JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY & EDUCATIONAL STUDIES (JRITES)
Homepage: http://Journals.unizik.edu.ng/index.php/jrites
e-ISSN 3122-0436
Vol 2 Issue 3 (2026) 89-97

Relevance and Adequacy of Senior Secondary School Hausa Language Curriculum to the Socio-Cultural Realities of Students in Taraba State

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Abstract: This study investigated the relevance and adequacy of the senior secondary school Hausa language curriculum to the socio-cultural realities of students in Taraba State, Nigeria. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was adopted. The sample comprised 480 students and 48 Hausa language teachers selected through multi-stage sampling from 24 public senior secondary schools across the three senatorial districts of the state. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, and analyzed using descriptive statistics, and thematic analysis. Findings revealed moderate overall relevance of the curriculum. While traditional festivals, literature, and moral values were rated as relevant, significant gaps existed in the coverage of traditional occupations, indigenous knowledge systems, inter-ethnic communication, and contemporary socio-cultural issues. The study concludes that the curriculum is only partially adequate for the multi-ethnic context of Taraba State and recommends contextualized curriculum review, inclusion of local socio-cultural content, and enhanced teacher capacity to improve relevance.

Keyword: Relevance, Adequacy, Senior Secondary School, Hausa Language, Curriculum, Socio-Cultural Realities of Students, Taraba State

INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a tool of communication; it is the primary vehicle through which a people transmit their worldview, values, history, and socio-cultural identity from one generation to another. In multilingual Nigeria, the teaching of indigenous languages in the formal school system occupies a strategic place in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013). Among these languages, Hausa occupies a privileged position. It is one of the three major Nigerian languages (alongside Igbo and Yoruba) that the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) has developed into a full senior secondary school curriculum. The Hausa language curriculum for Senior Secondary School (SSS) aims to equip learners with competence in the sound system, grammar, literature (oral and written), and cultural practices of the Hausa people, while also fostering national unity and cultural preservation (NERDC, 2008; WAEC, n.d.).

Taraba State, located in the North-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, presents a particularly interesting setting for examining the relevance and adequacy of this curriculum. The state is one of the most ethnically heterogeneous in the country, with over seventy

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linguistic groups (Alkali & Lukman, 2019). Despite this diversity, Hausa functions widely as a lingua franca for inter-ethnic communication, trade, and social interaction (Mgbemena, Agyo & Akafa, 2026). Many students in senior secondary schools across Taraba therefore encounter Hausa both as a school subject and as a language of everyday life. Their socio-cultural realities are shaped by a complex interplay of indigenous traditions, Islamic and Christian influences, agrarian lifestyles, inter-ethnic relations, and the pressures of modernisation and insecurity. A curriculum that is intended to develop linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness must, therefore, be examined against the lived experiences, values, and communicative needs of these students.

Curriculum relevance refers to the extent to which the content, objectives, and learning experiences of a programme correspond to the needs, interests, and socio-cultural contexts of the learners for whom it is designed (Tyler, 1949; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017). Adequacy, on the other hand, concerns the sufficiency, depth, and appropriateness of the content and pedagogical provisions in enabling learners to achieve the intended outcomes. When a language curriculum fails to reflect the socio-cultural realities of its users, it risks becoming abstract, demotivating, and ultimately ineffective in promoting either linguistic competence or cultural continuity (Bamgbose, 2000; Adegbija, 2004).

Previous studies on indigenous language education in Nigeria have highlighted both the policy commitment to mother-tongue and Nigerian language instruction and the persistent challenges of implementation, including inadequate teaching materials, teacher competence, and limited cultural responsiveness of curricula (Fafunwa, 1989; Olaoye, 2013; Wushishi et al., 2016). While the NERDC Hausa curriculum and the associated schemes of work cover important domains such as traditional festivals (*bukukuwa*), indigenous medicine (*magunguna gargajiya*), traditional occupations (*sana'oin gargajiya*), and literary forms, there remains a paucity of empirical investigation into how well these contents align with the specific socio-cultural realities of students in a multi-ethnic state such as Taraba. Most existing evaluations of Hausa language education have concentrated on the core Hausa-speaking states of the North-West, leaving a significant knowledge gap concerning peripheral but Hausa-using contexts.

This study is therefore motivated by the need to interrogate the degree of congruence between the senior secondary school Hausa language curriculum and the socio-cultural realities of students in Taraba State. It seeks to determine whether the curriculum content adequately reflects the communicative practices, cultural values, occupational patterns, and inter-ethnic dynamics that characterize the daily lives of these learners, and whether the curriculum is sufficiently robust to prepare them for effective participation in both local and wider Nigerian society.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the content of the senior secondary school Hausa language curriculum reflect the socio-cultural realities of students in Taraba State?
2. How adequate is the coverage of cultural elements in the curriculum for students in a multi-ethnic context such as Taraba State?
3. What gaps exist between the prescribed curriculum and the lived socio-cultural realities of senior secondary school students in Taraba State, and how might these gaps be addressed?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, specifically the convergent parallel mixed-methods approach. This design was considered appropriate because the research questions required both quantitative measurement of the perceived relevance and adequacy of the curriculum and qualitative exploration of the socio-cultural realities and lived experiences of students and teachers in Taraba State. Quantitative data provided breadth and generalizability regarding stakeholders' perceptions, while qualitative data offered depth and contextual understanding of the congruence (or lack thereof) between the official Hausa language curriculum and the socio-cultural environment of the learners (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The two strands were conducted concurrently, analyzed separately, and then merged during interpretation to achieve complementarity and triangulation.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Taraba State, located in the North-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Taraba is characterized by high ethnic and linguistic diversity, with over seventy ethnic groups. Despite this heterogeneity, Hausa functions as a widely used lingua franca for inter-ethnic communication, commerce, and social interaction across the state. The state is divided into three senatorial districts (Northern, Central, and Southern) and sixteen Local Government Areas. Senior secondary schools offering Hausa language as a subject are distributed across urban, semi-urban, and rural settings, providing a suitable context for examining curriculum relevance in a multi-ethnic environment.

Population of the Study

The target population comprised all Senior Secondary School (SSS) students offering Hausa language and all Hausa language teachers in public senior secondary schools in Taraba State. According to the Taraba State Ministry of Education (2025/2026 academic session records), there were approximately 28,450 SSS students offering Hausa and 312 Hausa language teachers across the state.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. In the first stage, the three senatorial districts of Taraba State were deliberately selected to ensure geographical representation. In the second stage, six Local Government Areas (two from each senatorial district) were randomly selected. In the third stage, 24 public senior secondary schools (four from each selected LGA) that offer Hausa language were purposively chosen based on the availability of qualified Hausa teachers and an adequate number of students offering the subject.

From the selected schools, a sample of 480 students (20 students per school) was drawn using stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation of gender and class levels (SS1, SS2, and SS3). In addition, all 48 Hausa language teachers in the selected schools were included through a census approach, given the manageable size of the teacher population. For the qualitative strand, 24 students (one from each school) and 12 teachers were purposively selected for in-depth interviews based on their willingness to participate and their experience with the Hausa curriculum.

Instrumentation

Two main instruments were developed for data collection:

Structured Questionnaire

A Questionnaire on Relevance and Adequacy of Hausa Language Curriculum (QRAHLC) This was a structured questionnaire designed for students and teachers. It consisted of four sections:

Section A: Demographic information

Section B: Relevance of curriculum content to socio-cultural realities (15 items)
Section C: Adequacy of cultural coverage and learning experiences (12 items)
Section D: Perceived gaps and suggestions (open-ended items)
Items were measured on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1). Separate versions with minor modifications in wording were prepared for students and teachers.

Interview Guide for Students and Teachers (IGST)

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to elicit deeper insights into participants' experiences of the curriculum in relation to their socio-cultural contexts. The guide contained open-ended questions probing the alignment of topics such as traditional festivals, indigenous knowledge, literature, and communicative practices with the realities of life in Taraba State.

In addition, a curriculum content analysis checklist was used to systematically examine the NERDC Senior Secondary Hausa Language Curriculum document and the corresponding schemes of work against identified socio-cultural dimensions relevant to Taraba State.

Validity of the Instruments

The instruments were subjected to face and content validation by three experts: one specialist in Curriculum Studies, two in Hausa Language Education all from a Nigerian university. The experts examined the instruments for clarity, relevance, adequacy of coverage of the research questions, and cultural appropriateness. Their comments and suggestions were used to refine the items. A draft of the questionnaire was also reviewed by two experienced Hausa language teachers in Taraba State for contextual suitability.

Reliability of the Instruments

The reliability of the questionnaire was determined through a pilot study conducted in two senior secondary schools in a neighbouring Local Government Area not included in the main study. Forty students and eight teachers participated in the pilot. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient obtained for the student version was 0.86, while that for the teacher version was 0.84, indicating high internal consistency. The interview guide was refined through peer debriefing and pilot interviews to ensure clarity and cultural sensitivity.

Method of Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected through the administration of the questionnaire by the researcher and three trained research assistants who were fluent in both English and Hausa. The questionnaires were administered during regular school hours with the permission of school principals. Qualitative data were collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews conducted in quiet settings within the schools. Interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of participants and lasted between 25 and 40 minutes. All interviews were conducted in the language preferred by the participants (English or Hausa) and later transcribed and, where necessary, translated into English. Curriculum documents were obtained from the NERDC and the Taraba State Ministry of Education for content analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations). A criterion mean of 2.50 which was the lower limit of "Agree" was used to determine agreement or disagreement with items on the four-point Likert scale.

The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. NVivo software was used to facilitate the coding process.

Findings from the quantitative and qualitative strands were integrated during the discussion of results to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relevance and adequacy of the curriculum.

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in two major sections corresponding to the quantitative and qualitative strands of the mixed-methods design. Quantitative findings are organized according to the research questions, while qualitative findings are presented thematically. The two strands were subsequently integrated to provide a richer interpretation of the outcomes.

Research Question 1

Extent to which the curriculum content reflects the socio-cultural realities of students in Taraba State

The students' and teachers' responses on the relevance of curriculum content were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviations. The results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Students and Teachers on Relevance of Curriculum Content to Socio-Cultural Realities

S/N	Item Statement	M_1	M_2	Remarks
1	Topics on traditional Hausa festivals reflect celebrations in my community	2.87	3.12	Relevant
2	Content on traditional occupations matches livelihoods in Taraba	2.41	2.35	Not relevant
3	Indigenous medicine and healing practices are adequately represented	2.28	2.19	Not relevant
4	Literary texts portray values and social relations familiar to students	2.76	2.94	Relevant
5	Communicative situations in the curriculum mirror everyday language use	2.93	3.08	Relevant
6	Content addresses inter-ethnic interaction and the role of Hausa as lingua franca	2.19	2.08	Not relevant
7	Religious and moral values in the curriculum align with local practices	2.81	2.98	Relevant
	Grand Mean	2.61	2.68	Relevant

Key: M_1 = Mean for Students; M_2 = Mean for Teachers,

The grand mean scores for students (2.61) and teachers (2.68) indicate that, overall, respondents perceived the curriculum content as moderately relevant to the socio-cultural realities of students in Taraba State. However, notable areas of weakness emerged. Items relating to traditional occupations (Mean = 2.41 for students; 2.35 for teachers), indigenous medicine (2.28; 2.19), and the role of Hausa in inter-ethnic communication (2.19; 2.08) fell below the criterion mean, suggesting limited reflection of Taraba-specific socio-economic and multi-ethnic realities.

Research Question 2

Adequacy of cultural coverage in the curriculum for students in a multi-ethnic context of Taraba State

Table 2 presents the mean ratings on the adequacy of cultural coverage in the curriculum for students in a multi-ethnic context of Taraba State.

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Table 2: Mean Ratings on Adequacy of Cultural Coverage in the curriculum for students in a multi-ethnic context

S/N	Aspect of Cultural Coverage	M_1	M_2	Remarks
8	Coverage of traditional festivals and ceremonies	2.92	3.15	Adequate
9	Representation of indigenous knowledge systems	2.31	2.27	Inadequate
10	Depth of oral literature (proverbs, folktales, praise poetry)	2.78	2.96	Adequate
11	Inclusion of contemporary social issues affecting youth	2.15	2.04	Inadequate
12	Portrayal of gender roles and family structures	2.64	2.71	Adequate
13	Attention to cultural diversity within Hausa-speaking communities	2.08	1.98	Inadequate
	Grand Mean	2.48	2.52	Marginally Adequate

The grand means (students = 2.48; teachers = 2.52) hover around the criterion mean, indicating marginal adequacy. While traditional festivals, oral literature, and gender/family structures received relatively favourable ratings, indigenous knowledge systems, contemporary youth-related issues, and cultural diversity within Hausa-speaking communities were rated as inadequate by both groups.

Research Question 3:

Identified gaps between the curriculum and socio-cultural realities of senior secondary school students in Taraba State

The qualitative data from the 36 interviews (24 students and 12 teachers) were analyzed thematically. Four major themes emerged:

Theme 1: Limited reflection of local livelihoods and indigenous knowledge

Many participants noted that topics on traditional occupations and medicine were presented in a generic, northern Nigerian manner that did not capture Taraba's agrarian diversity, fishing communities along the rivers, or local herbal practices. One SS3 student remarked:

> *"We learn about 'sana'oin gargajiya' but they talk mostly about things from Kano or Sokoto. Here in Taraba, we have different ways of farming and different herbs. The book does not talk about what we know."*

Theme 2: Inadequate attention to Hausa as a lingua franca in a multi-ethnic setting

Teachers and students repeatedly highlighted that the curriculum treats Hausa primarily as a mother-tongue language of a relatively homogeneous community, with little emphasis on its function as a language of wider communication among Jukun, Tiv, Kuteb, Mumuye, and other groups in Taraba. A teacher with 15 years' experience stated:

> *"Most of my students are not pure Hausa. They use Hausa to communicate across tribes. But the curriculum does not teach strategies for inter-ethnic communication or code-switching, which is everyday reality here."*

Theme 3: Under-representation of contemporary socio-cultural challenges

Participants observed that issues such as youth migration, inter-communal conflict, changing gender relations, and the influence of social media on language use received little or no attention. An SS2 female student noted:

> *"We study old stories and festivals, but nothing about how young people today mix Hausa with English or how insecurity affects our communities. The curriculum feels like it is from another time."*

Theme 4: Strengths in literary and moral content

Despite the gaps, both students and teachers acknowledged that the literary texts and moral/religious values embedded in the curriculum resonated with local ethical norms and provided useful models for character formation.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The quantitative data revealed moderate overall relevance but clear weaknesses in specific socio-cultural domains. The qualitative findings corroborated and enriched these results by explaining why certain areas were rated low: the curriculum's orientation toward a more homogeneous Hausa cultural core, its limited engagement with Taraba's ethnic plurality, and its insufficient responsiveness to contemporary local realities. Together, the two strands indicate that while the senior secondary Hausa language curriculum possesses foundational relevance, it is only partially adequate for the distinctive socio-cultural context of students in Taraba State.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the senior secondary school Hausa language curriculum possesses moderate overall relevance to the socio-cultural realities of students in Taraba State, yet it falls short in several critical domains that are central to the lived experiences of learners in this multi-ethnic context. The grand mean scores of 2.61 (students) and 2.68 (teachers) on relevance, and the borderline adequacy scores of 2.48 and 2.52 respectively, indicate that while the curriculum is not entirely disconnected from the students' environment, its alignment is partial and uneven. This pattern of findings warrants careful interpretation in light of existing scholarship on curriculum responsiveness, indigenous language education, and the socio-linguistic complexities of northern Nigeria.

The relatively favourable ratings for topics on traditional festivals, literary texts, moral and religious values, and everyday communicative situations suggest that the curriculum retains significant cultural capital. These elements resonate with the broader Hausa cultural repertoire that continues to influence social life across Taraba State, even among non-Hausa ethnic groups who use the language as a lingua franca. This finding is consistent with earlier observations that oral literature, proverbs, and festival-related content in Nigerian language curricula often serve as effective vehicles for the transmission of shared values and identity (Bamgbose, 2000; Olaoye, 2013). The fact that both students and teachers rated these areas above the criterion mean indicates that the NERDC curriculum successfully captures certain enduring aspects of Hausa socio-cultural life that transcend regional boundaries.

However, the consistently low ratings for traditional occupations, indigenous medicine, inter-ethnic communicative practices, contemporary social issues, and cultural diversity within Hausa-speaking communities expose a fundamental limitation of the curriculum: its orientation toward a relatively homogeneous, core Hausa cultural heartland (primarily the North-West) rather than the heterogeneous realities of peripheral Hausa-using states such as Taraba. Participants repeatedly noted that content on *sana'oin gargajiya* and *magunguna gargajiya* reflected practices more typical of Kano, Sokoto, or Katsina than the mixed agrarian, fishing, and trading livelihoods of Taraba. Similarly, the curriculum's limited engagement with Hausa as a language of inter-ethnic communication fails to address the daily linguistic strategies of code-switching, accommodation, and pragmatic adaptation that characterize social interaction in a state with over seventy ethnic groups. These gaps corroborate arguments

by scholars such as Adegbija (2004) and Fafunwa (1989) that many Nigerian indigenous language curricula remain insufficiently sensitive to intra-language variation and the sociolinguistic functions of languages beyond their traditional ethnic bases.

The qualitative data further illuminated these gaps by highlighting the curriculum's temporal and spatial disconnect: its emphasis on traditional forms at the expense of contemporary youth experiences (social media-influenced language practices, migration, and insecurity) renders it less engaging for present-day senior secondary students.

Implications of the Study

These results have important implications for curriculum theory and practice. From a curriculum relevance perspective (Tyler, 1949; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017), the Hausa language curriculum currently prioritizes cultural transmission of a standardized Hausa heritage over responsive adaptation to diverse learner contexts. In a multi-ethnic state such as Taraba, where Hausa functions more as a language of wider communication than as an exclusive mother tongue for many learners, a purely ethnic-cultural model of language education is inadequate. The findings therefore support calls for a more flexible, context-sensitive approach to Nigerian language curriculum development one that incorporates regional variations, lingua franca functions, and contemporary socio-cultural dynamics while retaining core linguistic and literary content.

Practically, the results suggest the need for periodic curriculum review that involves stakeholders from diverse Hausa-using regions, not only the traditional heartland. Localization of examples, inclusion of Taraba-specific indigenous knowledge, and explicit attention to inter-ethnic communicative competence would enhance relevance without diluting the linguistic integrity of the subject. Teacher education programmes also require strengthening so that Hausa language teachers can mediate between the official curriculum and the socio-cultural realities of their specific localities.

Conclusion, Limitations and Suggestions for further Research

Several limitations of the study must be acknowledged. For instance, the research was confined to public senior secondary schools in six Local Government Areas; private schools and more remote rural communities may present different patterns of curriculum experience. Again, while the mixed-methods design provided both breadth and depth, the qualitative sample, though purposive, was relatively small. Finally, the study relied on perceptions and document analysis rather than direct classroom observation of curriculum enactment, which could have revealed further nuances in implementation.

Despite these limitations, the study makes a significant contribution by providing empirical evidence from a hitherto under-researched multi-ethnic context. It demonstrates that the senior secondary Hausa language curriculum, while possessing foundational cultural value, is only partially adequate for the socio-cultural realities of students in Taraba State. Addressing the identified gaps through inclusive curriculum revision, contextualized instructional materials, and enhanced teacher capacity will be essential if the teaching of Hausa is to fulfil its dual mandate of linguistic competence and meaningful cultural relevance in Nigeria's diverse educational landscape.

Future studies could expand the scope by including private schools and more remote rural communities in Taraba State. Classroom observation of actual curriculum implementation would provide deeper insights into how teachers adapt the content. Comparative studies across other multi-ethnic states where Hausa is used as a lingua franca are also recommended. Additionally, research examining the impact of a contextualized Hausa curriculum on students' learning outcomes and cultural engagement would be valuable.

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