E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (EHASS)
ISSN – Online 2720-7722 | Print 2821-8949
Volume 7 Issue 9 2026 pp 2728 - 2745
Available online at: https://noyam.org/journals/ehass/
DOI: https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20267918

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Yorùbá folktales, oral storytelling and the decolonial imperatives for children's education in Africa

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the cognitive, cultural, and decolonial significance of traditional Yorùbá folktales. It establishes Yorùbá folktales as a vital component of African oral storytelling, capable of informing the development of Afrocentric educational frameworks for children. Although academic discourse acknowledges these educational and social deficits, there remains a critical research gap regarding how traditional oral narratives can be systematically operationalised within educational policy and practice. Using a conceptual review and qualitative approach, this research highlights the decline of African oral traditions and links this phenomenon to contemporary challenges faced by African youth, including identity crises, social fragmentation, ethical erosion, and cognitive dissonance. It posits that the primary drivers of this cultural attrition are the coloniality of the African educational system, the pervasive influence of modern media, and the hegemony of written literature. The study acknowledges the utility of "Secondary Orality" and digital storytelling in fostering engagement with these traditions and uses secondary data to analyse the structural paradigms of Yorùbá folktales. Overall, the research advocates the cultural reappropriation of digital storytelling, proposing a pedagogical model in which primary oral storytelling is used alongside digital formats. It concludes that integrating oral storytelling into classroom curricula is essential to actualise Afrocentric education and dismantle the lingering effects of educational coloniality.

Keywords: African Oral Storytelling, Afrocentric Education, Children, Pedagogy, Yorùbá Folktales

INTRODUCTION

Far transcending entertainment, African oral storytelling serves critical communal and social objectives. For centuries, orality dominated continental communication because it uniquely advanced community cohesion compared to regional written traditions (such as Ge'ez/Amharic in Ethiopia or Hausa/Arabic in northern Nigeria), cave paintings, or material culture. In East Africa, this communal utility is evident in Swahili storytelling traditions, which combine African, Arab, and Persian influences in adventure, romance, and moral instruction. This heritage includes oral and written narratives, as Utendi wa Tambuka exemplifies.[1] Nonetheless, attesting to the dominance of oral tradition and the broader social benefits of storytelling in Africa, and in the specific context of the Igbo, Àjàyí and Iwuagwu argue that

[1] M. Yassin, "The Ancient Art of Storytelling in Africa: Tracing the Origins and Evolution," 2024.

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PUBLICATION HISTORY - Received: 25th April, 2026 | Accepted: 19th August, 2026 | Published: 29th October, 2026.
TO CITE THIS ARTICLE – Mba, Chika C., and Ănuolúwapọ̀ Adéwùnmí Adétọ̀míwá. "Yorùbá folktales, oral storytelling and the decolonial imperatives for children's education in Africa." *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 7, no.9 (2026): 2728 - 2745. https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20267918
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"the foundation of all Igbo literature is the Igbo oral tradition (folktale) now called oral performance." Other scholars argue that Igbo folktales, known as *Ifo* Igbo, serve as practical, informal educational tools for moral development, cultural transmission, and the enhancement of children's cognitive skills.[2] Among the Yorùbá and the Zulu, oral praise poetry, such as *oríkì* and *izibongo*, incorporates artistic performance and cognitive training.[3] The San people of Southern Africa have a rich tradition of oral storytelling, including myths, legends, and folktales. These stories often feature wildlife, animals, and natural elements, reflecting the San's deep connection to their environment. San folktales impart knowledge about survival, social values, and the natural world. Performed through a multisensory combination of songs, dance, and recitations, Luba epic narratives recount legendary heroism and kingdom history to instil a lasting sense of identity and cultural continuity.[4] In all, African oral storytelling serves five core transgenerational functions: cultural preservation, moral education, social cohesion, cognitive development, and spiritual connection.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars agree that traditional African oral storytelling frequently occurs in communal settings—such as around a fire, under the moonlight, or at home before supper—where gathering to listen, discuss, and reflect reinforces social ties and deepens a sense of communal belonging.[5] The metaphorical and allegorical nature of African stories encourages thoughtful engagement, provoking deeper reflection and critical discussion while developing problem-solving and memory skills. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o sees African storytelling as "the tradition of group reception of art that enhances the aesthetic pleasure and provokes interpretation, comments and discussions."[6] This form of art is deeply rooted in oral traditions, in which stories are sometimes conveyed through performance, music, dance, and visual art.[7] In this sense, this work defines African oral storytelling as a performative art that conveys knowledge and tradition through voice and gesture, serving as a custodian of cultural heritage and as a moral, educational, and social medium that preserves history, transmits values, and strengthens community bonds. Therefore, diverse African storytelling traditions share a commitment to cultural preservation and *intergenerational education*.

In the last analysis, rather than a single uniform style, African storytelling is unified by a "culture of orality" that blends spoken word, performance, music, and social interaction. These forms often serve as powerful media for social critique, using allegory and metaphor to address societal issues and challenge authority, especially where direct criticism is dangerous.[8] For instance, masquerades in oral storytelling and performance expose the misdeeds of influential figures without fear of retribution. A poignant example is the story of Ọba Jáyin in the old Ọ̀yọ́ Empire, who took his life before *Iwì* (the Masquerade) could reveal the king's crime of killing his beloved son. From that tale, the Yorùbá derived the proverb: *Ó kù dẹ̀dẹ̀ ká gbé iwì dé Akẹ̀sán, Ọba Jáyin tẹ́rígbaṣọ* ("Just a little while before the *Iwì* masquerade got to Akẹ̀sán, king Jáyin gave up the ghost"). This illustrates how narrative techniques, proverbs, and masks critique issues of justice, governance, and morality.[9]

Extant empirical studies reveal that incorporating indigenous stories, like folktales, in the classroom or as narrated in indigenous communities can and does increase children's sense of communality, justice and resilience, creating a mutually reinforcing sense of belonging, enhancing active and participatory learning, and serving as a culturally relevant pedagogical tool to bridge

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[2] Gloria Chimeziem Ernest-Samuel, "Igbo Language and Literature in Classroom Discourse: A Pedagogical Experiment," *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Da Presença* 9, no. 1 (2019): 1–22.

[3] A. Babalọlá, *Àwọn Oríkì Orílẹ̀ Mẹ́tàdínlógbọ̀n* (Longman, 2000); R Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Clarendon Press, 1970).

[4] L. Bailey, "The Art and Forms of African Storytelling," pan-african.net, 2022.

[5] Steven M Almquist, *Decolonizing the Mind with Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe: Searching for a Voice in Postcolonial African Literature* (The University of North Dakota, 1998); Isidore Okpewho, *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Character, and Continuity*, vol. 710 (Indiana University Press, 1992); B. T Maphosa, "The Evolution of African Storytelling: From Oral Traditions to Digital Narratives," *The Journal of African Youth Literature*, 2024.

[6] Almquist, *Decolonizing the Mind with Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe: Searching for a Voice in Postcolonial African Literature*.

[7] Enongene Mirabeau Sone, "The Folktale and Social Values in Traditional Africa," *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies* 4, no. 2 (2018): 142–59.

[8] Arinpe G Adejumo, "Yoruba Culture in a Changing World," *Yoruba Studies Review* 8, no. 1 (2023): 1–20.

[9] Adejumo, "Yoruba Culture in a Changing World."

the traditional walls between the formal school setting and the community/home environments.[10] Thandeka Cochrane's ethnographic study found that for the Chitonga people of the northern lakeshore of Malawi, *nthanu* (storytelling) forms a crucial part of what might be considered education, the "core components in the construction of the social-self," while it plays "a critical role in the onto-epistemological formation of the young person".[11] While Cochrane's ethnography focused on storytelling in general, Wiysahnyuy and Valentine focused on incorporating folktales into formal education through a case study of stakeholders' views on integrating specific Indigenous pedagogical tools into schools in Cameroon, Central Africa.[12] These examples show that the route to decolonial/Afrocentric education for children suggested in this study is not impossible, and that oral storytelling, in general, remains an underused resource in this regard.

Akíntúndé Akínyẹmí and Àjàyí et al. describe a community-based initiative in Ibadan, Nigeria, that organised storytelling workshops in which elders shared Yorùbá folktales with children.[13] The community held regular oral storytelling sessions in community centres and schools, with elders and community leaders serving as storytellers. This initiative engaged children in story-related discussions and activities, strengthening their sense of self-identity and their understanding of their cultural heritage. The study also found that this practice enhanced children's communication and social interaction skills, positively affecting students' overall academic performance and behaviour. Taking a different qualitative approach, Edward Adie and Donaldson Afo explore an intercultural approach that integrates folklore, myths, and storytelling into drama-in-education pedagogy to support cultural development and transmission, positioning it as a viable tool for an enhanced intercultural curriculum.[14] Their study examined a practical "Children's Theatre Workshop with Primary IV pupils at St. Mary Nursery and Primary School in Oye-Ekiti", which combined African indigenous pedagogies with drama-in-education. The findings suggest that combining European and African pedagogies facilitated cognitive development, leading the authors to recommend integrating these methods into the curriculum to foster a more holistic educational experience.

However, traditional oral storytelling practices and orientations in Africa, including folktales, are declining.[15] This decline is largely due to the impact of coloniality, or colonial legacies, on every aspect of African socio-cultural life, including educational systems. The coloniality of knowledge privileges Western narratives and epistemologies over Indigenous or non-Western systems of knowing.[16] Modernisation and urbanisation, along with the pervasive influence of film, digital media, AI, and other entertainment modes driven by modern technology, exacerbate this problem by making it harder to recreate the traditional African settings where oral storytelling once flourished.

As oral traditions and interest in folktales decline, African storytellers, especially writers, have sought to adapt to the digital age. Contemporary African writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Tomi Adéyẹmí seek to recover the benefits of oral storytelling by using digital tools to share their

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[10] Peter Onah Thompson et al., "African Folklore: A Tool for Improving Sustainable Resource Management Practices in Africa," *Environmental Development* 51 (2024): 101044; T Cochrane, "The Power of Stories: Oral Storytelling, School/Ing and onto-Epistemologies in Rural Malawi," *Oxford Review of Education* 49, no. 4 (2023): 478–95; Iyanuoluwa Ajayi et al., "Developing a Traditional Oral Health Education Folktale for Primary School Pupils in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria," *Nigerian Dental Journal* 31, no. 2 (2023).

[11] Cochrane, "The Power of Stories: Oral Storytelling, School/Ing and onto-Epistemologies in Rural Malawi."

[12] Lilian F Wiysahnyuy and Ngalim Banfegha Valentine, "Folktales as Indigenous Pedagogic Tools for Educating School Children: A Mixed Methods Study among the Nso of Cameroon," *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (2023): 1049691.

[13] Akintunde Akinyemi, "Yorùbá Oral Literature: A Source of Indigenous Education for Children," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 16, no. 2 (2003): 161–79; Ajayi et al., "Developing a Traditional Oral Health Education Folktale for Primary School Pupils in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria."

[14] Edward Ugbada Adie and Afo Donaldson Ushie, "Integrating African Folklore into Drama-in-Education Pedagogy for Cultural Development in Nigerian Primary Schools Curriculum," *Humanitatis Theoreticus Journal* 1, no. 1 (2018).

[15] Isidore Okpewho, "Storytelling in the African World," *Journal of the African Literature Association* 3, no. 2 (2009): 110–22; Mogomme Masoga, "Storytelling Research: Implications for the Broader Higher Education System in South Africa," *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies* 32, no. 2 (2022): 14.

[16] Chika C. Mba, "African Philosophy: Rethinking the Ethics of Development and Human Well-Being in the Twenty-First Century," *African Studies Review* 68, no. 2 (2025): 360–69; C. C Mba, *Specialization or Interdisciplinarity: African Studies in Africa at a Crossroads. In O. Adebayo (Ed.), Transformations in Africana Studies: History, Theory, and Epistemology* (Routledge, 2023); Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Katharina Schramm, "Thinking as Moving—Knowledge Practices and Decolonial Frames in African Studies," *Knowing–Unknowing: African Studies at the Crossroads*, 2024.

work and connect with readers, infusing traditional narratives with contemporary themes, sometimes in an intercultural manner.[17] This cultural adaptation itself stems from what Walter J. Ong introduced as "Secondary orality"[18]. Secondary orality is a re-emergence of oral discourses within literate cultures. It seeks to restore the community-focused nature of oral communication globally through technology. Unlike primary orality, found in traditional African societies and entirely independent of writing, secondary orality is deeply rooted in literate culture and relies on electronic media, including television, radio, and digital social platforms, for transmission. In other words, Secondary orality "arises from the written word. In …Ong's words, Secondary orality is 'essentially a more deliberate and self-conscious orality based permanently on the use of writing and print which are essential for the manufacture, and operation of the equipment and for its use as well.'"[19]

Technological shifts, with their advantages and disadvantages, are inevitable given the realities of cultural intermingling, cultural mutation, and the demands of contemporary life in Africa. Africa's challenge is to turn this trend on its head and harness modern technology, including AI and digital media, to promote orality and amplify its value for acculturation and learning among current and future generations. "The goal", as Michael Afọ́láyan urges, "is not to substitute the dying traditional culture of folktale narrations around the moonlight with the modern-day technological media but to serve, at least, as reminders of what used to be and provide an encouragement for the return of such culturally enriching traditions."[20] The flip side is to consider whether interest in African oral storytelling can be reignited despite, or even *because of,* the rise of digital technologies. In this work, we grapple with this challenge. The key interest of this work is to reinscribe confidence in traditional African storytelling not only as a path to cultural renaissance but, more importantly, as an Afrocentric pedagogical tool for children's education. We do this by engaging specifically with (Yorùbá) folktales. This approach has not received sufficient attention in the literature and in educational policy and practice in Africa.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Molefi Kete Asante, Afrocentricity emphasises centring African experiences and narratives, thereby challenging the Eurocentric paradigms that have long dominated educational discourse.[21] An Afrocentric education therefore places African history, culture, knowledge, and experiences at the centre of learning, aiming to instil a stronger sense of cultural identity, self-esteem, and critical understanding of children's origins. This deviates from the dominant educational paradigm based on a Eurocentric viewpoint that often marginalises or completely erases African/Black contributions to knowledge and pedagogy.[22] Afrocentric education focuses on developing the whole child across cognitive, emotional, physical, and linguistic domains, using culturally relevant methods that promote community responsibility while advancing a positive African worldview. By reclaiming African identity through oral traditions, Afrocentric education can foster a deeper appreciation of indigenous knowledge systems.[23]

Complementing this view, some scholars have critiqued the lingering effects of colonialism on knowledge production and cultural representation.[24] Decoloniality stresses the value of Indigenous

[17] P. Okoi, *The Role of Storytelling in African Oral Tradition* (The Love Central, 2023).
[18] Walter J. Ong. *Rhetoric, romance, and technology: Studies in the interaction of expression and culture*. Cornell University Press. 1971.
[19] Nabaneeta Deb Sen, "Secondary Orality: How Words Speak Through Television," *Indian Literature* 37, no. 5 (163 (1994): 125–41.
[20] Afọ́láyan, Michael O., "Teaching Folklore and Oral Traditions: The Folktale Medium as Pedagogy," In *The Palgrave Handbook of African Oral Traditions and Folklore*, A. Akinyemi and T. Falola (eds). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, (2021): 1004.
[21] Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (Chicago: African American Images, 2003).
[22] Eric Tamatey Lawer et al., "Beadmaking as a Pedagogical Site: Transcending the Traditional Walls between the Academy and the Community," *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 20, no. 3–4 (December 21, 2025): 275–92, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-025-10250-w.
[23] Ayub Sheik, "A Man Is a Tale That Is Told: The Utility of African Folktales in an Afrocentric Curriculum and in the COVID-19 Pandemic.," *Alternation* 27 (2020): 399.
[24] Walter D Mignolo, "Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of de-Coloniality," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (2007): 449–514; Walter D Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009); Aníbal Quijano, "Colonialidad Del Poder y Clasi? Cacion Social," *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 2000, 342–86; Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization* (Routledge, 2018); Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "The Cognitive Empire, Politics of Knowledge and African Intellectual Productions: Reflections on Struggles for Epistemic Freedom and Resurgence of Decolonisation in the Twenty-First Century," *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 5 (2021): 882–901.

voices and approaches in educational narratives and knowledge production.[25] As it is, the decline of traditional oral storytelling can and should be understood as an outcome of broader epistemic violence resulting from colonialism, which imposes foreign cultural practices and devalues African oral and epistemological traditions.[26] This has important negative implications for learning, especially for children and the youth in these epistemically minoritised societies.

Indeed, many educationists/scholars across the globe are increasingly linking "the problem of low education outcomes among historically marginalised communities to the gap between home and school cultures."[27] More importantly, "[t]his dynamic is accentuated where local contexts, aspirations and approaches differ significantly from Western education models".[28] This study contends that the decline in oral storytelling in Africa is an important index of the disconnect between children's home cultures and dominant Western educational models, which often lead to cognitive dissonance. This disconnect is partly responsible for the decline of oral storytelling, even at home. As children and their parents focus on assignments and schoolwork far removed from their home cultural learning, they have little room to engage in oral storytelling, which may even be seen as a waste of time. As Anlimachie argues, "bridging students' home–school cultural divide is the first step to decolonise and reconstruct contextually relevant education for historically marginalised communities."[29]

Crucial empirical precedent for this model exists within regional scholarship. For instance, Adéyẹmí and Adéyinká document an institutional project in Lagos, Nigeria, that successfully integrated Yorùbá folktales into the primary school curriculum through digital storytelling platforms.[30] Using tablets, interactive whiteboards, and localised educational applications, teachers presented animated versions of traditional oral narratives. Learners engaged with these animations through tailored interactive quizzes and structured group discussions, a methodology that increased classroom engagement and significantly improved comprehension of core cultural values and moral lessons. The study shows this dual approach fostered higher student participation and intrinsic interest in lessons, deepened learners' understanding of Yorùbá culture and traditions, and improved academic performance in language arts and social studies. Building on this Lagos initiative, subsequent digital storytelling projects designed by Àlàdé et al. and Àlàdé further confirmed the critical role indigenous folktales play in the modern educational curriculum for African children.[31]

METHODOLOGY

This study systematically reviewed literature on African oral storytelling, traditional Yorùbá folktales, and contemporary pedagogy to conceptualise a decolonial, Afrocentric educational model for children. By treating existing scholarship and documented oral traditions as vital qualitative data, the research process mapped out a path to transition these ancient wisdom systems into modern digital spaces.

Research Design & Selection Strategy

The study adopted a qualitative conceptual review design, uniquely suited to map the intersections between indigenous oral traditions and modern pedagogy without testing empirical hypotheses. This approach captured the deeply interpretive, non-numerical dimensions of cultural identity, ethics, and pedagogical elements embedded within Yorùbá folktales.

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[25] Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization*.

[26] Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*; Sheik, "A Man Is a Tale That Is Told: The Utility of African Folktales in an Afrocentric Curriculum and in the COVID-19 Pandemic."

[27] Moses Ackah Anlimachie, "Decolonising Education in Africa through Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A Ghanaian Rural Local Government District's Case," *International Journal of Educational Development* 120 (2026): 103477.

[28] Anlimachie, "Decolonising Education in Africa through Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A Ghanaian Rural Local Government District's Case"; Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, "Implications of Folk Songs for Education in Africa," *IAAJAH-IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* 11, no. 5 (2025).

[29] Anlimachie, "Decolonising Education in Africa through Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A Ghanaian Rural Local Government District's Case."

[30] T Adéyẹmí and A Adéyìnká, "The Use of Multimedia in Teaching Yoruba Folktales in Lagos State Primary Schools ," *Journal of Educational Technology* 8, no. 2 (2012): 45–56.

[31] S M Aládé, Stephen Fọlárànmí, and Odetunji Ọdéjóbí, "A Model for Animation of Yorùbá Folktale Narratives," *African Journal of Computing & ICT* 8, no. 3 (2015): 113–20; Alade Samuel Mayowa, "Development of a 2D Digital Animation for Yorùbá Folktale Narrative," *International Journal of Art, Culture, Design, and Technology (IJACDT)* 9, no. 1 (2020): 47–61.

Literature was retrieved from Google Scholar, Scopus, and African Journals OnLine (AJOL) using targeted keywords combining terms like:

- "Yoruba folktales" AND "oral storytelling"
- "Afrocentric education" AND "the coloniality of knowledge"
- "Secondary Orality" AND "digital storytelling
- "Coloniality" AND "children's education in Africa"

This database search was supplemented by manual back-searching of foundational bibliographies. To ensure data integrity, selection was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles, academic chapters, and authoritative anthologies addressing African oral traditions, digital media adaptations, or decolonial education. Non-African folklore frameworks, purely commercial digital media studies, and non-peer-reviewed blog posts or opinion pieces were strictly excluded.

Analysis & Derivation of Conclusions

The selected texts were qualitatively analysed in three distinct phases, including (1) identifying recurring narrative forms, linguistic formulae, and character archetypes such as the trickster Tortoise, (2) tracing how these narrative styles explicitly cultivate communal responsibility and ethical reasoning, and (3) exposing the structural exclusions within current Eurocentric education systems caused by coloniality.

Conclusions were derived by pairing deductive theoretical lenses (decoloniality and Afrocentricity) with inductive text coding. These insights directly informed the proposed pedagogical model, in which primary oral storytelling is conducted concurrently with digital media formats. Reconciling the cultural power of oral literature with modern media realities confirmed that integrating these traditions into classroom curricula is both structurally viable and necessary for dismantling educational coloniality.

Analysis of Yorùbá Folktales

Folktales constitute a significant strand in Africa's rich oral storytelling tradition and *folkloric aesthetics*. For context, folklore is a broad category encompassing traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community, including "myths, legends, folktales, riddles, proverbs, tongue-twisters, taboos, ballads, songs and dances."[32] Yorùbá folktales are constitutive of Yorùbá folklore, so much so that, as Majasan contends, "Perhaps the most important single item in Yorùbá folklore is the folktale".[33] According to Olúgbèmí-Gabriel, Olúmídé & Ukpi, folktales convey the values, beliefs, and histories of Yorùbá communities, support cognitive development, and foster a sense of identity among children.[34] *Àlọ́,* or Yorùbá folktales, are a subset of African folktales, often utilising animal characters to convey complex moral lessons, engaging audiences of all ages and allowing for playful exploration of human behaviour, as seen with prominent archetypes like the trickster figure, for example*, Ìjàpá* (the tortoise) and *Anansi* (the spider) in Nigeria and Ghana, respectively.[35] *Àlọ́* and the *Ifa* literary corpus are integral to the Yorùbá oral tradition, encompassing history, wisdom, knowledge, and moral teachings. *Ifá* is a complex, intricate divination system consisting of 256 *Odù Ifá* (the main sacred divination patterns/chapters). The first 16, known as the *Ojú Odu*, are the foundational patterns from which all the other 240 combinations, called *Ọmọ Odù*, are derived. They are further subdivided into verses called *ẹsẹ Ifá*, whose exact number is unknown because it is constantly increasing. This is mainly because no single authority determines the canonical verses of Ifá; rather, its vast body of oral literature is a living tradition in which *Ifá* priests (Babaláwo) and knowledge-keepers in the Yorùbá community determine what is considered authentic through oral transmission and practice. Unlike religions with codified scriptures, *Ifá*'s verses are fluid and learned through apprenticeship, emphasising the practical wisdom and moral truths in *Odù Ifá* rather

[32] J. A. Majasan, "Folklore as an Instrument of Education Among the Yoruba," *Folklore* 80, no. 1 (March 1969): 41–59, https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.1969.9716616.
[33] Majasan, "Folklore as an Instrument of Education Among the Yoruba."
[34] Olumide Olugbemi-Gabriel and Mbasughun Ukpi, "The Signifying Culture: An Intercultural and Qualitative Analysis of Tiv and Yoruba Folktales for Moral Instruction and Character Determination in Children," *F1000Research* 11 (2023): 455.
[35] Ọbádélé Kambon, "Akan Ananse Stories, Yorùbá Ìjàpá Tales, and the Dikènga Theory: Worldview and Structure," *Contemporary Journal of African Studies* 4, no. 2 (June 20, 2017): 1, https://doi.org/10.4314/contjas.v4i2.1.

than a fixed, unchanging canon. *People usually consult Ifá at moments of important decisions, seeking spiritual and poetic clarity* and direction. Yorùbá folktales and Ifá stories primarily aim to teach children moral lessons, social values, and cultural identity,[36] while *Ifá* stories in *Ifá verses* (*ẹsẹ Ifá*) are more esoteric, often reserved for adults and ritual contexts.[37] *Ẹsẹ Ifá* contain spiritual, philosophical, and historical knowledge, and are generally intended for adults or those undergoing initiation.[38] *Àlọ́*, by contrast, includes fables, myths, legends, and proverbs passed down through generations and is deeply intertwined with values, beliefs, and social norms.

Azeez Sesan explains that Ayọ̀ Bámgbóṣé classifies *Àlọ́* into three themes: moral stories, Tortoise stories, and "why" stories.[39] Shifting to characterisation, Ropo Sekoni (1983, 5) argues that Àlọ́ actors are animate or inanimate, and he classifies them into four fictive categories: heroic, non-heroic, anti-heroic, and a-heroic.[40] Udom Iwara rejects Sekoni's "fictive categories" and categorises *Àlọ́* as nonfiction or fiction, based on their perceived factual basis and historical reliability within Yoruba cultural tradition.[41] Iwara considers historical, creation, and origin stories non-fiction because they have a historical basis and cultural truth, while fictional stories, such as divination, hunting, explanatory, and moralising stories, are primarily for moral, educational, and entertainment purposes. Some scholars segment Yorùbá folktales into four categories: *Àlọ́ Oníjàpá* (Tortoise-Based Folktale), *Àlọ́ Aláìníjàpá* (non-Tortoise-based folktales), *Àlọ́ Olórin* (song-based folktales), and *Àlọ́ Aláìlórin* (non-song-based folktales).[42] During narration, Yorùbá folktales fall into two main narrative types—Àlọ́ Àpamọ̀ and Àlọ́ Ọlọrin—distinguished by their format (how tales *appear* during presentation, not necessarily their structure) and interactive elements. *Àlọ́ Àpamọ̀* refers to riddles or short, riddle-based narratives that require mental ingenuity to solve – literally a story that is hidden/locked, requiring the listener to unlock it. The narrator poses a riddle, and the listeners must solve it before the full story is revealed. This highly interactive storytelling device is designed to sharpen children's memory and critical-thinking skills. *Àlọ́ Ọlọrin* (Song-based Tales) are often longer narrative stories that incorporate songs. *Ọlọrin* means "the singer", indicating a tale that must be sung. The plot progresses through musical interludes or choruses the audience sings. Listeners participate by singing the chorus (ọrin) whenever the storyteller begins it. Most Yorùbá folktales, however, begin with *Àlọ́ àpamọ̀* (riddles) that engage children and adults in critical thinking and build intuitive knowledge.

Examples of these riddles and their narrative format are:
Narrator: *À ń lọ, ó kọjú sí Ọ̀yọ́, à ń bọ̀, ó kọjú sí Ọ̀yọ́, kí ni o?* (We are going; it faces Ọ̀yọ́ (*Authors' explanation*: *A town in Yorùbáland*), and we are returning; it faces Ọ̀yọ́; what is it?)
A child: '*Ìlù*' (talking drum). *Authors' explanation*: This is because the talking drum has two faces; whether it is coming or going, it faces two directions simultaneously.
Narrator: *Ọ̀pá tín-ín-rín kanlẹ̀, ó kan ọ̀run, ta ló mọ̀ ọ́n o?* (A tiny stick touches the earth and the sky; who knows it?)
A child: '*Òjò'* (rain).
Narrator: *Kò lórí kò nírù, ó bẹ́ sí igbó*, kí ni o? (It has neither head nor tail; it jumps into the bush. What is it?)
A child: '*Kẹ̀lẹ̀bẹ̀*' (spit).

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[36] Olúmídé Olúgbèmí-Gabriel & Mbasughun Ukpi, "The Signifying Culture: An Intercultural and Qualitative Analysis of Tiv and Yorùbá Folktales for Moral Instruction and Character Determination in Children," *F1000Research*, 11, 455 (2022).
[37] Surajudeen Adewale Badru and Adesegun Olayide Odutayo, "Parents' Perceptions on the Efficacy of Yorùbá Folktales in Cultivating Moral Values among the Youths," *Vision: Journal for Language and Foreign Language Learning* 12, no. 2 (2023): 101–14.
[38] Teresa N Washington, "Mules and Men and Messiahs: Continuity in Yoruba Divination Verses and African American Folktales," *Journal of American Folklore* 125, no. 497 (2012): 263–85; Michael Oladejo Afolayan, "Teaching Folklore and Oral Traditions: The Folktale Medium as Pedagogy," in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Oral Traditions and Folklore* (Springer, 2021), 995–1010.
[39] Ayọ̀ Bámgbóṣé, *Yoruba Folktales* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1969); Azeez Akinwumi Sesan, "Yoruba Folktales, the New Media and Postmodernism," 2014..
[40] R. Sekoni, "Towards a New Taxonomy of Yoruba Oral Prose Fiction [Seminar Paper Presentation]" (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Department of Literature in English, Obafemi Awolowo University, 1983), 5.
[41] Alexander U. Iwara, "Unity in Diversity of West African Folktales," in *A Seminar Paper Presented at The Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan*, 1985.
[42] Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa*; Akinyemi, "Yorùbá Oral Literature: A Source of Indigenous Education for Children"; Bayo Ogunjimi and Abdul Rasheed Na'Allah, *Introduction to African Oral Literature and Performance* (Africa World Press, 2005).

The last riddle teaches children the importance of cleanliness by suggesting that spitting on the road or in an open area can cause someone to step in it, potentially leading to a sore throat. It could also spread a virus. If people accidentally spit on the road, they are told to cover it with sand.

If none of the children gets the meaning of a particular riddle right, the narrator will say '*ẹ ní hùn-ún-ùnùn!' Mo fi rẹ ẹ yín lẹ́nu bẹ́rẹ́kẹ́tẹ́* (I have smeared your mouth with it).

Riddles test listeners' cognitive abilities because they contain information, native intuitive knowledge, and social and material cultural consciousness. Riddles are preliminary quizzes that include rigorous calculations. Combining *àlọ́ àpamọ̀* (riddles) and *àlọ́ àpagbè* (folktales) can enhance children's intelligence and cultural consciousness through reasoning and problem-solving.[43]

Sample Narration of a Yorùbá Folktale

Túndé Ògúnpòlù identifies seven essential components that contribute to the quality of folktale performance: its function in the community, the narrator, the audience, the tale's indigenous name, content, character, and structure.[44] Two groups are defined by the use or non-use of songs: *Àlọ́ Olórin* (song-based folktales) and *Àlọ́ Aláìlórin* (non-song-based folktales). In the following narrations, we use a Tortoise-based folktale to demonstrate the structure, interactive nature, and cognitive design of Yorùbá folktales in five stages. Although dialectical differences may exist among, for example, Oyo, Ekiti, and Igbomina, most Yoruba folktales generally maintain the structure presented in this narrative example or include all its elements.

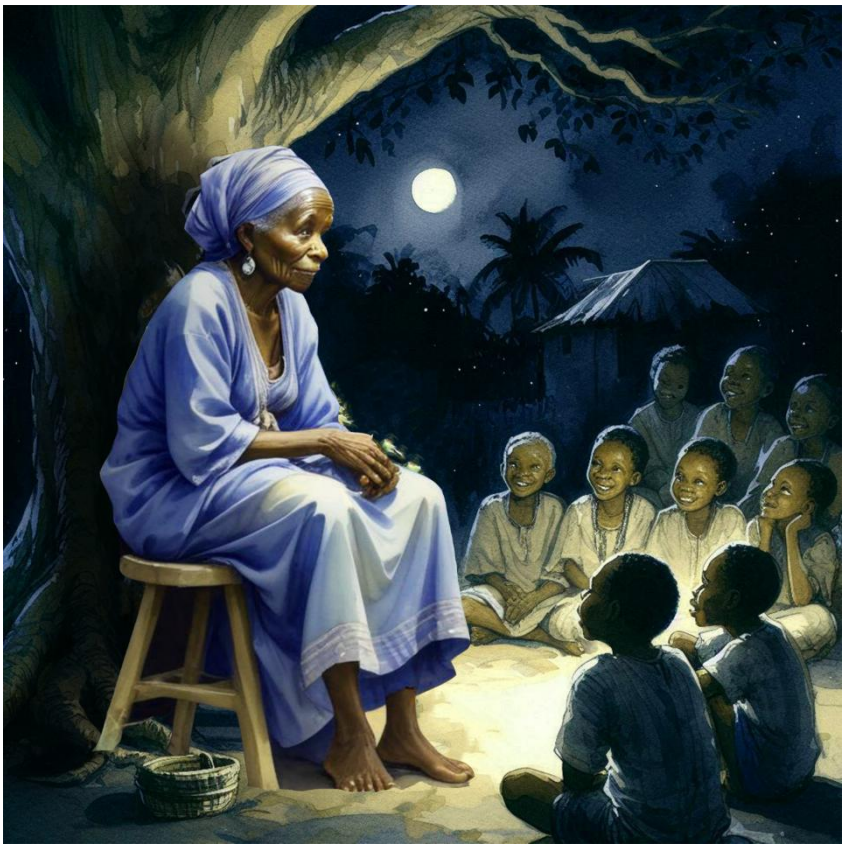


Figure 1: An elderly African woman narrating folktales to children in her compound under the bright moonlight.
Source: Authors' own artistic work

[43] Wiysahnyuy and Valentine, "Folktales as Indigenous Pedagogic Tools for Educating School Children: A Mixed Methods Study among the Nso of Cameroon"; Thompson et al., "African Folklore: A Tool for Improving Sustainable Resource Management Practices in Africa."

[44] Tunde Ogunpolu, *Classification of Yoruba Prose Narratives: A New Perspective* (Ogun State University, Faculty of Arts, 1986).

It illustrates the traditional setting of African oral literature before Western hegemony disrupted written literature. The elderly woman represents the human archive—the active custodian of history, philosophy, and ethics.

Name of Tale: *The Thieving Tortoise and the Unforgiving Snail*
Stage 1: Opening Glee/*Àlọ́ Àpamọ̀* (Riddles)
Authors*:* The opening glee features lively interaction as the narrator and audience begin the tale with traditional call-and-response.
Apàlọ́: Àlọ́ ooo! (Narrator: Folktale!)
Òǹgbọ́: Ààlọ̀ọ̀ọ̀! (Audience: Folktale!)
Apàlọ́: Àlọ́ ooo! (Narrator: Folktale!)
Òǹgbọ́: Ààlọ̀ọ̀ọ̀! (Audience: Folktale!)
Apàlọ́: Àlọ́ mi dá fìrìgbagbòó, ó dá lórí Ìjàpá Tìrókò, Alábahun, Ọlọ́gbọ́n ẹ̀wẹ́, ọkọ Yánníbo, ẹsẹ̀ danindanin bi àran ọ̀pẹ. Tó kọ́lé, kọ́lé tó fi ìrán bà á jẹ́. Tí ń lọ láàárín ẹ̀pà tí ìpàkọ́ rẹ̀ ń hàn fìrifìri, tó ní ọpẹ́lọpẹ́ pé òun ga, àti àna rẹ̀, Ìgbín! (from Babalọlá 1982).
(Narrator: My folktale roves and roves and finally dwells on Tortoise of the silk cotton tree, the master trickster, the husband of Yánníbo, with legs tight like the fruit of the palm tree. He builds houses and destroys them with the seat of his shell. He goes among groundnuts, and the back of his head is barely visible. Whoever says it is because he is tall. This mocks the short one who prides himself as a giant!)
Ọ̀ǹgbọ́: Má a wí àdántọ́ asọ̀tàn, a ń gbọ́!
(Audience: Go on, the eloquent narrator, we are all ears!)
Apàlọ́: Ẹ ṣeun ẹ̀yin ọmọ mi, ẹ yá mi léti yín!
(Narrator: Thank you, my children, lend me your ears!).
Stage 2: Narration (Rising Action)
Narrator: Once upon a time, in a quaint village, there lived a diligent farmer named Snail. His daughters were renowned for their beauty and attracted many suitors, including Tortoise, a man known for his indolence. Tortoise sought Snail's daughter's hand, feigning love to gain access to Snail's bountiful farm. Over time, Snail consented to the union, and they held a grand wedding. However, Tortoise's true colours soon showed; he failed to provide for his wife and resorted to pilfering crops from Snail's farm. He deceived his wife into believing he owned a vast farm and forbade her from visiting it. As the thefts escalated, Snail set traps across his farm. One fateful night, Tortoise was ensnared, and the next morning, Snail revealed him as the thief. Snail ordered Tortoise bound at the market junction on a bustling market day. As traders passed, they learned of his misdeeds and scorned him.

Authors: Here, the children in the Narrator's audience sing a song of mockery, cementing Tortoise's disgrace.

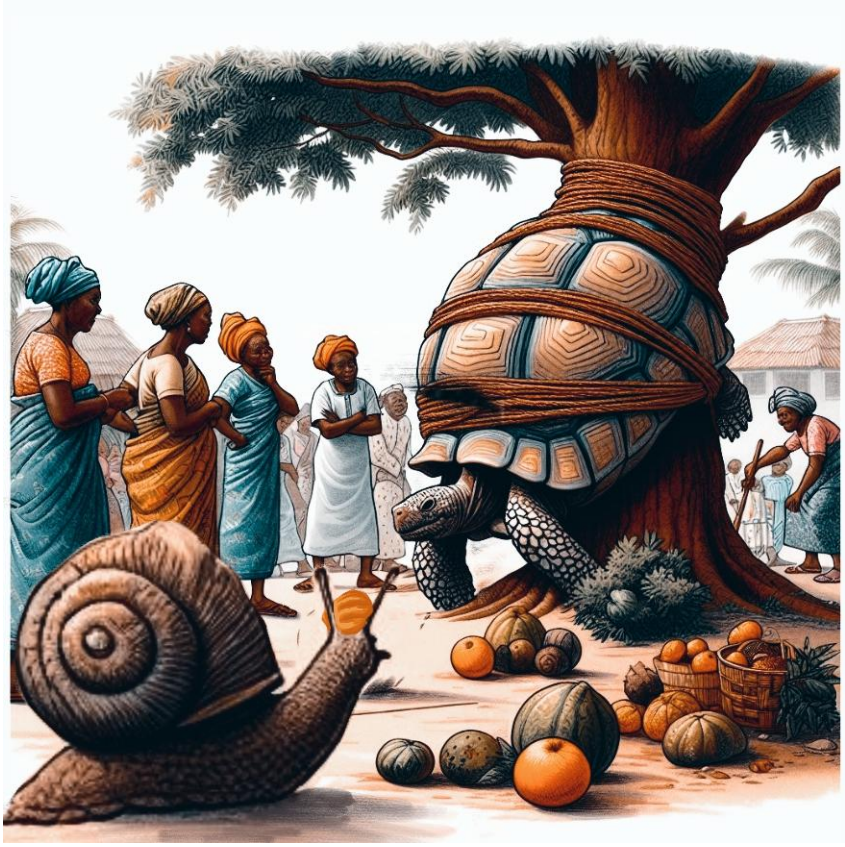


Figure 2: At the bustling market junction, Snail tied Tortoise to a tree.
Source: Author's own artistic work

Passersby, who were traders, scolded the Tortoise for stealing farm products from his in-law, the Snail. This image functions as a profound visual analysis of indigenous jurisprudence, the performance of morality, and the structural architecture of Yorùbá folklore.

Stage 3: Song (Climax)
Authors: Dramatising, the children sing a song labelling Tortoise (represented by the Lead) as a thief, listing the various crops he stole, while Tortoise (the Lead) pleads for forgiveness, preferring death over public humiliation.
Thereafter,
Lílé: Ìjàpá, olè! (Lead: Tortoise, the thief!)
Ègbẹ́: Olẹ̀! (Chorus: The thief!)
Lílé: Ó jíṣu oníṣu! (Lead: He stole someone else's yams!)
Ègbẹ́: Olẹ̀! (Chorus: Thief!)
Lílé: Ó jí ẹ̀gẹ́ ẹlẹ́gẹ̀ẹ́! (Lead: He stole someone else's cassava!)
Ègbẹ́: Olẹ̀! (Chorus: Thief!)
Lílé: Ó jí kókò oníkókò! (Lead: He stole someone else's cocoyam!)
Ègbẹ́: Olẹ̀! (Chorus: Thief!)
Lílé: Ó jí ẹ̀fọ́ ẹlẹ́fọ̀ọ́! (Lead: He stole someone else's vegetable!)
Ègbẹ́: Olẹ̀! (Chorus: Thief!)

Narrator: As the day went on, the villagers' opinions shifted. Initially, they scorned Tortoise, but by evening, they condemned Snail's harsh punishment. 'Ha! Snail, you are evil! Is Tortoise not your son-in-law? If Tortoise were not your son-in-law, you would have practically beheaded him. Whereas he would feed your daughter with the stolen yams.' The traders freed Tortoise, leaving Snail humiliated and ashamed.

Falling Action
Narrator: This folktale produced two Yorùbá proverbs, 'Àtèétèé àna Ìgbín, bí bẹ́ẹ̀ kọ́ ìbá ti bẹ ní orí.' (Indeed, he is Snail's son-in-law; if not, he would have called for his head) and 'Àlọ ni ti Alábahun/ Ahun, àbọ̀ ni tàna rẹ̀' (Vituperation goes to Tortoise when passers-by were going in the morning; vituperation goes to Snail in the evening when the same people were returning).

Stage 4: Closing Glee
Apàlọ́: Ìdí àlọ́ mi rèé gbáńgbáláká! (Narrator: This is the end of my tale!)
Ìdí àlọ́ mi rèé gbàǹgbàlàkà! (This is the end of my tale!)
Bí ó bá jẹ́ irọ́ ni mo pa! (If I have lied!)
Kí agogo ẹnu mi má rò ó lẹ́ẹ̀mẹta! (May the bell of my mouth not ring thrice!)
Bí n ò bá parọ́!, (If I did not lie!)
Kí agogo ẹnu mi ró lẹ́ẹ̀mẹta! (May the bell of my mouth ring thrice!)
Pó! Pó!! Pó!!! (Pó! Pó!! Pó!!!) (Ideophone)
Authors: The folktale concludes with traditional closing statements from the Narrator, underscoring the narrative's truthfulness.

Themes: Crime and punishment, offence and moderation, cautionary example and mercy.
Stage 5: Morals (Denouement)
The Narrator points out that the above folktale conveys valuable lessons about crime and the need for moderation in punishment.

DISCUSSION

The selected narration shows how Yorùbá folktales can offer a dual critique, reprimanding both Tortoise's deceitful criminality and Snail's disproportionate retribution. Tortoise's public disgrace illustrates the severe psychosocial consequences of theft, warning learners of the inevitable shame and alienation that follow anti-social behaviour. At the same time, the tale underscores the necessity of emotional restraint and measured reciprocity, especially when dealing with grievance and anger. The unexpected backlash against Snail's extreme punitive measures serves as a cautionary example, instilling in children the vital indigenous virtues of mercy, proportionality, and reconciliation. It argues that when an offender shows remorse and pleads for clemency, extending compassion is not only commendable but essential to preserving communal harmony. More fundamentally, this folktale exemplifies the kind of primary orality currently in decline and serves as a sophisticated structural and philosophical blueprint for advancing an indigenous pedagogy and operationalising an Afrocentric educational policy.

Through its multi-staged performance—transitioning seamlessly from the dialogic engagement of the opening call-and-response glee to the intricate ethical grey areas of the denouement—the narrative fundamentally disrupts the linear, moralising frameworks characteristic of Eurocentric instruction. To clarify, Western moral instruction historically relies on a linear progression of cause and effect, often guided by strict rules, legal codes, or black-and-white binaries (e.g., Good vs Evil, Right vs Wrong, Crime vs Punishment). A rule is taught, a boundary is set, and a specific consequence follows. The narrative sample in this study instead proposes a dynamic, dialectical approach to character formation and restorative justice. Consequently, this study contends that this embodied practice of primary orality has unique pedagogical efficacy; contemporary digital modifications, or "Secondary Orality", cannot fully replicate the profound cultural, relational, and transformative work achieved by this traditional Yorùbá narrative framework.

To be sure, certain innovations in Secondary Orality may mark the start of the struggle to revitalise oral storytelling in Africa and decolonise educational policy and frameworks, especially for children. Prominent among these interventions is the Tanzanian educational cartoon series *Ubongo Kids*, launched in January 2014 by the social enterprise Ubongo under the co-founding direction of Nisha Ligon, Rajab Semtawa, and their colleagues. Designed to cross-pollinate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) instruction with indigenous storytelling traditions, the platform

uses catchy musical scores and relatable local narratives to build social-emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills in children aged seven to ten.

Empirical tracking confirms that this framework has achieved immense scalability, reaching dozens of African nations and demonstrating that mediated oral forms can foster significant cognitive and numeracy gains.[45] Similarly, Michel Ocelot's 1998 animated film series, *Kirikou and the Sorceress*, represents a seminal cinematographic intervention with clear decolonial merit. As an aesthetic adaptation of traditional West African folk narratives, the trilogy has been successfully integrated into classroom curricula across West Africa and Europe to challenge Eurocentric pedagogical biases and offer non-Western cultural representation.

More recently, the animated science-fiction miniseries *Iwájú* (2024)—produced by the Pan-African entertainment group Kugali Media in collaboration with Walt Disney Animation Studios—offers a distinct approach to cultural preservation. Although it does not explicitly translate historical folktales, its futuristic, tech-driven depiction of Lagos, Nigeria, remains deeply rooted in Yorùbá cultural aesthetics, class dynamics, and philosophical concepts. *Iwájú* serves as an important case study in contemporary media scholarship, showing how digital-age platforms can project positive, authentic, forward-looking representations of African societies without erasing indigenous linguistic and cultural foundations. Similarly, the digital adaptation of the *Ugomma* narrative operates as a vital analogue to *Ubongo Kids* within a possible Afrocentric framework. The remediation of *Ugomma* signifies an ongoing cultural migration, transmuting traditional Igbo oral prose into digital formats to sustain engagement among "digital-native" youth demographics.

Moving beyond fixed e-book layouts and standard video productions, contemporary content creators increasingly use serialised storytelling architectures across social media platforms to unpack Ugomma's narrative trajectory. By maintaining a bilingual structure that privileges Igbo alongside English subtitles, this digital folktale format supports complex cultural continuity and identity negotiation. [46] However, while these digital systems excel at linguistic visibility and broad dissemination, a critical awareness must be maintained: such media architectures still risk flattening the visceral, performative, and relational feedback loops that define authentic primary oral traditions.

Although these digital adaptations democratise access and expand the narrative domain, they arguably compromise the stylistic texture and alter the structural architecture of traditional African oral storytelling.[47] For instance, although *Ubongo Kids* has achieved extraordinary mass outreach, its pedagogical framework remains heavily bound to Euro-dominant Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) templates. By using African characters and settings to meet standardised Western-style academic benchmarks, the series often compromises its Afrocentric potential, marginalising indigenous African epistemologies and epistemic problem-solving methods in mathematics and science. Furthermore, acute geopolitical and financial limitations constrain the platform's linguistic expansion. Currently broadcast in Kiswahili, Hausa, French, and English, the logistical capital required to translate highly complex cultural and pedagogical concepts, categories and symbols from Kiswahili into hundreds of other indigenous African languages remains prohibitive. Consequently, most of the forty subscribing African nations must rely on English or French broadcasts, subjecting Ubongo Kids to severe market-driven pressure to internationalise, which ultimately dilutes localised African structural features and identities.[48]

This commercialisation and capital-driven distribution model presents even more restrictive bottlenecks for cinematic models such as *Iwájú*. Because its distribution is gated behind the subscription-based Walt Disney paywall, the series remains inaccessible in many regions of the continent—including Ghana and Nigeria—and most continental locales, forcing regional audiences to rely on highly restricted pay-as-you-view television stations. Similarly, while *Kirikou and the Sorceress* has been translated into

[45] Joe Watson, Sara Hennessy, and Anna Vignoles, "The Relationship between Educational Television and Mathematics Capability in Tanzania," *British Journal of Educational Technology* 52, no. 2 (2021): 638–58.

[46] F. C Eze and L Anyanwu, " Low Academic Performance and Dropout Risk among Junior Secondary Students in Southeastern Nigeria," *International Journal of Educational Research* 5, no. 4 (2022): 25–37.

[47] Rosaleen Oabona Brankie Nhlekisana, "Orality and Technology: Transforming Traditional Songs to Popular Music," in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Oral Traditions and Folklore* (Springer, 2021), 907–23.

[48] Nhlekisana, "Orality and Technology: Transforming Traditional Songs to Popular Music."

over forty languages globally, its formal educational application within Africa remains heavily restricted to Francophone territories. Beyond these market constraints, contemporary digital remediations such as *Ugomma* present distinct ideological vulnerabilities; the narrative arc frequently reinforces archaic, patriarchal gender tropes by tethering the protagonist's agency and narrative development almost exclusively to physical beauty.

More fundamentally, the systematic decline of primary orality and the concurrent shift toward digital configurations within domestic spaces have fractured a core pillar of indigenous oral art: communal interaction and intergenerational bonding.[49] First, the dialogic engagement, mutual participation, and relational intimacy shared between elder-narrators and child-audiences within families and kinship networks are completely erased by passive, screen-gated ingestion. As Nhlekisana critically observes, "technology kills the spirit of communality that was prevalent when people gathered together to watch the performances."[50] This structural divergence is analogous to the difference between the visceral, co-present feedback loops of live theatre and the fixed, non-reciprocal isolation of a cinematic exhibition.

Second, the systemic translation of these digital tales into European languages inevitably erodes their cultural and philosophical depth. As a vast body of postcolonial linguistic and translation scholarship establishes, many proverbs, idioms, and somatic expressions are structurally bound to indigenous linguistic environments and ontologies, rendering them fundamentally untranslatable into Eurocentric speech patterns.[51] Because specific ecological formulas and cultural motifs are deeply embedded within native geographic terrains, they defy translation into Western vocabularies. Given the overbearing hegemony of Euro-modernity and Western epistemic frameworks over intercultural paradigms,[52] the declining fortunes of African oral storytelling cannot be reversed through technological remediation alone. Instead, these crises mean that teachers must urgently put Afrocentricity at the heart of how to teach and design school lessons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The decolonial imperatives for children's education in Africa require systematically dismantling Eurocentric educational models established during colonial rule and replacing them with systems that reflect African realities, histories, and cultural knowledge. These imperatives require a fundamental shift toward centring African worldviews and empowering learners to actively challenge dominant, Western-centric narratives. In the Nigerian context, revitalising oral storytelling—specifically Yorùbá folktales—at home and in schools is an essential strategy for bridging the home-school cultural divide. This approach aligns directly with Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), which seeks to cultivate fair, inclusive, relevant, and improved learning experiences for marginalised children, yet remains largely underexplored within African educational policy.

Actualising these decolonial imperatives requires a multifaceted paradigm shift that begins with the institutionalisation of epistemic pluralism and the systematic re-centring of African knowledge systems in educational policy. This involves moving decisively beyond a single, "universal" Western truth to recognise multiple, co-existing ways of knowing, thereby validating indigenous epistemologies in foundational fields like science, philosophy, and history, especially in research methods and theoretical framings. Achieving this intellectual autonomy requires a total rejection of the colonial mindset that continuously confines African intellectual thought to Western paradigms. Crucial to this epistemic reclamation is recognising the role of language in cultural empowerment through the curriculum, especially in early childhood education. This demands a structural shift away from the exclusive use of colonial languages such as English, French, and Portuguese in early childhood

[49] Afolayan, "Teaching Folklore and Oral Traditions: The Folktale Medium as Pedagogy."
[50] Nhlekisana, "Orality and Technology: Transforming Traditional Songs to Popular Music."
[51] Almquist, *Decolonizing the Mind with Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe: Searching for a Voice in Postcolonial African Literature*; Serena Talento and Moradewun Adejunmobi, "Handling and Mishandling African Language Texts," *Journal of the African Literature Association* (Routledge, 2025); Bethlehem Attfield, "African Literature in Translation: Towards Adopting a Minor Translation Theory," *Media and Intercultural Communication: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 1, no. 1 (2023): 17–28.
[52] Mba, "African Philosophy: Rethinking the Ethics of Development and Human Well-Being in the Twenty-First Century"; C. C Mba, "Achieving Global Justice through Decolonising Human Dignity," *Caribbean Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2022): 1–26.

education, promoting mother-tongue instruction alongside dynamic translanguaging practices in the classroom.

By extension, formally adopting Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) implements teaching methods that explicitly validate local cultural assets. As Anlimachie (2026) posits, bridging the home-school cultural divide requires deliberately including local languages, storytelling, proverbs, and oral traditions in core curricula. This pedagogical shift simultaneously breaks down the artificial walls of formal education by integrating community and indigenous knowledge holders. By involving community elders, oral artists, and traditional custodians as legitimate, co-equal educators, schools can weave indigenous knowledge systems into daily classroom life. This integration also supports a land-based education model that reconnects children to the land, its unique social relations, environmental knowledges, and localised vocabularies, countering the spatial and cultural alienation induced by Euro-modern school environments.

In the end, these combined efforts demand a comprehensive redefinition of educational success, shifting the academic focus from individualistic, competitive, and test-driven Eurocentric models toward collective, community-oriented approaches to achievement and character formulation. Achieving this vision requires extensive curriculum reform and content representation to ensure that African histories, literature, and philosophies occupy a central, rather than marginal, position within educational frameworks. This structural change in educational practice must be sustained by comprehensive teacher training programmes designed to equip educators with decolonial skills and critical perspectives. This ensures that teachers can successfully serve as facilitators of indigenous knowledge rather than passive transmitters of Western-centric content. Overall, revitalising traditional African oral storytelling—and Yorùbá folktales in particular—provides a vital, practical vehicle for anchoring these culturally responsive, land-based, community-driven practices and making the broader decolonial imperative for African children's education achievable.

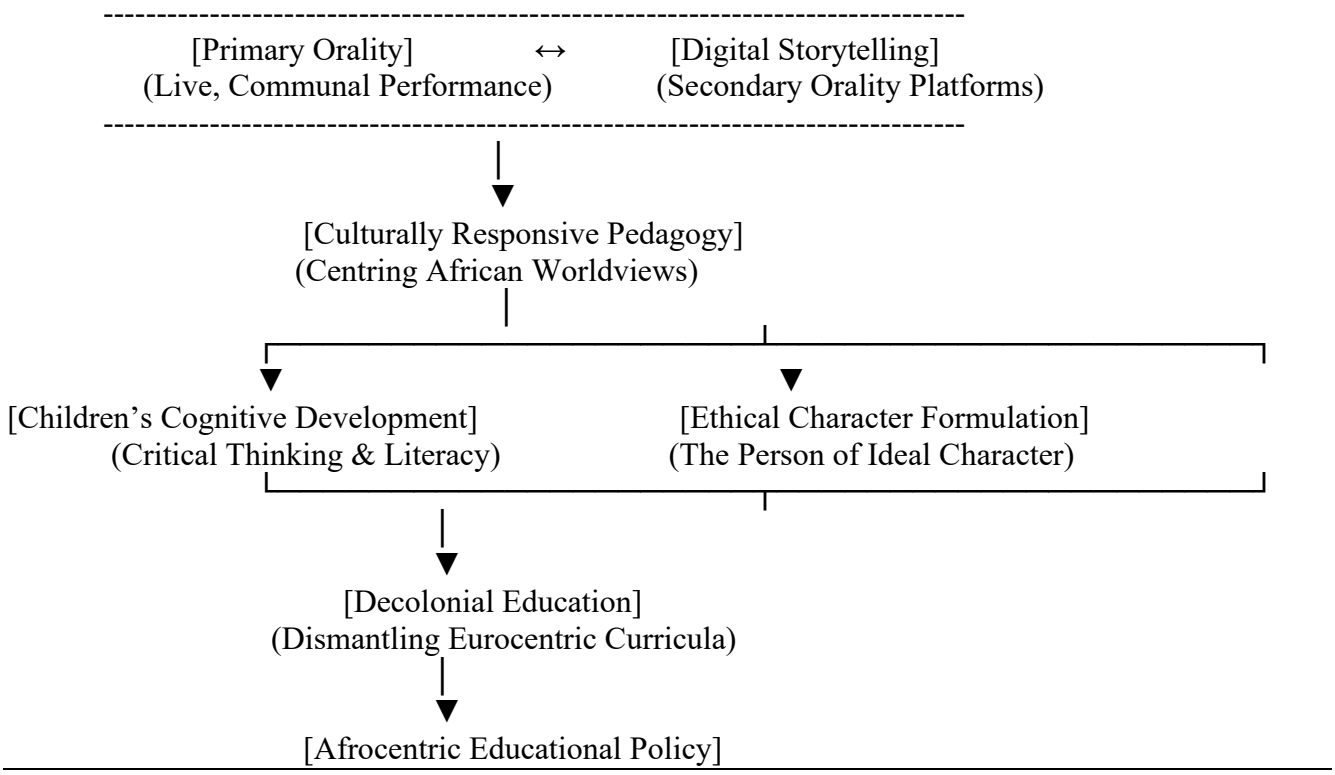


Figure 3: A conceptual diagram mapping the dialectical relationship between Primary Orality and Secondary Orality (Digital Storytelling), showing how it feeds directly into the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) engine.

It maps the split pathways—Children's Cognitive Development on the one hand and Ethical Character Formulation on the other—before converging on the strategic objective: Decolonial and Afrocentric Education.

CONCLUSION

Guided by these Afrocentric and decolonial imperatives for early childhood education, we firmly defend the indispensable value of traditional oral storytelling, including (Yorùbá) folktales, for a truly transformative pedagogy. We argue that this epistemic reclamation can be achieved through innovative classroom adaptations, including physical, embodied narrations, and a much more rigorous reliance on African languages in primary and secondary oral storytelling frameworks. Adapting traditional tales in Ubongo Kids and the other multimedia interventions discussed in this study undoubtedly represents a commendable step in the right direction; however, much more comprehensive structural work remains.

Empirical findings by scholars reviewed in this study point toward a foundational pillar of our recommendations: while secondary orality achieved through digital platforms serves as an essential technological starting point to arrest the decline of indigenous orality, it remains fundamentally insufficient on its own to realise the broader, radical objectives of Afrocentric education. Against the backdrop of contemporary decolonial critique, which characterises the present epoch as an era of transnational epistemic conflict, policymakers, curriculum theorists, and educators must deliberately and pragmatically mobilise digital storytelling as a critical pedagogical lever to institutionalise Afrocentric education within primary and secondary curricula across the continent. However, our contention is that given its inherent commercial and structural limitations, digital storytelling must never be permitted to displace primary orality, nor should traditional performance completely isolate itself from technological realities; rather, they must coexist and dynamically reinforce one another. For this reason, this study concludes that oral storytelling performances must become a mandatory component of school curricula and pedagogy, and educators should be institutionally empowered to stage live, communal oral performances alongside contemporary screen-gated exhibitions.

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