

Preserving Human Culture in Schools Through Oral Storytelling: Perspectives From Teachers in Eastern Cape, South Africa



Yamkela Ntwalana¹  & Nomasomi Hilda Matiso¹ 

¹ Faculty of Educational Sciences, Walter Sisulu University, South Africa

ABSTRACT

With the growth of technology, elderly people in societies no longer gather children to conduct oral storytelling sessions, which are regarded as important tools for the preservation of culture. The objective of this study was to investigate how culture can be preserved through oral storytelling in schools and to determine how oral storytelling can be revived. Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which emphasises the importance of social interaction in the construction of social meaning, anchored this inquiry. A qualitative approach, entrenched in an interpretive paradigm, was utilised. An exploratory research design was chosen for this study. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from 6 purposely chosen language teachers, that is, 3 grade 9 English Additional Language teachers, and 3 isiXhosa teachers in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. Data, which were thematically analysed, indicated that oral storytelling has deteriorated in schools due to curriculum changes, and the influence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Multimedia storytelling has replaced oral storytelling. Furthermore, there is a lack of professional development in cultural heritage. The non-practice of oral storytelling could have a negative impact on preserving human culture in schools. The study recommends that culturally literate people from communities, including parents, should be utilised in schools to conduct storytelling sessions to preserve culture. This could be done through the organisation of cultural activities in which learners participate in oral storytelling. By integrating oral storytelling into the educational system, societies can ensure that future generations remain connected to their cultural roots while developing important cognitive and social skills.

Correspondence

Nomasomi Hilda Matiso

Email:

nmatiso@wsu.ac.za

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INTRODUCTION

Oral storytelling customs date back to the ancient Greek, African, and Khoisan cultures. Verbina and Damodaran posit that oral storytelling is an ancient cultural practice that has been used for both educational and entertainment purposes in many communities.¹ For cultural preservation, it was crucial to assemble kids and tell or perform a short narrative.² Nalibali asserts that cultural norms and values were

¹ H. A. Verbina and G. R. Damodaran, "Tradition of Oral Literature in the Works of Chinua Achebe-An Insight," *Front*, 2013, 19.

² Verbina and Damodaran, "Tradition of Oral Literature in the Works of Chinua Achebe-An Insight."

ingrained in the narrative to ensure their persistence and non-extinction.³ Stories varied from place to place, and as time went on, so did the circumstances and goals of storytelling. Although some of the stories have a purpose, not all of them are historically accurate or even factual.⁴ Epic poetry, chants, voice, and body language are all used in oral storytelling to portray meaning.⁵

Oral storytelling is an effective way to preserve culture in classrooms while helping learners develop a feeling of continuity and identity.⁶ Tuwe asserts that stories, which include myths, legends, fables, religions, prayers, proverbs, and directions, contribute to cultural cohesion.⁷ This demonstrates how effective oral storytelling was in shaping youngsters from various social backgrounds. Some asserts that historical oral storytelling served a purpose other than mere entertainment since it conveyed significant moral lessons that shaped society.⁸ Telling historical tales helped pass along important knowledge and insights from one generation to the next.⁹ In the past, bringing kids together for oral storytelling in communities was a potent way to impart moral principles and other virtues.¹⁰ Elderly people can build a bridge between the past and present by passing on customs, values, and information to new generations through oral storytelling. According to Wilson and Sobol, Gentile, and Sunwolf, continuity is crucial for the preservation of culture.¹¹

According to research, despite the fact that some oral storytelling practices have been recorded, technology and well-known literature have not been able to preserve African culture to the same extent that oral storytelling did in the past.¹² One important method of keeping people's beliefs, history, culture, and philosophy alive was through storytelling. Mahala asserts that it was formerly the responsibility of the elderly to teach the younger members of society, thereby conserving culture, but this is no longer the case.¹³ This has also left the elderly with fewer responsibilities in society, as they formerly told stories to the youth in order to instruct them.

Oral storytelling, as a way of preserving culture, is fading; consequently, children, in the modern era, are culturally dislocated.¹⁴ One urgent problem endangering both the preservation of cultural legacy and the holistic development of pupils is the loss of oral storytelling in schools. The educational landscape has seen significant upheaval in the last few decades. The humanities and the arts have frequently suffered because of the change in emphasis toward STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).¹⁵ Due to this change, traditional cultural expressions like oral storytelling, which are difficult to measure or evaluate using standardized testing, have been marginalized.¹⁶ As a result, pupils are becoming disconnected from a crucial component of their cultural background and identity.

In this paper, the authors scrutinise reasons why oral storytelling, as a form of preserving culture, is fading. The objective of this inquiry is to establish how storytelling can be an effective vehicle for the preservation of human culture in schools. The research questions below guided this inquiry:-

- What are the challenges faced by the schools in preserving culture through oral storytelling?

³ "Nal'ibali Data Analysis Report," 2018, nalibali.org/sites/default/files/media/nalibali_data_analysis_report_2018_year_end_pdf.

⁴ Halima I Amali, "The Function of Folktales as a Process of Educating Children in the 21st Century: A Case Study of Idoma Folktales," in *21st Century Academic Forum Conference Proceedings IC21CE*, vol. 21, 2014, 88–97.

⁵ Amali, "The Function of Folktales as a Process of Educating Children in the 21st Century: A Case Study of Idoma Folktales."

⁶ Amali, "The Function of Folktales as a Process of Educating Children in the 21st Century: A Case Study of Idoma Folktales."

⁷ Kudakwashe Tuwe, "The African Oral Tradition Paradigm of Storytelling as a Methodological Framework: Employment Experiences for African Communities in New Zealand," in *African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP) Proceedings of the 38th AFSAAP Conference: 21st Century Tensions and Transformation in Africa* (Deakin University, 2016).

⁸ Enongene Mirabeau Sone, "The Folktale and Social Values in Traditional Africa," *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies* 4, no. 2 (2018): 142–59.

⁹ Amali, "The Function of Folktales as a Process of Educating Children in the 21st Century: A Case Study of Idoma Folktales."

¹⁰ Pelokazi Nqabeni and Nomasomi Matiso, "Connecting Morals and Values to Combat the Spread of HIV/AIDS in Grade 10 School Children," *Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology* 8 (2020): 125–36; Tatek Abebe, "Storytelling through Popular Music: Social Memory, Reconciliation, and Intergenerational Healing in Oromia/Ethiopia," *Humanities* 10, no. 2 (April 21, 2021): 70, <https://doi.org/10.3390/h10020070>.

¹¹ Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Fernwood publishing, 2020); Joseph Sobol and John S Gentile, "Once upon a Time: An Introduction to the Inaugural Issue," 2004.

¹² Chia Yi Quah and Kher Hui Ng, "A Systematic Literature Review on Digital Storytelling Authoring Tool in Education: January 2010 to January 2020," *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction* 38, no. 9 (2022): 851–67.

¹³ Siphwo Mahala, "The Changing Topography of Short Story Writing in South Africa," *Imbiza: Journal for African Writing* 1, no. 1 (2021): 110–19.

¹⁴ Abebe, "Storytelling through Popular Music: Social Memory, Reconciliation, and Intergenerational Healing in Oromia/Ethiopia."

¹⁵ Elliot W Eisner, "The Arts and the Creation of Mind," *Language Arts* 80, no. 5 (2003): 340–44.

¹⁶ T. Grainger, K. Gooch, and A. Lambirth, *Creativity and Writing: Developing Voice and Verve in the Classroom* (Routledge, 2005).

- How can oral storytelling be revived in schools to preserve culture?

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Abebe, cultural preservation is a crucial instrument for forming an individual's identity.¹⁷ According to Schein, culture is defined as the beliefs, practices, and social interactions of a specific group of people or civilization. According to Abebe, every community has a unique historical way of life that Tuwe contends ought to be preserved.¹⁸ Oral storytelling is crucial for the preservation of culture in African society. Oral storytelling was seen as a unifying force in society, with the elders gathering young people and instructing them. Oral storytelling customs, from the past, are no longer followed, and no research has examined the reasons behind this decline from the perspective of the elderly, who should be leading this practice.

Self-recognition requires knowledge of behaviors that define and rectify one's manner of living.¹⁹ In the context of teaching and learning, oral storytelling exercises have various advantages. Inculcating religious ideals and practitioners²⁰ and moral values,²¹ are some examples of these. Oral storytelling also enhances language proficiency in speaking and listening;²² boosts courage and self-confidence;²³ increases self and social care;²⁴ and, finally, instil pride in cultural products and in community leaders who are honoured by their community. To reap all these benefits, a series of oral storytelling exercises, rooted in local folklore or wisdom must be implemented in local schools so that students acquire, and be accustomed to these values in the educational process.

Narrative instruction is a widely applicable approach to human learning, suitable for both adult and young learners.²⁵ Depending on the culture, oral tradition storytelling can be traced back to various historical periods. These customs narrate stories that have been passed down from generation to generation using song, chant, and epic poetry.²⁶ Word-of-mouth was also the first method of myth transmission. Word-of-mouth storytelling is still a common practice wherever people congregate for social interaction. Abebe contends that storytelling is still the best teaching and learning method.²⁷ Storytelling began as a ceremonial activity in the past and developed into a way to explore emotion, expand vocabulary, and improve cognitive function in general. Stories are usually, used to signify an event, provide guidance, or alert readers to potential dangers. Furthermore, according to Tuwe, fairy tales and tall tales have historically been used in storytelling as a means of trying to explain the incomprehensible.²⁸

People now live in a generation where the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has taken hold in all spheres of life. Because of the 4IR, the majority of people are addicted to cell phones, because of social media and gaming. According to recent studies, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Whatsapp have gained prominence and have experienced substantial user and subscriber growth.²⁹ Every

¹⁷ Abebe, "Storytelling through Popular Music: Social Memory, Reconciliation, and Intergenerational Healing in Oromia/Ethiopia."

¹⁸ Abebe, "Storytelling through Popular Music: Social Memory, Reconciliation, and Intergenerational Healing in Oromia/Ethiopia"; Tuwe, "The African Oral Tradition Paradigm of Storytelling as a Methodological Framework: Employment Experiences for African Communities in New Zealand."

¹⁹ Abebe, "Storytelling through Popular Music: Social Memory, Reconciliation, and Intergenerational Healing in Oromia/Ethiopia."

²⁰ Eylem Atakav, "Growing Up Married (2016): Representing Forced Marriage on Screen," *Critical Discourse Studies* 17, no. 2 (March 14, 2020): 229–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2019.1665078>.

²¹ Nadarajan Thambu, "Storytelling and Story Reading: A Catalyst for Inculcate Moral Values and Ethics among Preschoolers,"

International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences 7, no. 6 (2017): 1116–30; Maila D. H. Rahiem, "Technological Barriers and Challenges in the Use of ICT during the COVID-19 Emergency Remote Learning," *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 8, no. 11B (November 2020): 6124–33, <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.082248>.

²² Victoria L Joffe, Lorna Rixon, and Charles Hulme, "Improving Storytelling and Vocabulary in Secondary School Students with Language Disorder: A Randomized Controlled Trial," *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders* 54, no. 4 (2019): 656–72.

²³ Véronique Rizzi et al., "Designing a Creative Storytelling Workshop to Build Self-Confidence and Trust among Adolescents," *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 38 (December 2020): 100704, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2020.100704>.

²⁴ W. E Vine and William Jr. White, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co., 1985).

²⁵ Amali, "The Function of Folktales as a Process of Educating Children in the 21st Century: A Case Study of Idoma Folktales."

²⁶ Amali, "The Function of Folktales as a Process of Educating Children in the 21st Century: A Case Study of Idoma Folktales."

²⁷ Abebe, "Storytelling through Popular Music: Social Memory, Reconciliation, and Intergenerational Healing in Oromia/Ethiopia."

²⁸ Tuwe, "The African Oral Tradition Paradigm of Storytelling as a Methodological Framework: Employment Experiences for African Communities in New Zealand."

²⁹ Quatro Mgogo and Sinoyolo Nokutywa, "Reinterpreting Technological Language: The Use of Facebook Emojis to Construct New Meanings in IsiXhosa Language," in *African Language Media* (Routledge, 2023), 79–97.

day, both adults and children watch television. As a result, these researchers have shown that storytelling is eroding daily.

Oral storytelling preserves culture in classrooms, and improves children's vocabulary, language skills, speaking and listening abilities.³⁰ For pupils from backgrounds, with rich oral traditions, in particular, oral storytelling improves literacy and language competency. According to Dyson and Genishi and Heath, it aids in the development of listening, understanding, and expressive language skills.³¹ The enhancement of critical thinking abilities, creativity, active learning, narrative thinking skills, and interpersonal skills can all be facilitated by studying live oral storytelling. Long before book reading is introduced, early literacy abilities can be developed through oral storytelling. "Storytelling is universal, and is popular in cultures where it became the medium in which the people used to preserve their beliefs, social values, wisdom, and cultural experiences, as well as to transfer them from one generation to another."³² In the past, community elders connected, illustrated and communicated with students through stories.³³ This indicates that communities employed storytelling as a means of imparting knowledge, preserving oral history, and teaching indigenous people about cultural standards.³⁴

Both formal and informal contexts were used for storytelling. Certain storytellers were regarded as court historians or oral artists, and they honed unique storytelling skills, such as the ability to recall specific events through the telling of protracted history.³⁵ In other contexts, storytelling served as a means of parent-child education or as a communal participation experience.³⁶ In the past, elderly members of the community would relax by reading stories to their young children, in the evening, after a demanding workday.³⁷

Given that Indonesia is home to many different traditional tribes, races, and customs, it is required of the school to serve as a hub for the growth, protection, and exchange of these cultural components.³⁸ Studies have indicated that the inclusion of oral storytelling in the Indonesian curriculum plays a significant role in the cultural preservation of Indonesia. This study confirms that if the Indonesian curriculum had not been changed, oral storytelling in schools would have not been practised and culture would have not been preserved at all.

Zort et. al asserts that oral storytelling serves a major purpose beyond simple entertainment, as it conveys significant cultural values essential to the development of civilization.³⁹

Similarly, a study carried out in Kenya by Opondo, found that oral storytelling was included in drama festivals in Kenyan schools and colleges around the mid-1990s, along with other curriculum changes.⁴⁰ The goal was to maintain an oral tradition among the indigenous people who appeared to be at risk of dying out. Mahala supports the initiative to include oral storytelling in the Kenyan curriculum, as he believes that the inclusion of oral literature studies in Kenya's official curriculum has promoted oral literature performance, especially, oral narrative in formal educational settings.⁴¹ The authors, in this paper, argue for the inclusion of oral traditional storytelling in the curriculum as it benefits both learners and teachers in preserving the language. This is because stories are recounted in indigenous languages,

³⁰ Meghan B. Owenz and Blaine J. Fowers, "A Goal-Theoretic Framework for Parental Screen-Time-Monitoring Behaviour," *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 12, no. 3 (September 8, 2020): 335–49, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12384>.

³¹ Anne Haas Dyson and Celia Genishi, *The Need for Story: Cultural Diversity in Classroom and Community*. (ERIC, 1994); S.B. Heath, *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

³² Simeon Edosomwan and Claudette M Peterson, "A History of Oral and Written Storytelling in Nigeria.," *Commission for International Adult Education*, 2016, 4.

³³ Edosomwan and Peterson, "A History of Oral and Written Storytelling in Nigeria."

³⁴ Verbina and Damodaran, "Tradition of Oral Literature in the Works of Chinua Achebe-An Insight."

³⁵ Tuwe, "The African Oral Tradition Paradigm of Storytelling as a Methodological Framework: Employment Experiences for African Communities in New Zealand."

³⁶ Verbina and Damodaran, "Tradition of Oral Literature in the Works of Chinua Achebe-An Insight"; Tuwe, "The African Oral Tradition Paradigm of Storytelling as a Methodological Framework: Employment Experiences for African Communities in New Zealand."

³⁷ Edosomwan and Peterson, "A History of Oral and Written Storytelling in Nigeria."

³⁸ Tristan Rokhmawan and M. Bayu Firmansyah, "Cultural Literacy Development Based On Local Oralstories As The Cultural Identity Of Kebonsari Elementary School," *ISLLAC : Journal of Intensive Studies on Language, Literature, Art, and Culture* 1, no. 1 (September 15, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.17977/um006v1i12017p224>.

³⁹ Çağın Zort et al., "Sharing of Cultural Values and Heritage through Storytelling in the Digital Age," *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (2023): 1104121.

⁴⁰ Rose A Opondo, "Oral Storytelling and National Kinship: Reflections on the Oral Narrative Performance in the Kenya Schools and Colleges Drama Festivals: Dossier-Orality and Technauriture of African Literatures," *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde* 51, no. 1 (2014): 118–31.

⁴¹ Mahala, "The Changing Topography of Short Story Writing in South Africa."

thus, allowing the learners to withdraw knowledge from their primary languages, thereby preserving their culture. Language is culture. Language is a fundamental tool for acquiring and passing down one's culture, and it is utilised to identify and differentiate between various ethnic groups and cultures.⁴²

In this inquiry, the authors are of the opinion that even though the current curriculum caters to oral storytelling, it is rather not enough. The authors agree with Hlalele in the decolonization of the curriculum as it has the influence of the west.⁴³ Datta contends that African people should not rely on Western-dominated stories as the basis of their discussions on traditionally related issues; they should rather gather information from their own stories, which reflect their identities.⁴⁴

The authors concur with both Hlalele and Datta, in the sense that oral storytelling should be authentic for it to serve its main purpose.⁴⁵ This suggests that learners should tell stories from their own backgrounds, that is, stories that reflect their histories. Such stories bear testimony of their origins and are transferred orally from one generation to the next, strengthening their roots as Africans.

A gap identified by the authors is that South African culture is in the bluff of losing its values, and its rich culture. Hlalele states that the introduction of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement in South Africa called for the recognition of the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS).⁴⁶ However, because “Indigenous Knowledge Systems reside among the majority of South Africans, the topic has not been given the attention in educational curriculum development policies it deserves, resulting in a lack of attention to indigenous knowledge in the discursive terrains of all learning areas/subjects.”⁴⁷ However, in South Africa, the demand for a decolonized curriculum is growing. Indigenous Knowledge Systems value and incorporate local information and ways of knowing, in contrast to the school curriculum that emphasizes knowledge from western perspectives.⁴⁸

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Storytelling is a potent teaching tool that complements Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and helps to preserve culture in schools. This hypothesis highlights the role that cultural resources and social interactions play in the development of cognitive abilities. As a culturally rich activity, storytelling helps learners enhance their cognitive abilities as well as transmit cultural values. According to Vygotsky's theory, social interactions within a cultural framework are how learners acquire new skills and grow cognitively. Vygotsky further posits that language and stories—two cultural tools—are essential to the development of higher mental functions since learning is inherently a social activity. As a common cultural activity, storytelling works well as a vehicle for this kind of communication. An appropriate medium for this contact is storytelling, which is a pervasive cultural practice.

METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigm

This study used an Interpretive Research Paradigm. Abdulkareem and Kumatongo, postulate that interpretivists hold that there are several historical, particular, and non-generalizable realities and truths about the social world rather than a single, overarching one.⁴⁹ Therefore, interpretations of occurrences are derived from human creation and are thus unique and individualized.

⁴² Tertsea Joseph Ikyoive, “African Storytelling: A Theatrical Recipe for Teaching and Learning.,” in *Paper Presentation, 1st Biennial Conference of The Faculty of Arts International Conference, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 2011.*

⁴³ D. Hlalele, “Introducing Participatory Rural Appraisal Methodologies to Rural Education Research,” in *Conference Proceedings* (Bergen, Norway, , 2013).

⁴⁴ Ranjan Datta, “Traditional Storytelling: An Effective Indigenous Research Methodology and Its Implications for Environmental Research,” *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 14, no. 1 (2018): 35–44.

⁴⁵ Hlalele, “Introducing Participatory Rural Appraisal Methodologies to Rural Education Research.” Datta, “Traditional Storytelling: An Effective Indigenous Research Methodology and Its Implications for Environmental Research.”

⁴⁶ Hlalele, “Introducing Participatory Rural Appraisal Methodologies to Rural Education Research”; Department of Basic Education, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement.* (Pretoria , 2011).

⁴⁷ Alvin Daniel Riffel, “An Insight into a School’s Readiness to Implement a CAPS Related Indigenous Knowledge Curriculum for Meteorological Sciences.,” *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 3, no. 11 (2015): 909.

⁴⁸ Hlalele, “Introducing Participatory Rural Appraisal Methodologies to Rural Education Research.”

⁴⁹ Hanan Waleed Al-Shami, Hoda A S Al-Alwan, and Tamarah A Abdulkareem, “Cultural Sustainability in Urban Third Places: Assessing the Impact of Co-Operation in Science and Technology’ in Cultural Third Places,” *Ain Shams Engineering Journal* 15, no. 3 (2024): 102465; Brighton Kumatongo and Kenneth Kapalu Muzata, “Research Paradigms and Designs with Their Application in Education,” *Journal of Lexicography and Terminology (Online ISSN 2664-0899. Print ISSN 2517-9306).* 5, no. 1 (2021): 16–32.

Research Approach

Creswell articulates that when undertaking an exploratory or investigative study that aims to comprehend life experiences in a particular environment, the qualitative research strategy makes use of a variety of simple, adaptable, and easily understood procedures and techniques.⁵⁰ Creswell emphasizes even more that qualitative research methodology is carried out in a natural context to document people's actual experiences and identify the major problems that they face.⁵¹ Thus, this inquiry adopted a qualitative approach, which enabled the authors to be able to examine and probe deeper into the phenomenon under investigation.

Research Design

In order to gain a better knowledge of the current problem, this study employed an exploratory research design, which is defined as research used to investigate a problem that is not precisely defined.⁵² However, the study will not yield definitive conclusions.

Participant Selection

The population for this study was grade 9 isiXhosa Home Language and English First Language. This population was chosen because grade 9 does not have prescribed texts by the Department of Education. The researcher is of the opinion that storytelling could compensate for the unavailability of prescribed texts in this grade. Purposeful sampling was used to select 6 teachers, that is, 3 isiXhosa Home Language teachers and 3 EFAL teachers. The reason for choosing language teachers is that a nation's culture is portrayed through language. For the purpose of this study criterion sampling was appropriate.

Data Collection Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were administered to gather requisite information about how language teachers employ storytelling in their classrooms. Therefore, this technique provided deep information on why oral storytelling, as a form of preserving culture, is fading, and the challenges faced by teachers in engaging learners in storytelling. Interviews were conducted in both English and isiXhosa. Interviews, which were audio-taped, with the participants' permission, were conducted for a period of three days. Two participants were interviewed each day. This enabled the researchers to obtain rich data by making follow-up questions, where appropriate, to get clarity on certain issues.

Data Analysis

Analysing data involves examining data in ways that reveal the relationships, patterns, or trends within it. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Data were carefully studied; similar responses were grouped into patterns, and then into themes. Data analysis is a process of transferring raw data into variables that can be analysed to produce information constructed by the researcher.⁵³ Patterns were identified through a rigorous process of data familiarisation, data coding, and theme development and revision.

PRESENTATION OF DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The objectives of this paper were to investigate the challenges faced by schools in preserving culture. Another objective was to determine ways by which oral storytelling can be revived in schools. The findings of this inquiry were discussed in relation to the themes that emerged from data analysis. Themes that emerged from the first objective include change in societal roles, and curriculum design and implementation. From the latter, themes that emerged were; involvement in cultural activities, community engagement, and integration of storytelling into the curriculum. Table 1.1 below shows the relationship between the objectives and themes that emerged from the categorisation of data.

⁵⁰ J.W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. (London: Sage, 2013).

⁵¹ John W Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (Pearson, 2015).

⁵² Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*.

⁵³ E. Babbie and J. Mouton, *The Practice of Social Research* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Table 1.1 Objectives and Themes

Objectives	Themes
To investigate challenges faced by schools in preserving culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in societal roles • Curriculum design and implementation
To determine ways by which oral storytelling can be revived in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in cultural activities • Community involvement • Integration of storytelling into the curriculum

Objective 1: Challenges faced by the schools in preserving culture through oral storytelling**Theme 1: Change in societal roles**

With the growth of technology, elderly people in society are no longer able to gather children to conduct oral storytelling sessions, which are regarded as important for the preservation of culture. Modern societies, as agents of preserving culture, have neglected traditional storytelling.⁵⁴ This problem does not affect communities only, but schools, as well, are facing the same challenge as education starts at home. Some participants articulated that societal roles have changed drastically.

Nowadays, instead of sitting around the fire and telling stories to children, the present generation watches Television. Also, the elderly people are obsessed with soapies and other media stories.
(Participant D)

The claim above indicates that the new generation does not learn stories from their elders. Instead, the media has taken over, thus, the quest for storytelling has declined. Utami and Sama postulate that depending on the storytelling medium, a generation's level of interest in a particular folktale may change.⁵⁵ The poll found that, with a 46% approval rating, animation has become one of the most popular formats for telling classic stories. Conversely, only 33% and 21% of submissions were accepted for films and comics, respectively. In a study conducted by Cintya, it was discovered that the manner in which traditional folklore is presented may be a contributing factor to the waning interest of newer generations in storytelling, more specifically, how these stories are told may provide light on this pattern.⁵⁶

Even though Utami and Sama's exploratory tests suggest that storytelling media can change the acceptance of traditional folklore, the content of traditional folklore itself may affect the adoption of traditional folklore.⁵⁷ However, because of their quicker cognitive speeds, younger generations have different preferences than older generations.⁵⁸ The younger generation has very different customs and lifestyles from the group that grew up listening to traditional folktales. These differences may be the reason for the younger generation's lack of interest in traditional folklore. The everyday actions of the main characters are just different from those of the youth of today. The previously described research also shows how traditional folklore, mainly from Romania, is significantly modified to appeal to a younger audience through this incident.

Storytelling events or platforms can be used as a space for advocacy, where issues of social justice and equity are brought to the forefront. Narrating stories depicting how the indigenous people survived racial discrimination can be beneficial and educate the younger generation about social justice. These platforms can also provide a space for dialogue and collective problem-solving.

⁵⁴ Abrar Hiswara, Adit Mohammad Aziz, and Yenik Pujowati, "Cultural Preservation in a Globalized World: Strategies for Sustaining Heritage," *West Science Social and Humanities Studies* 1, no. 03 (2023): 98–106.

⁵⁵ Putri Utami and Hendi Sama, "An Exploratory Study of Digital Traditional Folklore and Its Acceptance Among Generation Z in Indonesia," *INFOKUM* 10, no. 5 (2022): 460–67.

⁵⁶ Hedi Amelia Bella Cintya, "Redesign The Traditional Folklore: Achieving A Sustainable Folklore For The Future Generation," *Ultimart: Jurnal Komunikasi Visual* 16, no. 1 (2023): 50–64.

⁵⁷ Utami and Sama, "An Exploratory Study of Digital Traditional Folklore and Its Acceptance Among Generation Z in Indonesia."

⁵⁸ Rahmat Hidayat and Abdillah Abdillah, "Ilmu Pendidikan: Konsep, Teori Dan Aplikasinya," 2019.

Theme 2: Curriculum design and implementation

Some of the participants complained about the current curriculum that does not cater for the practice of oral storytelling which plays a significant role in preserving culture.

The curriculum does not give enough time for oral storytelling. It is more on assessments that are textbook-based. (Participant F)

Our ATPs do not allow enough space for that and secondly, schools are run in English. (Participant B)

According to the participants' responses, the assessment-based curriculum poses a great threat to the fading of storytelling, thus, losing precious culture as oral storytelling's purpose is to preserve culture. The curriculum should cater for oral storytelling. As the participants complain about the curriculum that does not cater for oral storytelling, CAPS indicates that oral storytelling should be administered. Even though CAPS allows oral story-telling the participants' cry is the time to administer it.

One of the primary challenges is designing a curriculum that adequately reflects and respects cultural heritage. Schools often struggle to incorporate cultural content without making the curriculum overly complex or burdensome.⁵⁹ Teachers are vital to the preservation of culture, but many are not trained in culturally sensitive teaching practices. It is vital to guarantee that educators possess both cultural sensitivity and understanding.⁶⁰ The statements made by the individuals above indicated that English is the primary language spoken in schools. This implies that it can be challenging to strike a balance between the cultural representation of varied student populations. The primary languages of the learners are, thus, marginalized. Minority cultures must be represented in schools without putting them or other groups at risk of marginalization.⁶¹ It is essential to have administration and policy support at all levels—school, district, and federal. It is difficult for schools to develop complete cultural preservation programs since policies frequently do not prioritize cultural education.⁶²

The authors argue that the curriculum could include traditional storytelling and adapt to address modern challenges such as poverty, climate change, and corruption. Storytellers can encourage action and increase awareness by including these topics in their storytelling. Moreover, these messages can reach a wider audience by utilising technology to distribute tales extensively via social media and digital platforms, especially among young people and urban populations. Yeararta and Kelly articulate that digital storytelling exposes learners to a variety of media stories, which enhance their critical thinking skills and question certain occurrences in quest of social justice.⁶³

Objective 2: How oral storytelling can be revived in schools to preserve culture

Theme 1: Involvement in cultural activities

Oral storytelling stimulates creativity and imagination, encouraging students to create and share their own stories. This creative process is deeply tied to cultural expression and innovation.⁶⁴ Participants voiced that storytelling sessions and cultural activities can be used to revive storytelling.

“Organise storytelling competitions. Storytelling competitions amongst learners, classes, and schools. Schools should also have competitions and award certificates and trophies for telling stories but the challenge is the lack of funds to organise these events. (Participant B)

⁵⁹ G. Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice* (Teachers College Press, 2000); James A Banks, *Cultural Diversity and Education: Foundations, Curriculum, and Teaching* (Routledge, 2015).

⁶⁰ Christine E Sleeter, “Preparing Teachers for Culturally Diverse Schools: Research and the Overwhelming Presence of Whiteness,” *Journal of Teacher Education* 52, no. 2 (2001): 94–106; Gloria Ladson-Billings, “But That’s Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy,” *Theory into Practice* 34, no. 3 (1995): 159–65.

⁶¹ Sonia Nieto, *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities* (Teachers College Press, 2015); Banks, *Cultural Diversity and Education: Foundations, Curriculum, and Teaching*.

⁶² Michael Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change* (Teachers college press, 2015); D.B. Tyack and L. Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform* (Harvard University Press, 1995).

⁶³ Lindsay Yeararta and Katie Kelly, “Digital Storytelling to Enhance Social Studies Content Knowledge, Explore Multiple Perspectives, and Advocate for Social Justice,” in *Connecting Disciplinary Literacy and Digital Storytelling in K-12 Education* (IGI Global, 2021), 235–56.

⁶⁴ Nonceba Nolundi Mabovula, “The Erosion of African Communal Values: A Reappraisal of the African Ubuntu Philosophy,” *Inkanyiso: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2011): 38–47.

Cultural activities create a communal learning environment where students and teachers share experiences and build connections. This communal aspect reinforces cultural values and collective memory.⁶⁵

However, adequate resources and funding are necessary to support cultural programs, including materials, cultural events, and specialized staff. Many schools, particularly those in underfunded areas, struggle to allocate sufficient resources.⁶⁶ Participants further advised that societies like book clubs, debate clubs, and reading clubs to cater for the practice of oral storytelling. Also, oral storytelling competitions will surely gain moments and instil interest in learners as they will be done purposefully.

Since participants complained about not being given enough time by CAPS to practice oral storytelling, some countries have gone the extra mile to revive oral storytelling. In Italy, PoliCultura was introduced to cater for oral storytelling. PoliCultura is designed as an educational competition for Italian schools, where students are required to finish a "multimedia narrative" on various subjects that are either suggested by the organizers or freely chosen by the competitors. A number of stories, about "1001 stories", must be used in the creation of the multimedia tale.⁶⁷ By incorporating storytelling into the curriculum, initiatives like the UK's "Storytelling Schools" program have demonstrated beneficial results in the development of literacy and cultural involvement.⁶⁸ Similarly, native language and cultural knowledge have been successfully preserved and revitalized through indigenous storytelling initiatives in Australia and Canada.⁶⁹

Theme 2: Community Engagement

Students can interact with their cultural roots through oral storytelling, which promotes greater awareness and respect for their ancestry. It facilitates the development of pupils' sense of self and community.⁷⁰ Active community participation is necessary for effective cultural preservation. Building solid relationships with parents and nearby cultural institutions is something that schools frequently struggle to do.⁷¹ Some participants suggested that the best way to preserve culture in schools could be the involvement of the elder members of the society, who will narrate traditional stories to learners.

Parents can be invited to schools to narrate stories. This can be done weekly or monthly.
(Participant F)

Participants have a strong belief that the involvement of parents in story-telling at school can have beneficial gains. By exposing learners to a range of cultures and viewpoints, storytelling may foster empathy and a cross-cultural understanding. Different cultural narratives can be shared, and valued on this platform.⁷² One essential element of culture is language. Schools must encourage students' native tongues while simultaneously guaranteeing their fluency in the prevailing language for academic and general communication needs.⁷³ Thus, the involvement of community members can strengthen storytelling activities, which will hone the preservation of culture.

⁶⁵ Mary McCullum Baldasaro, Nancy Maldonado, and Beate Baltus, "Storytelling to Teach Cultural Awareness: The Right Story at the Right Time," *Learning Landscapes* 7, no. 2 (2014): 219–32.

⁶⁶ Linda Darling-Hammond, *The Flat World and Education: How America's Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Future* (Teachers College Press, 2015).

⁶⁷ Ido A. Jurgel et al., "CREACTOR – An Authoring Framework for Virtual Actors," 2009, 562–63, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-04380-2_92.

⁶⁸ Ageliki Nicolopoulou et al., "Using a Narrative-and Play-Based Activity to Promote Low-Income Preschoolers' Oral Language, Emergent Literacy, and Social Competence," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 31 (2015): 147–62.

⁶⁹ Rebecca Isbell et al., "The Effects of Storytelling and Story Reading on the Oral Language Complexity and Story Comprehension of Young Children," *Early Childhood Education Journal* 32 (2004): 157–63.

⁷⁰ A. McKeough and R. Genereux, "Transforming Classroom Narrative Practices to Promote Social Relations and Learning," *Educational Researcher* 32, no. 3 (2003): 15–20; Jo-ann Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (UBC press, 2008).

⁷¹ Joyce L Epstein, "School, Family, and Community Partnerships," *Preparing Educators and Improving Schools*, (Philadelphia, PE: Westview Press, 2011), 2016; Anne T Henderson and Karen L Mapp, "A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement. Annual Synthesis, 2002.," 2002.

⁷² Rudine Sims Bishop, "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors. Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom, 6 (3)," *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom* 6, no. 3 (1990): ix–xi; Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," *American Educational Research Journal* 32, no. 3 (1995): 465–91.

⁷³ Jim Cummins, "Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire," *Multilingual Matters*, 2000; Ofelia García and Jo Anne Kleifgen, *Educating Emergent Bilinguals: Policies, Programs, and Practices for English Learners* (Teachers College Press, 2018).

Narratives have the potential to educate communities, particularly young ones, about human rights, equity, and social justice.⁷⁴ Schools, community centres, and even media platforms can be used for this. Storytellers can promote empathy and understanding, two qualities that are critical for social justice and cohesion, by narrating tales that highlight the hardships and goals of other groups. Certain classic tales perpetuate negative stereotypes or patriarchal standards. Promoting social justice and gender equality can be accomplished through rewriting these tales to question prevailing conventions.⁷⁵ It is ensured that there is a greater tapestry of stories that reflect the diversity of African societies by involving storytellers from varied social and cultural backgrounds.

Theme 3: Integrating oral storytelling into the curriculum

All the participants have a great understanding of ways of preserving culture through oral storytelling. Participants highlighted that for culture to be preserved through oral storytelling people should tell stories that teach about the significance and value of traditions and ways of life. For oral storytelling to be practiced more often, learners should transfer the acts into the essence of knowledge and let learners tell their stories in their language as language is considered as culture. Oral storytelling activities in the learning process in the classroom bring benefits like instilling moral values that apply in society through storytelling.⁷⁶

It can be preserved by telling their own stories in their own language. Language is culture, so if learners use their language culture can be preserved. (Participant E)

By telling stories that teach about the significance and value of traditions and way of life. (Participant B)

The participants' responses above indicated that allowing learners to tell stories in their own languages can be beneficial. Using the learners' native languages to tell stories links them with their cultural backgrounds. Additionally, integrating oral storytelling into the curriculum can enrich students' educational experiences by providing diverse perspectives and promoting cultural understanding and empathy.⁷⁷ Furthermore, curricula should be designed to balance the acquisition of technical skills with the preservation and appreciation of cultural traditions. By embracing oral storytelling, schools can create dynamic and inclusive learning that honours and perpetuates cultural heritage. Preserving culture within educational settings is a multifaceted challenge that involves balancing modernisation and tradition, accommodating diverse student backgrounds, and integrating cultural heritage into the curriculum.

Traditional storytelling in Africa has always been a powerful tool for conveying values, cultural heritage, and communal wisdom.⁷⁸ Traditional storytelling is multifaceted as it embraces social justice and equity, in several meaningful ways.⁷⁹ Storytelling has the power to incorporate diverse voices and narratives. Because everyone can tell a story, it has the power to represent marginalised groups. To incorporate the experiences and viewpoints of marginalised groups, such as ethnic minorities and the disabled, traditional tales can be updated. Including them can increase awareness of their struggles and validate their experiences.

Despite its benefits, incorporating oral storytelling into modern education faces several challenges. Teachers may lack the training or resources to effectively integrate storytelling into their teaching practices.⁸⁰ Additionally, the pressure to meet academic standards and performance metrics can limit the time available for such activities.⁸¹ There is also a perceived lack of relevance in a fast-paced, technology-driven world, where digital media often overshadow traditional storytelling methods.⁸²

⁷⁴ Lee Anne Bell, *Storytelling for Social Justice: Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching* (Routledge, 2010), <https://pumble.com/blog/coaching-leadership/>.

⁷⁵ Bell, *Storytelling for Social Justice: Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching*.

⁷⁶ Thambu, "Storytelling and Story Reading: A Catalyst for Inculcate Moral Values and Ethics among Preschoolers."

⁷⁷ Jack Zipes, *Creative Storytelling: Building Community/Changing Lives* (Routledge, 2013).

⁷⁸ Tuwe, "The African Oral Tradition Paradigm of Storytelling as a Methodological Framework: Employment Experiences for African Communities in New Zealand."

⁷⁹ Susie Miles, "Distinguishing Inauthenticities: The Role of Personal Storytelling in Engaging with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Education," *Turning Toward Being: The Journal of Ontological Inquiry in Education* 1, no. 2 (2023): 3.

⁸⁰ V Paley, *The Boy Who Would Be a Helicopter* (University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁸¹ K. Robinson, *Out of Our Minds: Learning to Be Creative* (Capstone, 2001).

⁸² Henry Jenkins, "Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide," *Revista Austral de Ciencias Sociales* 20 (2011): 129–33.

Since traditional oral storytelling has been abandoned by modern society, schools have become cultural hubs for oral stories and preserved versions of local oral histories that are all but extinct.⁸³ Kids spend the majority of their time in school, and those same kids are the cultural ambassadors for the following generation. Thus, through the incorporation of storytelling into the curriculum, schools can contribute to the preservation of culture. Oral storytelling should be used in classrooms as part of the teaching and learning process to prevent the extinction of culture. Storytelling can encourage listeners to question existing power structures and norms by presenting alternative viewpoints and fostering discussions around justice and equity.

Discussion Summary

The objective of this paper was to investigate the challenges faced by schools in preserving culture through oral storytelling. Also, it sought to determine how storytelling can be revived in schools to preserve culture. Thematic analysis of data gathered through semi-structured interviews indicated that some of the challenges contributing to the decline of storytelling in schools are; changes in societal roles, and curriculum design and implementation. Findings also revealed that in schools, culture can be preserved through involvement in cultural activities, community engagement, and integrating storytelling into the curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this inquiry, the authors recommend that educational policymakers and stakeholders need to recognise the value of oral storytelling in preserving heritage and fostering well-rounded student development. This could be done through the organisation of cultural activities in which learners participate in oral storytelling. The authors also recommend that culturally literate people from communities, including parents, should be utilised in schools to conduct storytelling sessions in order to preserve culture. Professional development programs should be implemented to equip teachers with the skills and confidence to incorporate storytelling into their classrooms. Preservation of culture requires a concerted effort from educators, policymakers, and communities to value and promote storytelling as a vital component of education.

Strong narratives that speak to both older and younger generations can be produced through partnerships between traditional storytellers and modern artists or social activists. It is essential to make sure that the histories of all communities—especially those that are in danger of disappearing—are recorded and kept alive. This guarantees that all groups' knowledge and experiences are respected and contributes to the preservation of cultural variety. The original contexts and meanings of indigenous stories should be respected, while also using them to promote equity and justice. By embracing these strategies, traditional storytelling in Africa can continue to be a vital tool for promoting social justice and equity, ensuring that it remains relevant and impactful in contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

Oral storytelling is a multifaceted tool that can significantly contribute to cultural preservation in schools. It enhances cultural awareness, bridges generations, develops language skills, promotes multicultural understanding, encourages creativity, fosters community, and caters for diverse learning styles. Integrating storytelling into the curriculum requires thoughtful planning and support from educators, but the benefits for cultural preservation and student development are substantial. Oral storytelling is not just a means of entertainment: it is a powerful educational tool. It enhances listening skills, memory, and imagination while fostering a sense of community and shared identity. Stories passed down through generations carry the wisdom, values, and historical knowledge of cultures and should be maintained for the sake of posterity.

⁸³ Rokhmawan and Firmansyah, "Cultural Literacy Development Based On Local Oralstories As The Cultural Identity Of Kebonsari Elementary School."

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ABOUT AUTHORS

Yamkela Ntwalana holds an Honour's degree in Curriculum Studies in isiXhosa from Walter Sisulu University, South Africa. Yamkela is an award-winning author of isiXhosa books (Intlungu Yezandlebe, and Inzulu Le Nto), and three poetry anthologies (Tyatyadula Siba Lwam, Umbona Umnandi Ngokwabelana, and Ezinye Iingcambu Azifi Kuphele). Yamkela is a praise singer and formal poet who uses poetry to tackle cutting-edge societal matters. As an advocate of multilingual education, in 2016, he formed a book club aimed at reviving oral storytelling and preserving the isiXhosa language.

Nomasomi Hilda Matiso holds a Doctor of Education degree from Walter Sisulu University, South Africa. She also has a Master of Arts (MA) degree in Linguistics, with Phonetics and Phonology, Morphology and Syntax, Grammar and Usage as her majors. As a lecturer of Curriculum Studies in English, she has a passion for developing English Language Teaching and Learning pedagogies, in particular, the Text-based Approach. She has authored, co-authored, and published papers in International and National Journals.