate abilities, skills, and resources to be in control of their affairs without external intervention.
- ❖ There is the need to promote interactive programmes in the indigenous language for some of the subjects in the classroom to improve the academic performance of learners.
- ❖ Teachers and parents must collaborate to function as efficient team members by encouraging the use of the indigenous language in their homes. Parents can also encourage the screening of cartoon videos/YouTube clips and storybooks in the indigenous language to develop a love for the Yoruba language.

- ❖ For teachers to be more innovative in the delivery of lessons, the new mode of delivering the curriculum through EKO EXCEL should accommodate the use of indigenous languages during teaching and learning in the classroom for all the subjects to ensure that no learner is left behind.
- ❖ The Yoruba tradition advocates *Omoluabi* (character-building) through communicating in the indigenous language; hence, teachers should re-introduce *Omoluabi* to learners.
- ❖ Teachers as primary assets within the community should be afforded opportunities to utilise their latent potentials to ensure equal treatment and justice between the foreign language and the indigenous language.
- ❖ Government needs to train teachers (pre- and in-service) to understand the significance of early years' education and to increase their pedagogical competence in the indigenous language.

7.11 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- ❖ Since this research study was small scale in nature as it focused on one pre-primary school in the Ojo Local Government area of Lagos State in Nigeria, further studies should be conducted in other local government areas to focus on more than one school to extensively explore ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages in different contexts.
- ❖ This qualitative research adopted AR as the research design for data generation involving picture collages and focus group discussions. Future research could focus on quantitative or mixed methods to widen the scope of the study.

7.12 CHAPTER SYNTHESIS

This chapter summarised the study's findings and explained its contribution to theory, methodology and practice. It restated the framework that underpinned ECE teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages. The chapter also included the implications of the findings, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

7.13 CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY

This study viewed early childhood education teachers as assets and critical agents involved in the process of identifying challenges and opportunities in building schools and communities from inside-out through empowerment processes by enhancing cognitive justice involving indigenous languages. The critical role of teachers in the transformation process to mitigate the marginalisation of indigenous languages is paramount to enhance the academic performance of learners at the foundational level (ECE) of education. Despite many challenges confronting teachers, the desire to advance indigenous languages in pre- and primary levels of education was evident in their responses during the FGDs and collage constructions. The AR methodology and critical analysis approach facilitated the understanding of teachers' perceptions of the importance of indigenous languages in ECE. This study envisages that all stakeholders realise the critical importance of promoting indigenous languages so as not to lose cultural values and heritage which will give foreign languages a firmer foothold in oppressing local communities.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



04 April 2022

Solomon Taiwo Adebesein
(219095425) School of
Education
Edgewood

Campus

Dear ST
Adebesein,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003960/2022

Project title: Early Childhood Education Teachers Understanding
and Enhancement of Cognitive Justice in Indigenous Languages

Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 15 March 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e.

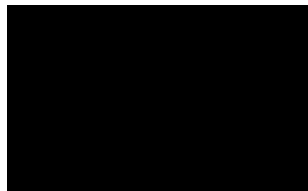
Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 04 April 2023.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines. HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

APPENDIX 2

APPROVAL LETTER FROM STATE UNNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION



LAGOS STATE GOVERNMENT


30th November, 2020

Mr. Adebessin Solomon Taiwo,
University of KwaZulu – Natal Edgewood Campus,
South Africa.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS

I am directed to refer to your application dated 30th October, 2020 on the above subject matter and to inform you that the Executive Chairman Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board has approved the conduct of your research entitled: "Enabling cognitive justice in indigenous languages' A case of early childhood education teachers in Nigeria' in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State.

2. In the light of the above, I am to inform you to meet with the Education Secretary of Ojo Local Government Area.
3. Kindly note that you are to submit both the Soft and Hard copy of your findings and recommendation at the end of the exercise to Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board.
4. Grateful, please.


Sareed .O. IbiKunle, Ph.D
For: Executive Chairman

STATE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION BOARD (SUBEB)

Maryland Schools Complex, Maryland. P.M.B. 21676, Ikeja Tel: 08150680907
E-mail: basiceducation@lagossubeb.gov.ng, basiceducation.subeb@gmail.com, lasubebbasic@yahoo.com Website: www.lagossubeb.gov.ng

APPROVAL LETTER FROM STATE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION,
LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION AUTHORITY



LAGOS STATE GOVERNMENT
STATE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION BOARD
LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION AUTHORITY, OJO

All correspondence to be addressed to:
The Education Secretary




Address: Defunct N.R.C. Building,
Pako Bus Stop, Okokomaiko, Ojo-Lagos.

23rd November, 2020.

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

This is to introduce the bearer (**ADEBESIN SOLOMON TAIWO**) a PhD student from University of Kwazulu – Natal Edgewood Campus, South Africa to conduct his research thesis in your school and any other assistance within the coffers of your authority.

Thanks.


ABIOLA KOLAWOLE ESROM (MR)
Education Secretary

OJO LGEA - LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

APPROVAL LETTER FROM ANGLICAN NURSERY & PRIMARY SCHOOL



**LAGOS STATE GOVERNMENT
STATE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION BOARD
ANGLICAN NURSERY & PRIMARY SCHOOL 1, OTO/IJANKIN**
MOTTO: UNITED WE STAND
OJO LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION AUTHORITY
KM 28, Badagry Expressway, Oto Ijanikin, Lagos State.



Our Ref: _____ Your Ref: _____ Date: _____

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Reference to your letter dated 23rd of November, 2020

You are thereby permitted to conduct your research in the above named school.



INFORMED CONSENT

School of Education
College of Humanities
University of Kwazulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus
South Africa

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Adebessin Solomon Taiwo, a PHD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus, South Africa.

I would like to conduct my research study at your school. *The title of my study is: Early childhood teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.*

The aim of this study is to explore early childhood education teacher's understanding of cognitive justice within indigenous languages. Information will be gathered on this topic through collage construction and focus group discussions which would be of one hour duration.

Please note that your participation will contribute immensely to this study. The following privacy and confidentiality processes will be instituted:

1. A pseudonym/code will be used instead of your real school's name.
2. Participants' inputs will be safeguarded and protected via anonymity principles.
3. Any information given by participants will not prejudice them in any way.
4. Data will be stored securely, and destroyed after 5 years.
5. If you wish to exit from the research process at any stage, you may do so without being penalised in any way.
6. Through member-checking, you will be able to verify if all the information you presented; and if there are anomalies, these will be attended to for correction.

7. Your involvement will be purely for academic purposes, and there is no financial benefit.

If you are willing to be involved in the collage and focus group discussion (FGD), please indicate by ticking your option, including whether you would permit meetings to be video- and/or audio-recorded:

Tools	Willing	Not willing
Voice Recorder		
Video Recorder		
Collage and FGD		

Declaration by participant

1. I fully understand the nature and purpose of the research study.
2. I give full voluntary consent (signed) to participate research study in the without any coercion.
3. I fully understand the implications and risks of participating in this research study.
4. I hereby give permission for the use of information obtained during the study for academic publications.

Full names:

Signature

Date:

Thank you in anticipation

Adebesin Solomon Taiwo (researcher)

Email: adebesintawios@gmail.com

Cell: +2347040710509

Supervisor:

Professor D. J. Hlalele

University of KwaZulu-Natal

U-2265 CS102 Main Tutorial Building

Edgewood Campus

Richmond Road

Durban

3605

Cell: +2731 2603858

Email: HlaleleD@ukzn.ac.za

Contact details of HSSREC:

Email: **HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za**.

Tel: 27 31 2604557.

APPENDIX 6

SCHEDULE: DATA GENERATION PROCESS - COLLAGE SESSIONS

DATA GENERATION PLAN

RESEARCH QUESTION: TO EXPLORE ECE TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF COGNITIVE JUSTICE REGARDING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

In this first phase of AR, the collage instrument for data generation will be used.

The data generation process of AR comprises of four phases: planning, action, observation and reflection.

PLANNING PHASE (1)

STEP 1

The first session involves the **planning** phase of Action Research (AR), which concerns the researcher and co-researcher's preparation for data generation. During the planning phase of action research, assets within the community will be identified firstly, within three primary tiers that are accessible within the community; they include teachers, infrastructures, and learners. Secondary tiers, located within organisations are found in the school-community but not influenced by the school. Outside tiers located outside the community include non-governmental organisations and private businesses. The researcher will embark on asset-mapping to uncover the assets of the community while highlighting the interconnectedness among community members which could possibly expose their latent talents, assets, strengths, and potentials within the community to promote critical elements of cognitive justice.

STEP 2

The planning phase encompasses activities where the participants collaborate to design their performance objectives. Therefore, the researcher will invite an expert in the field of higher education as a co-researcher to facilitate a workshop for the participants to educate them on the research topic and to dwell on the concept of cognitive justice to inform the participants to identify and understand the challenges they are facing, in addition to explaining the collage technique.

Further, the researcher will also invite another seasoned researcher to facilitate a workshop on Action Research, especially on what is expected of participants during its four phases.

ACTION PHASE (2)

ASSET-MOBILISATION

The instruments of collage construction and focus group discussions will be utilised to explore early childhood teachers' understanding of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

STEP 1

This second phase corresponds to the second phase of AR, which is **ACTION**. As such, the identification of assets is followed by action which entails building the capacity of the community. This phase could increase the efficiency of the asset-based approach (ABA) because individuals share their identified assets to mobilise operations during this process. I will, therefore, guide the co-researchers to become more organised and committed in sharing knowledge, resources, and identifying common challenges. In addition, during this phase the effective utilisation of information generated through asset-mapping will enhance the process of asset-mobilisation, I will also guide and allow the participants to facilitate the utilisation of potential assets that might have been overlooked or not exploited to their full potential.

- During this action phase participants will form two groups with three participants each group who will be provided with collage materials (A3 paper, scissors, magazines, newspapers, small paint brushes, coloured pencils, glue sticks, and markers). This session will be of thirty minutes duration. The participants will work as a team to share experiences and ideas to solving a particular problem. I will motivate the two collage groups to be fully involved in the construction of a collage to facilitate the understanding of cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages.
- Since the key components of AR are collaboration and participation, effective discussion flows during data generation through collage-construction. I will ensure that I reduce the

distance between the researcher and co-researchers so that through engagement participants will develop confidence and thus improve their own skills to influence the process of transformation.

- Collage-construction will facilitate active participation in the data generation process as collaboration among groups of people leads to better brainstorming of ideas while building new connections. This will be done among groups without any interference, such that they freely voice their opinions which were oppressed and marginalised in the past.

OBSERVATION PHASE (3)

SHARING COLLAGES

This third session corresponds to the third phase of AR, which leads co-researchers to **observe** elements that influence the enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages in early childhood education. The research instruments are collage construction and focus group discussions.

- This session will be of thirty-minute duration which entails the observation phase of AR, involving the creation of the collage. In this session clues will be provided to participants to enable them to skillfully construct their collage activity. These prompts will inspire them to create a collage by using their understanding of CJ within IL by showing the:
 - (i) Oppression of indigenous languages during teaching and learning processes.
 - (ii) Threats to the enhancement CJ in IL during EKO EXCEL (Excellence in Learner Education and Learning).
 - (iii) Promotion of culture, norms, and values of the community to promote a positive or negative mentality.
 - (iv) Collaboration among teachers and learners during teaching and learning processes through communicating via indigenous languages.
 - (v) Injustice of entrenching a foreign language as opposed to an indigenous language.

The co-researchers are allowed to collaborate among themselves without any interference from the main researcher and facilitators. This ensures the effective utilisation of assets to construct creative collages such that the participants observe themselves through this activity. This session will also be audio-recorded with the consent of participants.

- In addition, I will ask participants to think deeply and critically on the enhancement of CJ within IL. The groups will be requested to explain meanings inherent in their collages to other the group/participants since AR involves research personally conducted by the

participants in their own settings in order to empower and improve their own practice. In this regard, each group will be allocated ten minutes to present their collage, after which questions will be asked by the other group members because AR is activity-oriented. Presenting aspects of collage interpretations will promote discussions to supplement data from FGDs.

- The focus of this session is empowerment. Participants will be given freedom to express their views, in line with the notion of enhancing of CJ within IL. During this session, I will observe the level of their empowerment as they voice their experiences within ECE settings.

REFLECTION PHASE (4)

REFLECTING ON THE ACTION RESEARCH (AR) PROCESS

This session involves the fourth phase of **AR** involving collage and focus group discussions. The main aim of adopting AR was to improve the understanding and knowledge of practice through reflection. Since AR allows participants to **reflect** on their discoveries concerning their experiences, knowledge, and understanding through their construction of collages, the promotion of cognitive justice is accelerated through empowerment which leads to emancipation. In this last phase of AR, participants will be requested to involve themselves in reflective writing concerning their participation in the collage session.

- Participants will embark on the two types of reflection - written and verbal.
- Each group in this session will be allocated ten minutes for discussion and the free writing activity to reflect on their participation in the collage sessions from the workshop, planning phase, action phase and the observation phase. I will ask them to write down their views about their participation in this session. I will also emphasize that the participants should be as honest as possible on how they felt when engaging in the construction of collages. Because reflection could be utilised for learning, teachers will be able to determine the level of transformation and empowerment through asset mobilisation. This is one of the crucial phases of the AR; hence, there will not be any prompting from the researcher and facilitators.
- The purpose of AR is to improve participants' competence at school.

- There might be the need for re-reflection and re-mobilisation of assets through a cycle of action-based tasks after the reflection of the anticipated transformation emanating from their experiences, knowledge, and understanding of issues investigated through collage construction and focus group discussions.
- Importantly, AR in this last phase, involves ensuring equality and social justice because these are unbiased critical elements of cognitive justice that consider ideology, perceptions, and feelings of groups or individuals. Hence, I will ensure all the participants are committed to reflect on their work and evaluate the effectiveness of their practice to improve their teaching.
- Lastly, the participants will be expected to commit to data generation processes which would be repeated if no meaningful transformation is evident since critical cognitive justice is about ongoing research, reflection, and evaluation.

APPENDIX 7

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION SCHEDULE DATA GENERATION PLAN

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) SCHEDULE

You are invited to participate in this study which explores early childhood education teachers' understanding and enhancement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.

I acknowledge that some participants may have insufficient understanding of cognitive justice and indigenous languages. However, in order to facilitate co-researchers' participation in discussions to answer the research questions, I will conduct a workshop for them on the relevant concepts related to the topic in order to elicit deeper understandings from the discussions. I will inform the participants that their participation in the focus group discussion is purely voluntary and that are free not to answer any questions that they feel uncomfortable with, or to withdraw from participation at any time. Since data generation will lead to also assessing the sustainability of the community, it will be based on the four phases of AR (planning, action, observation, and reflection).

Introduction by facilitator

- I will introduce myself to the participants.
- Asset-mapping will identify latent potentials of participants.

Introduction of the participants

- I will request participants to introduce themselves.

QUESTIONS TO PROMPT DATA GENERATION DISCUSSIONS

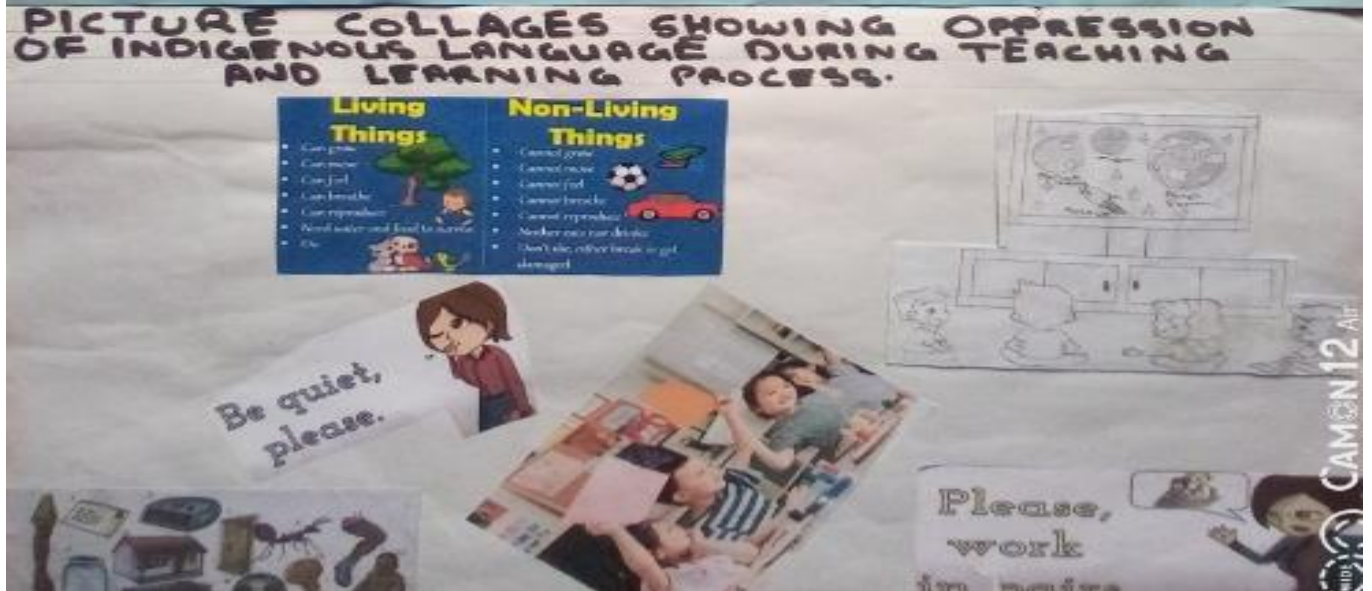
The following questions during the four phases of AR will guide the discussion:

	QUESTIONS
1.	Drawing from your years of experience as a specialist in early childhood education, please share your impressions on your understanding of cognitive justice concerning indigenous languages.
2.	Learning in early childhood education is fun involving various activities for learners. From your experience as a teacher in early childhood elucidation, please share your views on the programme for learners that support the enablement of cognitive justice in indigenous languages.
3.	National Policy on Education emphasises that the language of the immediate environment should be used in ECE. With this in mind, how do you think you can promote cognitive justice in indigenous languages?
4.	Teachers are critical agents in the educational system as they strive for positive change within the school system. Drawing from your experience, please indicate how you will circumvent the challenge of the Yoruba indigenous language going into extinction.
5.	The EKO EXCEL initiative of the Government to improve the educational system in Lagos State is laudable. Please share how your skills, capabilities, and potentials could be utilised to enhance CJ in IL.
6.	<i>Omoluabi</i> describes an individual within a society who is cultured, morally upright, intelligent, of sound mind, honest, and refined. Drawing from your experience, please share how you will ingrain these qualities in learners at the foundational level through the enhancement of CJ in IL.
7.	Successful teaching and learning in early childhood education is through language. How do you think CJ in IL could be affected during teaching and learning processes?

8.	The attitudes of teachers and parents of learners towards indigenous languages have a great influence on teaching and learning processes. Drawing from your experience in early childhood education, how do you think the enhancement of CJ in IL will engender positive change?
9.	Since the strength of an educational system is rooted at the early childhood level, please share your interpretation of this statement, and state how the teacher's role in the enhancement of CJ in IL can be of benefit to learners.
10	It is stated that improvement in the performance of learners is a product of investment and enhancement in the quality of teachers. Please share your views concerning teachers' support (or lack of it) regarding cognitive justice in indigenous languages.
	Lastly, I will ask for reflections. I will give the participants ten minutes for free-writing activities to reflect on their participation in the Discussion Meeting (DM) session. I will probe for a deeper understanding about their participation during the session. I will also encourage them to write honest reports to determine if there will be the need for the re-planning of a cycle of action.

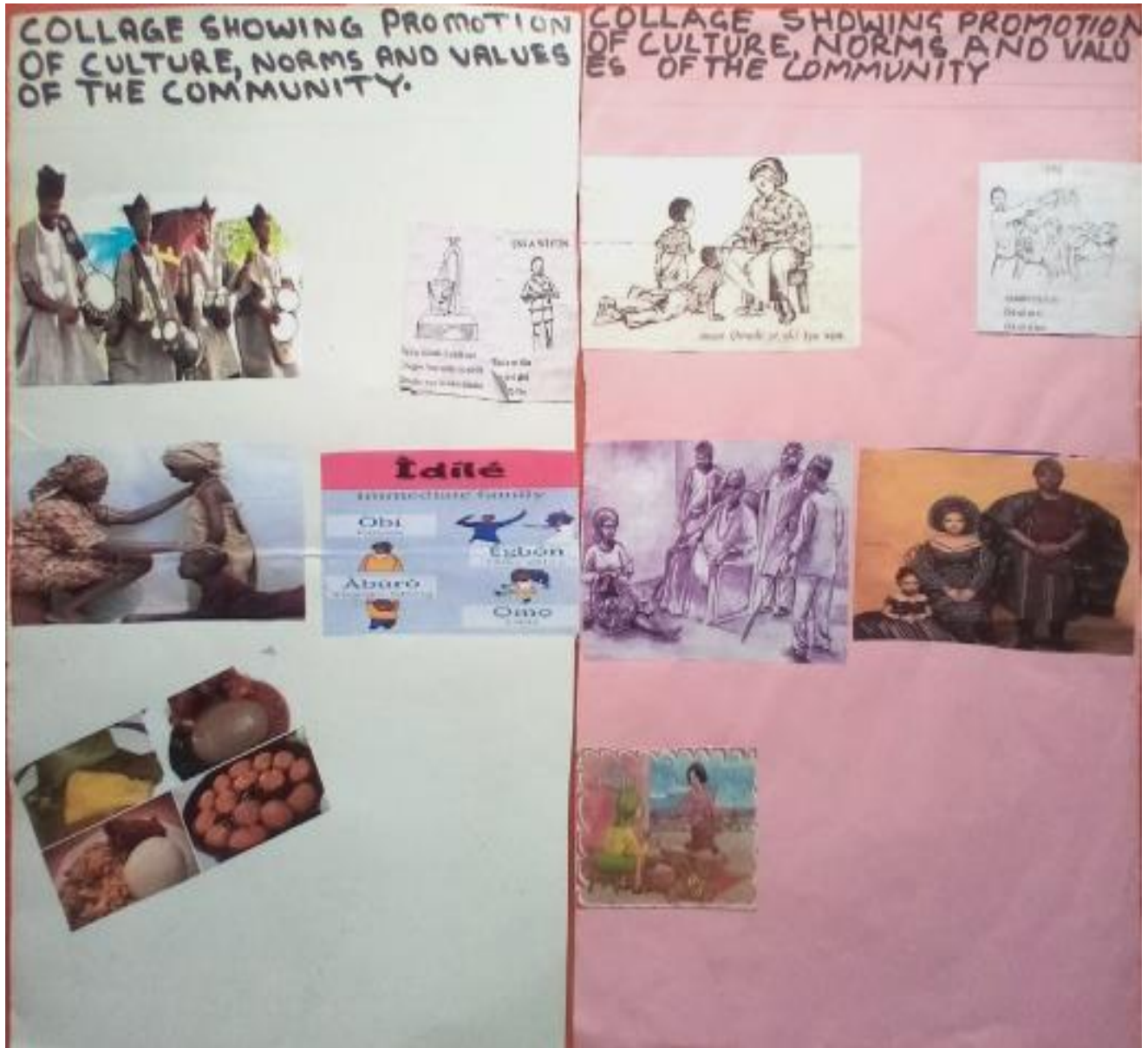
APPENDIX 8

SHOWING OPPRESSION OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES DURING TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS



APPENDIX 9

COLLAGE SHOWING PROMOTION OF CULTURE, NORMS, AND VALUES OF THE COMMUNITY

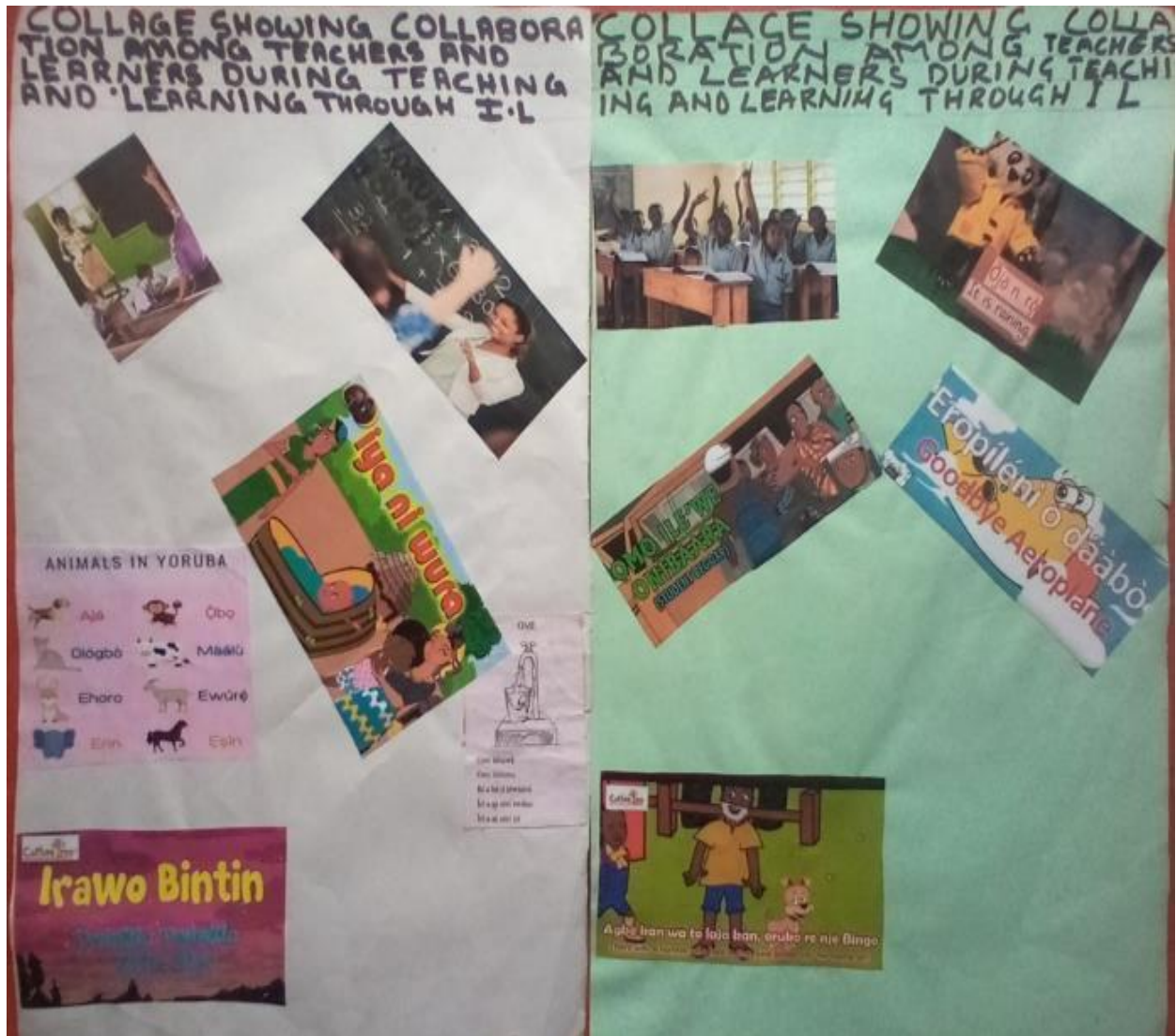


APPENDIX 10

COLLAGE SHOWING THREATS TO THE ENHANCEMENT OF CJ IN IL DURING EKO EXCEL



COLLAGE SHOWING COLLABORATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND LEARNERS



COLLAGE SHOWING INJUSTICE BETWEEN THE TREATMENT OF FOREIGN AND THE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE



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UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

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