



Education and Human Development: Public Secondary-School Teachers' Perspectives on Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals in Kwara Central

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ABSTRACT

Education contributes to human development by expanding knowledge, practical competence, ethical capacity, social participation, cultural identity, and opportunities for meaningful livelihoods. Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals of Education provide a historically significant African framework for examining these broad purposes. This study explored how public secondary-school teachers in Kwara Central perceive the extent to which current schooling practices reflect Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals. A qualitative descriptive design was adopted. Eight public secondary-school teachers from Asa, Ilorin East, Ilorin South, and Ilorin West Local Government Areas participated in the study. Data were generated through open-ended interviews and analyzed thematically with the support of ATLAS.ti. The findings show that teachers perceive the present schooling practices as reflecting some of Fafunwa's goals while falling short in others. Intellectual development was viewed as relatively well accommodated, while physical talent development and vocational education were perceived as inadequately supported. Teachers also expressed mixed views on character development and respect for authority, with some participants acknowledging positive effects of schooling and others identifying declining discipline and competing social influences. Community participation was viewed as constrained by weak family and school-community connections, whereas cultural heritage was perceived by some teachers as receiving attention through subjects that connect learners with cultural knowledge. Major constraints included inadequate facilities and equipment, theoretical rather than practical delivery of vocational subjects, inconsistent educational policies, limited instructional resources, teacher-related capacity challenges, and parental or community factors. Teachers recommended stronger government provision, practical and vocational learning, curriculum improvement, stable policy, teacher support, and greater collaboration with parents and community-based skilled workers. The study concludes that, from the perspectives of public secondary-school teachers in Kwara Central, contemporary schooling reflects Fafunwa's goals only partially. The findings support a contextual and contemporary interpretation of the goals rather than a national claim about the entire Nigerian education system.

Keywords: education; human development; Fafunwa; Seven Cardinal Goals; teachers' perceptions; public secondary schools; Kwara Central

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Education occupies a central position in human development because it influences the knowledge, skills, values, relationships, and opportunities through which individuals participate in society. Although schooling is often evaluated through academic achievement and certification, a broader conception of education includes intellectual growth, practical competence, moral development, social participation, cultural understanding, and preparation for meaningful work. Such a conception is particularly relevant in contexts where education is expected to contribute simultaneously to individual development, social cohesion, cultural continuity, and national development.

Within the Nigerian educational discourse, Fafunwa's account of African Indigenous education remains important because it presents education as a process concerned with the development of the whole person. Fafunwa (1974) identified seven broad goals of African traditional education: development of latent physical skills; development of character; inculcation of respect for elders and persons in authority; development of intellectual skills; acquisition of vocational skills and a healthy attitude towards honest labour; development of a sense of belonging and active participation in family and community affairs; and understanding, appreciation, and promotion of community cultural heritage.

The seven goals provide a useful historical lens for examining whether contemporary schooling gives sufficient attention to dimensions of development that extend beyond academic achievement. Physical development concerns the cultivation of learners' abilities and talents; character development concerns ethical conduct and responsible behaviour; respect for legitimate authority concerns social responsibility; intellectual development concerns knowledge and reasoning; vocational education concerns practical competence and the dignity of work; community participation concerns belonging and social engagement; and cultural heritage concerns identity, continuity, and appreciation of local knowledge and traditions.

The historical context of Fafunwa's formulation, however, requires attention when the goals are considered in contemporary education. African Indigenous education was not a single uniform system, and educational practices differed across communities and historical circumstances. Contemporary scholarship therefore cautions against treating Indigenous education as a fixed body of practices that can simply be transferred into modern schools. Seroto and Higgs (2024) emphasize the value of critical engagement with Indigenous education and the possibility of bringing Indigenous and other knowledge systems into productive dialogue. The contemporary relevance of Fafunwa's framework consequently lies less in reproducing traditional practices exactly as they existed and more in examining the holistic purposes of education represented by the goals.

This issue is also connected to human development. The capability approach emphasizes the substantive opportunities people have to develop and exercise valued abilities rather than treating educational resources or credentials as ends in themselves (Saito, 2003; Talbot, 2025). From this perspective, the presence of a vocational subject in a curriculum does not necessarily mean that students have developed vocational capability. Functional equipment, knowledgeable teachers, practical opportunities, and supportive environments are required for learners to convert curricular opportunities into capabilities. The same principle applies to physical talent, moral development, community participation, and cultural learning.

Contemporary Nigerian schooling operates within conditions that may facilitate or constrain these broader purposes. Persistent concerns about infrastructure, instructional materials, teacher capacity, funding, examination pressure, and implementation have implications for the extent to which schools can provide holistic educational experiences. National assessment evidence has also highlighted limitations involving infrastructure, furniture, and instructional materials in basic education (UBEC, 2024). At the same time, recent discussions of competency-based education emphasize the importance of moving from the transmission of theoretical knowledge towards the application of knowledge and skills in meaningful contexts (Ojo et al., 2026).

The relationship between Fafunwa's goals and contemporary education is therefore neither one of complete continuity nor complete discontinuity. Some current school practices correspond with the goals, while other

practices and institutional conditions may limit their realization. Teachers are particularly important in this relationship because they translate curriculum intentions into classroom practices and observe the conditions under which learners engage with the curriculum. Their professional perceptions provide an important, although situated, source of evidence about the relationship between educational goals and practice.

The present study consequently focuses on public secondary-school teachers in Kwara Central Senatorial District. It examines their perceptions of the extent to which current schooling practices reflect Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals. The study does not seek to make a national assessment of Nigeria's education system; rather, it provides a context-specific account of teachers' experiences and interpretations within the selected study area.

Statement of the Problem

The broad purposes of education in Nigeria include the development of morally responsible citizens, useful skills, national integration, self-reliance, and preparation for participation in society. Nevertheless, concerns about educational quality continue to centre on the gap between curriculum intentions and educational practice. In particular, vocational and practical learning may be constrained by inadequate facilities, materials, funding, and personnel, while examination-oriented practices may reduce the time and attention available for broader forms of development.

These concerns are relevant to Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals because the goals present education as a multidimensional process rather than a pathway to academic certification alone. Yet empirical attention to the contemporary relevance of the goals has often been framed broadly, without sufficient attention to how teachers working within particular school contexts understand their implementation. A national assessment cannot be established from a small qualitative sample drawn from one senatorial district. What can be examined meaningfully is how teachers in a defined context perceive the relationship between current schooling practices and the seven goals.

The problem addressed by this study is therefore the limited empirical understanding of how public secondary-school teachers in Kwara Central perceive the extent to which contemporary schooling practices reflect Fafunwa's holistic educational purposes. The study provides evidence on areas of alignment, areas of perceived weakness, and the institutional and social factors that shape implementation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore how public secondary-school teachers in Kwara Central perceive the extent to which current schooling practices reflect Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals and contribute to holistic human development.

Research Question

How do public secondary-school teachers in Kwara Central perceive the extent to which current schooling practices reflect Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals?

Significance of the Study

The study contributes to scholarship on African educational thought by examining Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals through the situated perspectives of public secondary-school teachers. It provides curriculum developers and education managers with insight into areas in which teachers perceive a stronger or weaker connection between educational intentions and practice. The findings are also relevant to discussions of practical learning, moral and social development, community participation, cultural responsiveness, and the conditions required for holistic education. For researchers, the study provides a context-specific basis for further investigation involving broader populations and additional sources of evidence.



Scope of the Study

The study was conducted among public secondary-school teachers in Kwara Central Senatorial District, Kwara State, Nigeria. Participants were drawn from Asa, Ilorin East, Ilorin South, and Ilorin West Local Government Areas. Eight teachers participated in the interviews. The study focused on teachers' perceptions of the extent to which current schooling practices reflect the seven goals identified by Fafunwa. It did not directly examine student outcomes, parents' perspectives, policymakers' perspectives, classroom observations, documentary evidence, private schools, or schools outside the selected study area. The findings are therefore interpreted within the context of the participants and setting.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Education and Human Development

Education is a multidimensional process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and capacities for participation in social life. Quality education involves not only access and academic achievement but also relevant skills, appropriate infrastructure, instructional materials, capable teachers, and learning environments that support learners' development (UNESCO, 2022). A human-development perspective broadens this understanding by considering whether education expands the opportunities through which individuals can live meaningful and socially valued lives.

The capability approach is useful in this regard because it distinguishes between resources, capabilities, and achieved functionings. Educational resources such as curriculum content, teachers, workshops, textbooks, and computers create opportunities, but learners require enabling conditions to convert those resources into actual capabilities (Saito, 2003). MacKenzie and Chiang (2023) similarly emphasize the relevance of the capability approach to educational agency and social justice. Applied to secondary education, this perspective means that the existence of a subject or policy is not sufficient evidence of successful educational development; the practical opportunities available to learners also matter.

African Indigenous Education and Human Development

African Indigenous education involved learning through observation, imitation, participation, apprenticeship, family life, community activities, and cultural practices. Mushi (2009) describes Indigenous education as a process through which knowledge, skills, norms, values, and traditions were transmitted between generations. Such education was closely connected with everyday life and therefore combined intellectual, moral, physical, vocational, social, and cultural dimensions.

Fafunwa's contribution is significant because it brought these multidimensional purposes into educational scholarship and demonstrated that African societies possessed established educational systems before colonial schooling. At the same time, contemporary interpretation must avoid portraying Indigenous education as uniform or idealized. Seroto and Higgs (2024) argue for critical engagement with Indigenous education and its relationship with other knowledge systems. In the present study, Fafunwa's goals are therefore treated as a framework for examining educational purposes rather than as a prescription to reproduce historical social arrangements unchanged.

Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals

Fafunwa (1974) identified seven goals that characterized the educational purposes of African traditional education. The first concerns the development of latent physical skills. The second concerns character development. The third concerns respect for elders and persons in authority. The fourth concerns intellectual development. The fifth concerns vocational competence and a healthy attitude towards honest labour. The sixth concerns a sense of belonging and active participation in family and community affairs. The seventh concerns understanding, appreciating, and promoting community cultural heritage.

Taken together, these goals present education as holistic. They incorporate domains that contemporary education continues to recognize, including cognitive development, ethical development, physical activity, practical competence, social participation, and cultural identity. However, the historical meanings of some goals require contemporary interpretation. Respect for authority, for example, can be understood in relation to responsible citizenship and respect for legitimate authority while maintaining critical thinking and accountability. Cultural heritage must likewise be approached in recognition of Nigeria's cultural, linguistic, religious, and social diversity.

Contemporary Education and Competency Development

Contemporary education increasingly emphasizes competencies that allow learners to apply knowledge rather than merely reproduce information. Competency-oriented education places value on practical application, problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, and the ability to perform meaningful tasks. These emphases resonate with several of Fafunwa's goals, particularly intellectual development, vocational competence, community participation, and the development of useful capacities.

However, the implementation of competency-oriented approaches depends on teachers, facilities, instructional materials, assessment systems, and institutional support. Ojo et al. (2026) identify challenges associated with implementing competency-based education in Nigerian secondary schools, reinforcing the importance of examining actual school conditions rather than relying solely on curriculum intentions. This distinction is central to the present study because participants repeatedly differentiated between what the curriculum contains and what schools are able to implement in practice.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on Conflict Theory and complemented by the human-development perspective. Conflict Theory, associated with Karl Marx, draws attention to unequal access to resources, power, opportunities, and valued forms of knowledge. In education, the theory is useful for examining how institutional priorities and resource inequalities can shape the opportunities available to different learners. The emphasis on academic credentials, for example, may give greater institutional status to examination performance than to vocational or practical competence.

The theory also helps interpret teachers' accounts of inadequate facilities, insufficient instructional materials, uneven school resources, and policy discontinuity. Where practical subjects require equipment and specialized personnel, resource shortages can restrict access to forms of learning that are central to Fafunwa's fifth goal. Conflict Theory therefore provides a structural explanation for why educational goals may be formally recognized but unevenly realized.

The human-development perspective complements Conflict Theory by shifting attention from resources alone to the opportunities learners actually have to develop and exercise capabilities. The two perspectives therefore provide a useful analytical combination: Conflict Theory highlights the structural distribution of educational resources and opportunities, while the human-development perspective considers what those conditions mean for learners' intellectual, practical, moral, social, and cultural development.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design. The design was appropriate because the study sought to understand teachers' perceptions and interpretations of current schooling practices rather than to measure the achievement of the seven goals statistically. Qualitative inquiry permits participants to describe educational practices, constraints, and experiences in their own words and provides a basis for identifying recurring patterns across accounts (Moser & Korstjens, 2017).



Study Area and Participants

The study was conducted in Kwara Central Senatorial District of Kwara State, Nigeria. The study covered Asa, Ilorin East, Ilorin South, and Ilorin West Local Government Areas. Eight public secondary-school teachers participated in the study, with teachers represented from each of the four selected Local Government Areas. Participants are identified as T1 to T8 in the presentation of findings to protect their identities.

Data Collection

Data were generated through open-ended interviews that allowed teachers to discuss the seven goals, their relationship with current curriculum and school practices, factors that support or hinder implementation, and possible ways of improving educational practice. The interviews were transcribed for analysis. The use of participant identifiers rather than names ensured anonymity in the presentation of the findings.

Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were analyzed thematically with the support of ATLAS.ti. The analysis involved repeated reading of the transcripts, identification of meaningful statements, assignment of codes, grouping of related codes, examination of similarities and differences across participants, and development of themes that addressed the research question. The Seven Cardinal Goals provided the principal organizing framework, while cross-cutting codes captured challenges, enabling conditions, and recommendations raised by participants. The coded material was then interpreted in relation to the study's human-development and Conflict Theory perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and participants' identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms in the reporting of findings. The study observed informed consent and confidentiality in the collection and presentation of interview data.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The findings indicate that teachers did not perceive the relationship between current schooling practices and Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals in uniform terms. Some goals were viewed as accommodated and relatively well achieved, while others were considered inadequately accommodated. Participants also identified factors that impeded implementation. The findings are presented according to the seven goals and the cross-cutting conditions that emerged from the interviews.

Development of Latent Physical Skills

Teachers' accounts indicate limited opportunities for identifying and developing learners' talents within the formal curriculum. T3 argued that many learners possess abilities such as singing and drumming but that these abilities are not sufficiently developed because classroom practice follows prescribed curriculum content. T7 similarly associated the problem with the strong emphasis on certificates and progression to the next level of education.

"A lot of students have skills, different skills, maybe singing, drumming, a lot different things, but due to what was laid in our curriculum, these kids are not bringing them out." (T3)

"What is after certificate? What after is results that result and go to the next stage of their studies, not the skill and the talent that will be developed." (T7)

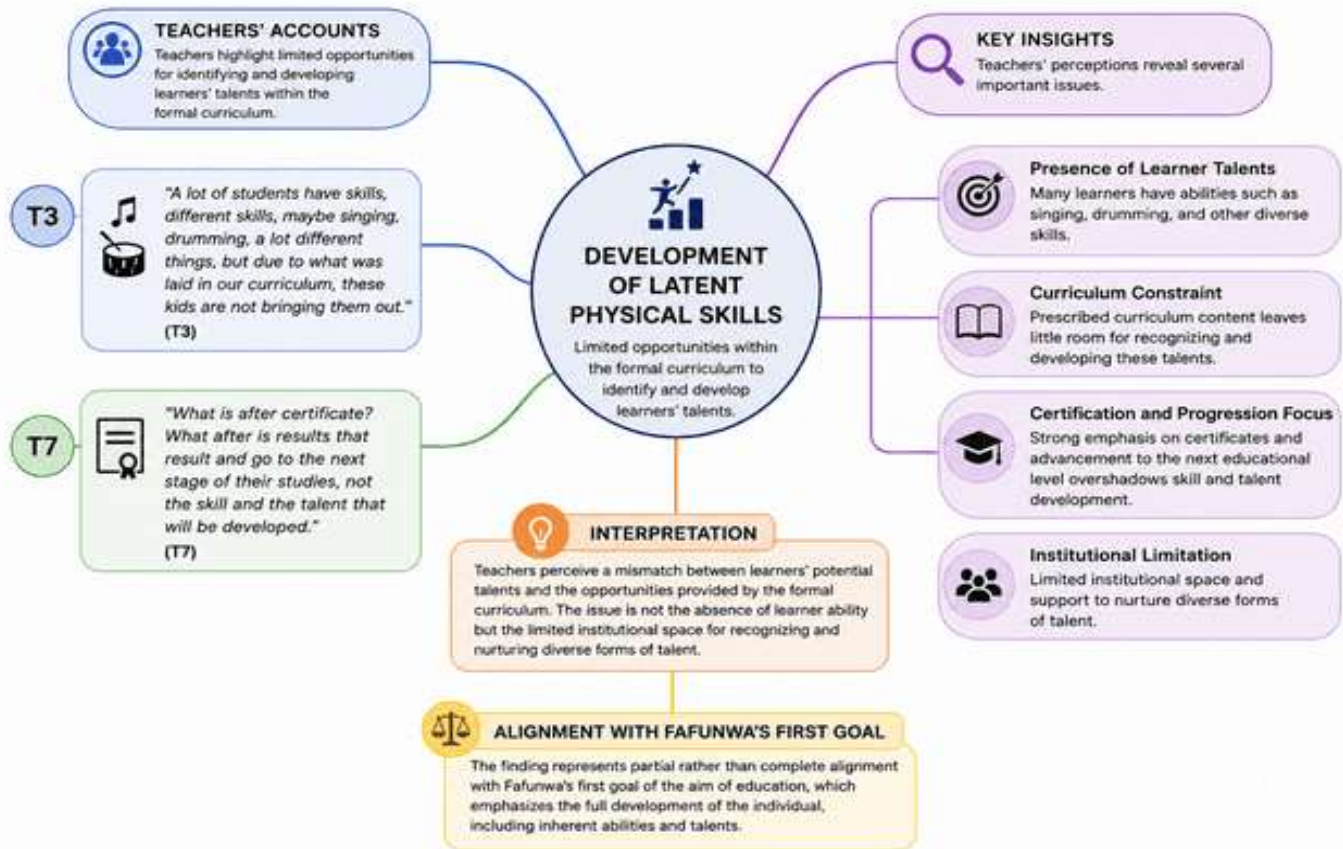


Figure 1: A Mindmap Diagram Illustrating Development of Latent Physical Skills

These accounts suggest that teachers perceive a mismatch between learners' potential talents and the opportunities provided by the formal curriculum. The issue is not the absence of learner ability but the limited institutional space for recognizing and nurturing diverse forms of talent. The finding represents partial rather than complete alignment with Fafunwa's first goal.

Development of Character

Teachers expressed divergent views about character development. T3 described a perceived decline in discipline, greeting practices, respect, and parental support for school discipline. In contrast, T7 viewed schooling as having a positive role in shaping learners' character, arguing that education refines individuals in ways that can be observed in their conduct. T5 also described teachers' efforts to reinforce values and appropriate behaviour in school.

"There's no way, no matter who the education is, there's always a difference between someone who goes to school, which means that in one way or the other, is really shaped, more refined than someone who did not go to school." (T7)

"We try to incorporate some moral values into them when they do things they are not expected to do. They are being punished for it." (T5)

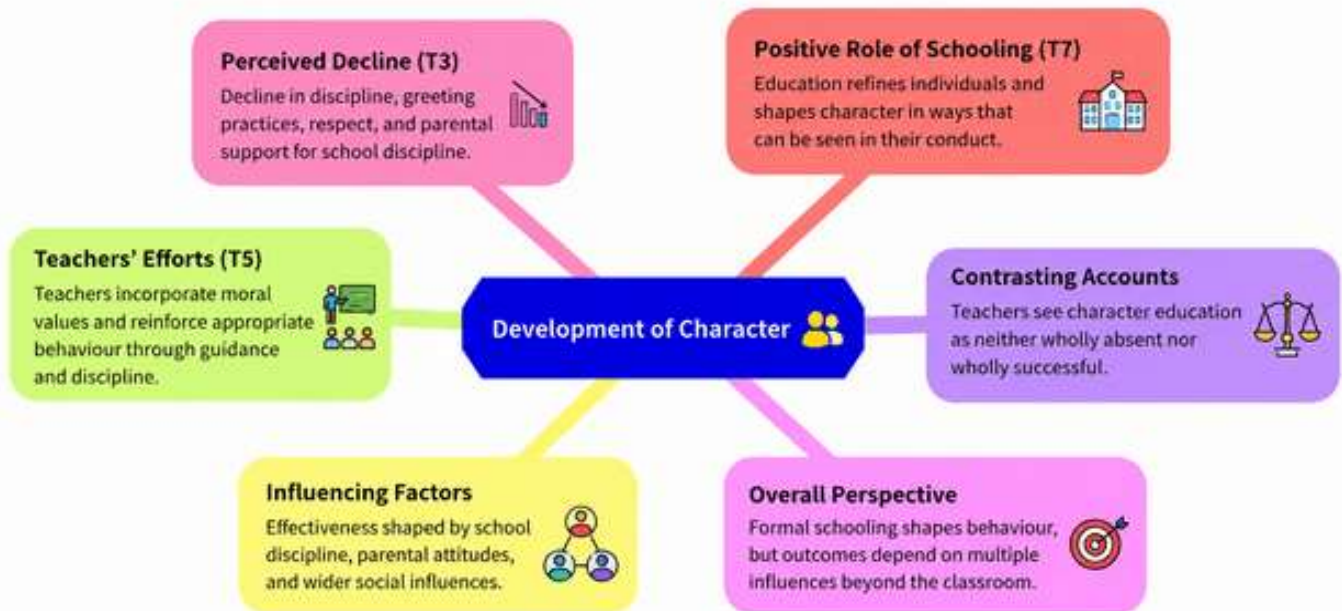


Figure 2: A Mindmap Diagram Presenting Teachers Views About Character Development

The contrasting accounts are important because they show that teachers did not regard character education as either wholly absent or wholly successful. Formal schooling was perceived as capable of shaping behaviour, but the effectiveness of this process was influenced by school discipline, parental attitudes, and wider social influences.

Respect for Elders and Persons in Authority

Teachers also offered mixed but generally positive evidence concerning the institutional teaching of respect for authority. T4 explained that school hierarchies and classroom leadership provide opportunities for learners to understand authority and responsibility.

"We have class rep, so an authority in the class, because if you do something against the classroom, class teacher will know, and class teacher will discipline any other student." (T4)

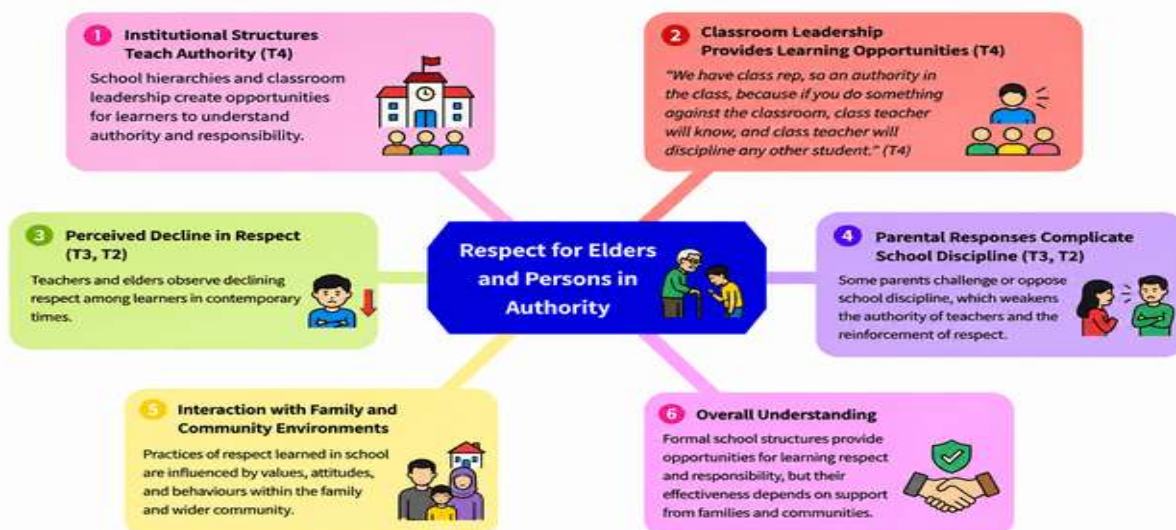


Figure 3: A Mindmap Diagram Explaining Teachers' Mixed Views on Respect for Elders and Persons in Authority

At the same time, T3 and T2 associated contemporary behaviour with declining respect for teachers and elders and identified parental responses to school discipline as a complicating factor. Thus, formal school structures provide opportunities for learning respect and responsibility, but teachers perceive these practices as interacting with family and community environments.

Development of Intellectual Skills

Intellectual development was perceived as one of the more strongly accommodated goals because formal schooling provides structured academic subjects and curriculum content. However, T3 indicated that the curriculum can also restrict intellectual and broader developmental opportunities when activities outside the prescribed scheme of work are treated as less important.

"It is what we have in our scheme that we follow as a teacher. Anything aside from that, these extracurricular activities are not relevant." (T3)

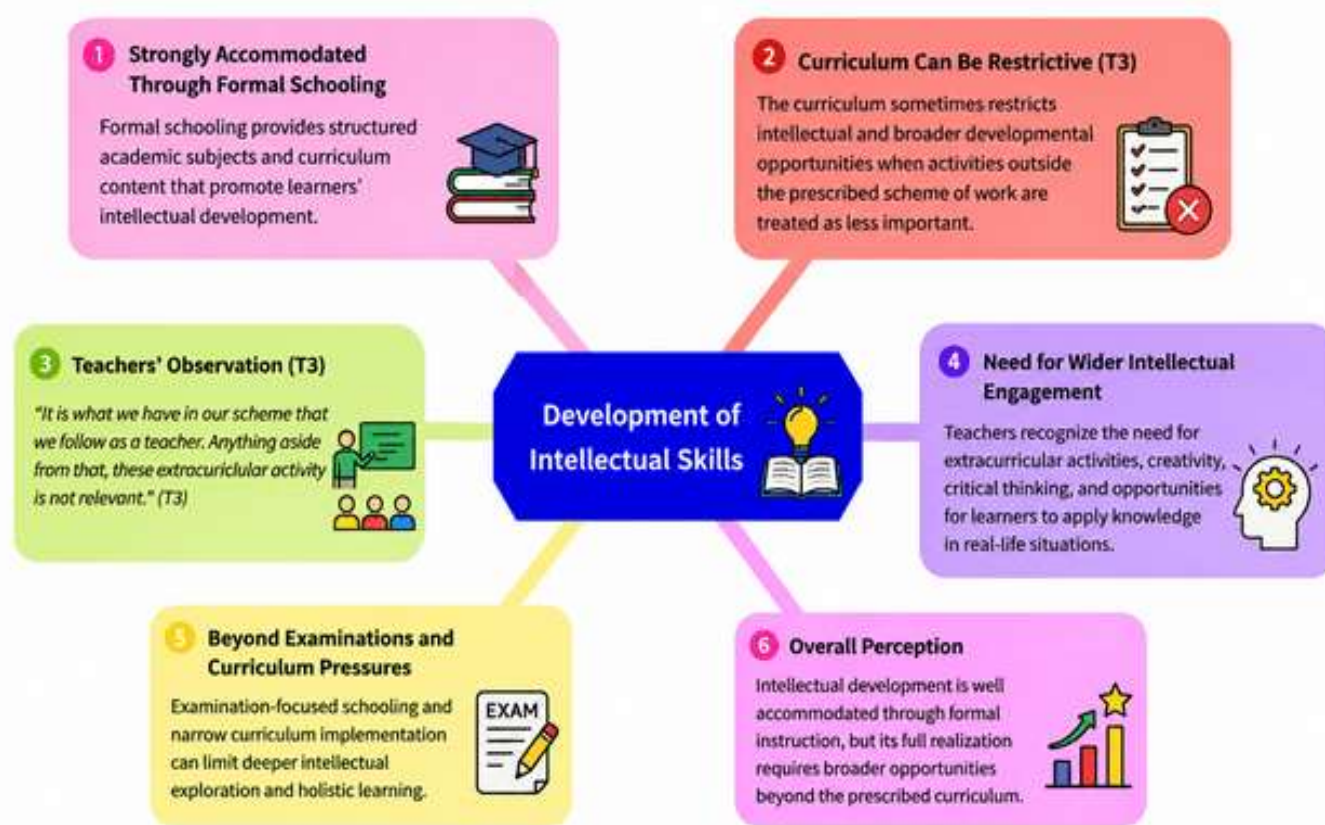


Figure 4: A Mindmap Diagram Highlighting Views on Development of Intellectual Skills

The finding therefore suggests that intellectual development is strongly represented through formal academic instruction, but teachers also recognize a need for wider forms of intellectual engagement, including extracurricular activities, creativity, and opportunities for learners to apply knowledge. The goal is consequently perceived as accommodated, although its realization may be narrowed by examination and curriculum pressures.

Vocational Skills and a Healthy Attitude Towards Honest Labour

Vocational education emerged as the most consistently contested area. Some teachers acknowledged that trade subjects are formally incorporated into the curriculum, while several participants emphasized that practical implementation is weak. T5 explained that trade subjects such as marketing and tie-and-dye are included and can provide useful opportunities for students. However, T6 reported that practical activities are frequently constrained by the cost of materials, while T2 and T8 emphasized the absence of facilities and the theoretical nature of instruction in many public schools.

"Most of the time what they do majorly is theoretical aspects. And the reason they are not able to carry out practical, particularly tie and dye and catering, is because of the issue of money." (T6)

"In most of the secondary schools... there are no facilities for this vocational training." (T2)

"That's what the aspect of vocational training, I think in that aspect zero, at least for public schools, I don't see any impact." (T8)

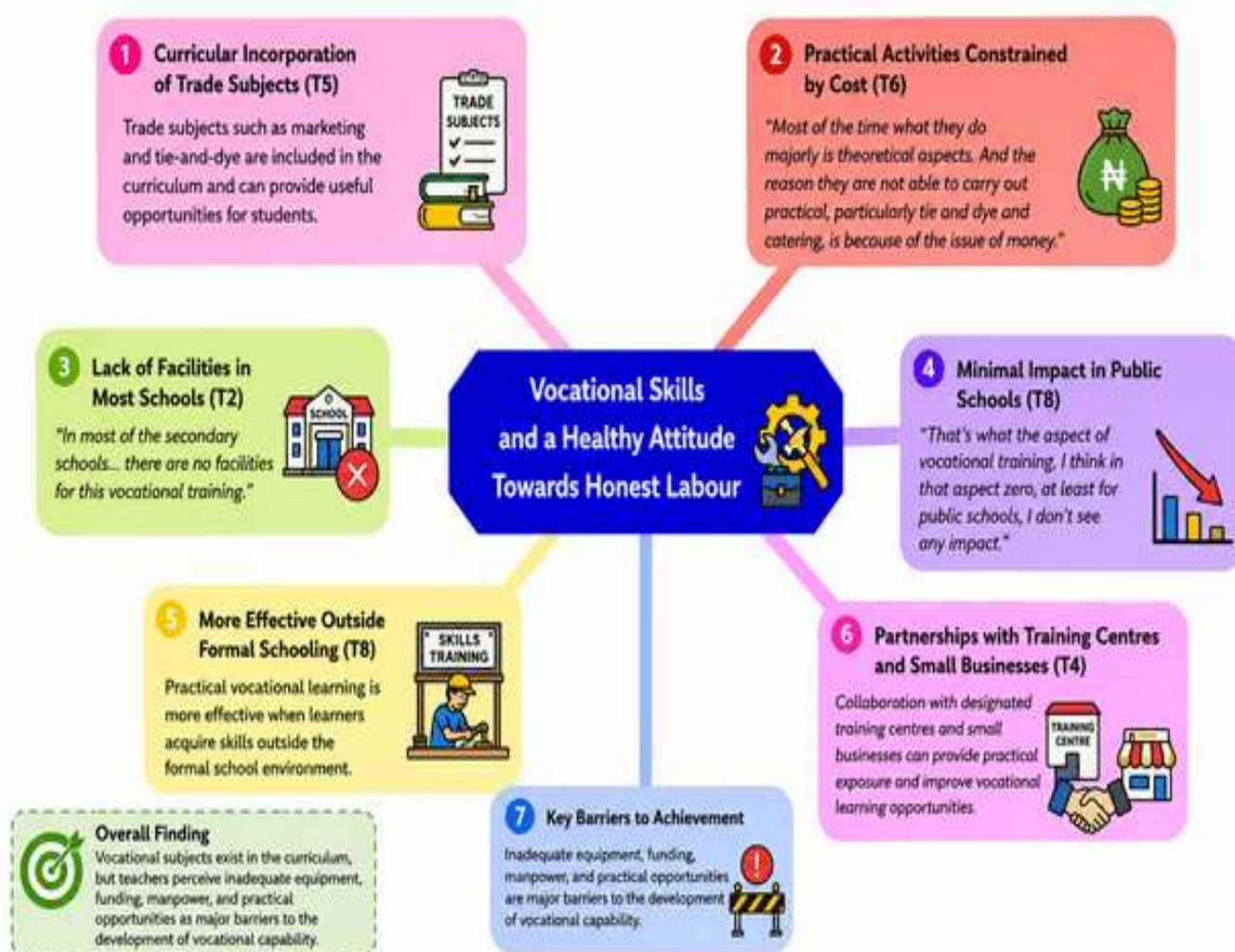


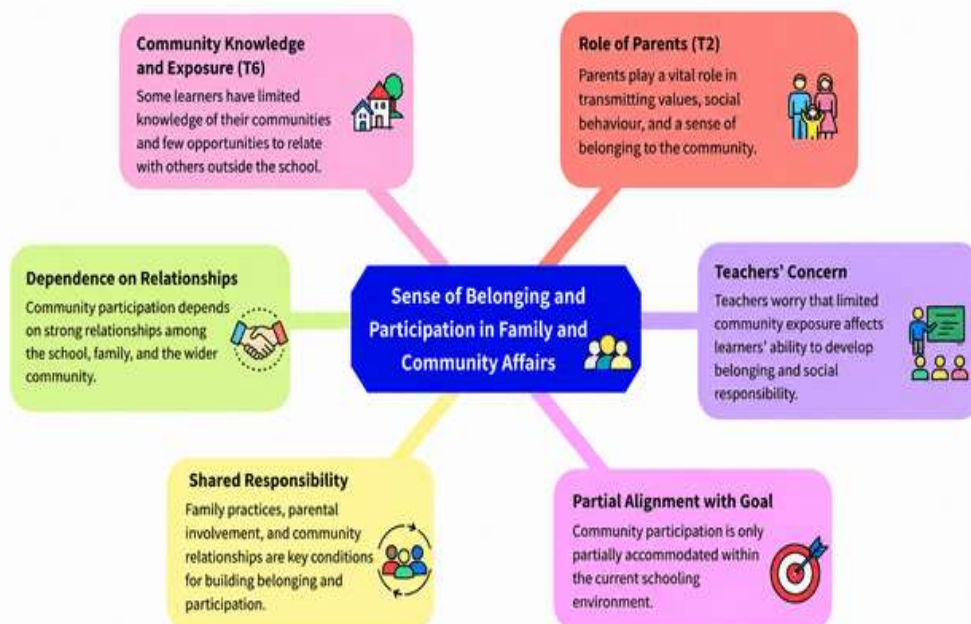
Figure 5: A Mindmap Diagram Presenting Vocational Skills and a Healthy Attitude Towards Honest Labour

T8 further argued that practical vocational learning is more effective outside formal schooling, while T4 proposed partnerships with designated training centres and small businesses. The findings therefore reveal a clear distinction between curricular accommodation and actual achievement. Although vocational subjects exist in the curriculum, teachers perceive inadequate equipment, funding, manpower, and practical opportunities as major barriers to the development of vocational capability.

Sense of Belonging and Participation in Family and Community Affairs

Teachers perceived community participation as dependent on relationships among the school, family, and wider community. T6 expressed concern that some learners have limited knowledge of their communities and insufficient opportunities to relate with others outside the school. T2 similarly emphasized the role of parents in transmitting values and social behaviour.

"Some of them have not even been to their community. They don't even know where they raise them and the community we live in." (T6)



The findings suggest that the school alone cannot fully achieve the goal of community participation. Teachers viewed family practices, parental involvement, and community relationships as important conditions for developing belonging and social responsibility. Community participation is therefore perceived as only partially accommodated within the current schooling environment.

Understanding, Appreciation, and Promotion of Cultural Heritage

Compared with the other goals, the evidence concerning cultural heritage was more limited but included a positive account from T4. The participant identified subjects that help students understand cultural ties and argued that some aspects of cultural learning found in informal education are also represented in formal schooling.

"There are some subjects that we teach that helps students to understand their cultural ties better." (T4)

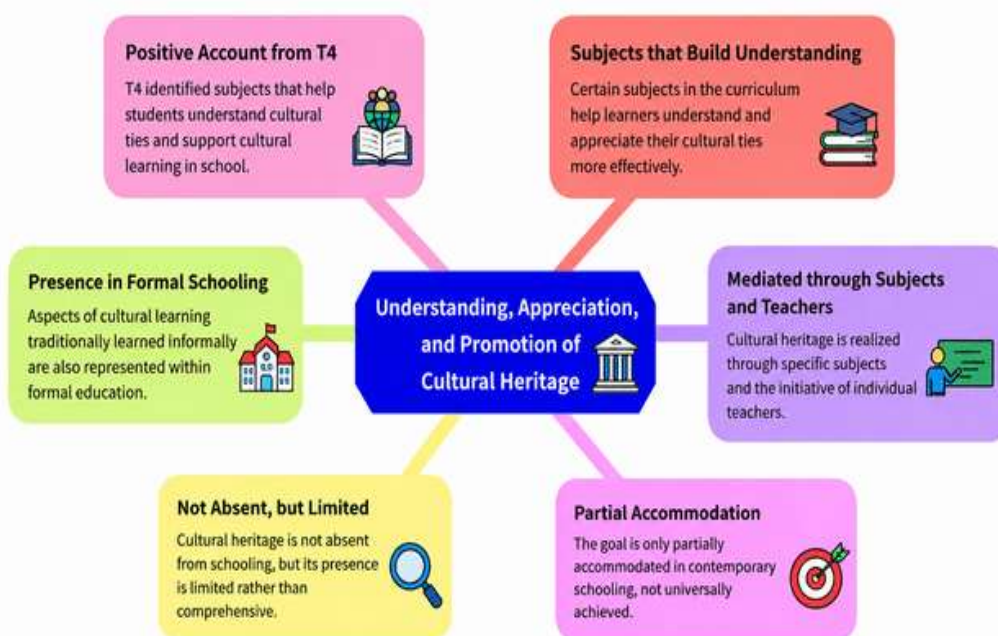


Figure 6: A Mindmap Diagram Presenting Understanding, Appreciation, and Promotion of Cultural Heritage

This account suggests that cultural heritage is not absent from contemporary schooling. However, the evidence indicates that its realization is mediated through particular subjects and teachers rather than through a comprehensive school-wide approach. The finding is therefore best understood as evidence of partial accommodation rather than universal achievement.

Cross-Cutting Institutional and Social Constraints

Across the seven goals, teachers identified several conditions that affect implementation. The first was inadequate facilities and instructional resources. T8 referred to the absence of workshops, laboratories, libraries, and other facilities, while T7 similarly emphasized the need for government provision.

"Most schools don't have workshops, no lab, laboratories, no library." (T8)

The second constraint was the availability of instructional materials and the financial capacity of learners and schools. T3 noted that many students do not purchase textbooks, while T6 explained that teachers cannot personally finance practical materials for trade subjects. The third constraint was teacher preparation and competence. T8 argued that teacher education should prepare teachers with practical competencies relevant to the subjects they will later teach.

A fourth constraint was policy instability. T6 described frequent policy changes as confusing teachers and learners and disrupting continuity in curriculum implementation.

"All this change in education policy, from time to time, it's affecting us... We are confused, and we are confusing these students." (T6)

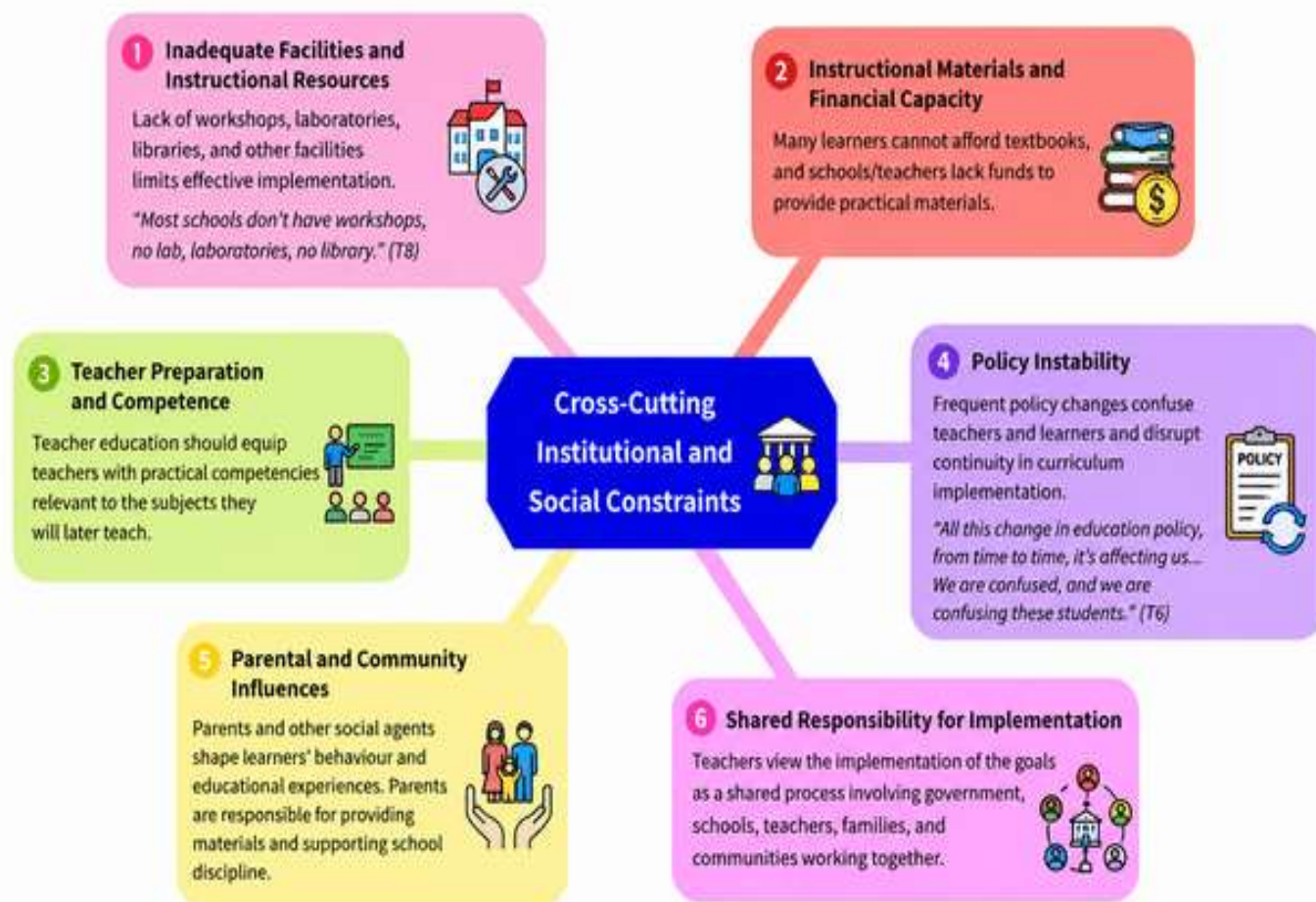


Figure 7: A Mindmap Diagram Explaining Cross-Cutting Institutional and Social Constraints

A fifth constraint concerned parental and community influences. T1 and T2 emphasized that parents and other social agents shape learners' behaviour and educational experiences. T7 similarly argued that parents have responsibilities for providing learning materials and supporting appropriate school discipline. These findings show that teachers perceive implementation of the goals as a shared process involving government, schools, teachers, families, and communities.

Teachers' Proposed Strategies for Improving Implementation

Participants proposed practical, institutional, and social strategies. A major recommendation was to increase government provision of facilities and materials for vocational and practical learning. T2 emphasized the need for adequate facilities, while T4 proposed a dedicated period for practical vocational training and partnerships with local small and medium-sized enterprises and skilled community members.

"The curriculum should be redesigned such a way that there shouldn't be too much theory... emphasis will be laid on practical." (T4)

"If you decide to embrace those people outside, like mechanics, carpenters, etc., all those people that learn this informally, we embrace them and include them into the current system." (T8)

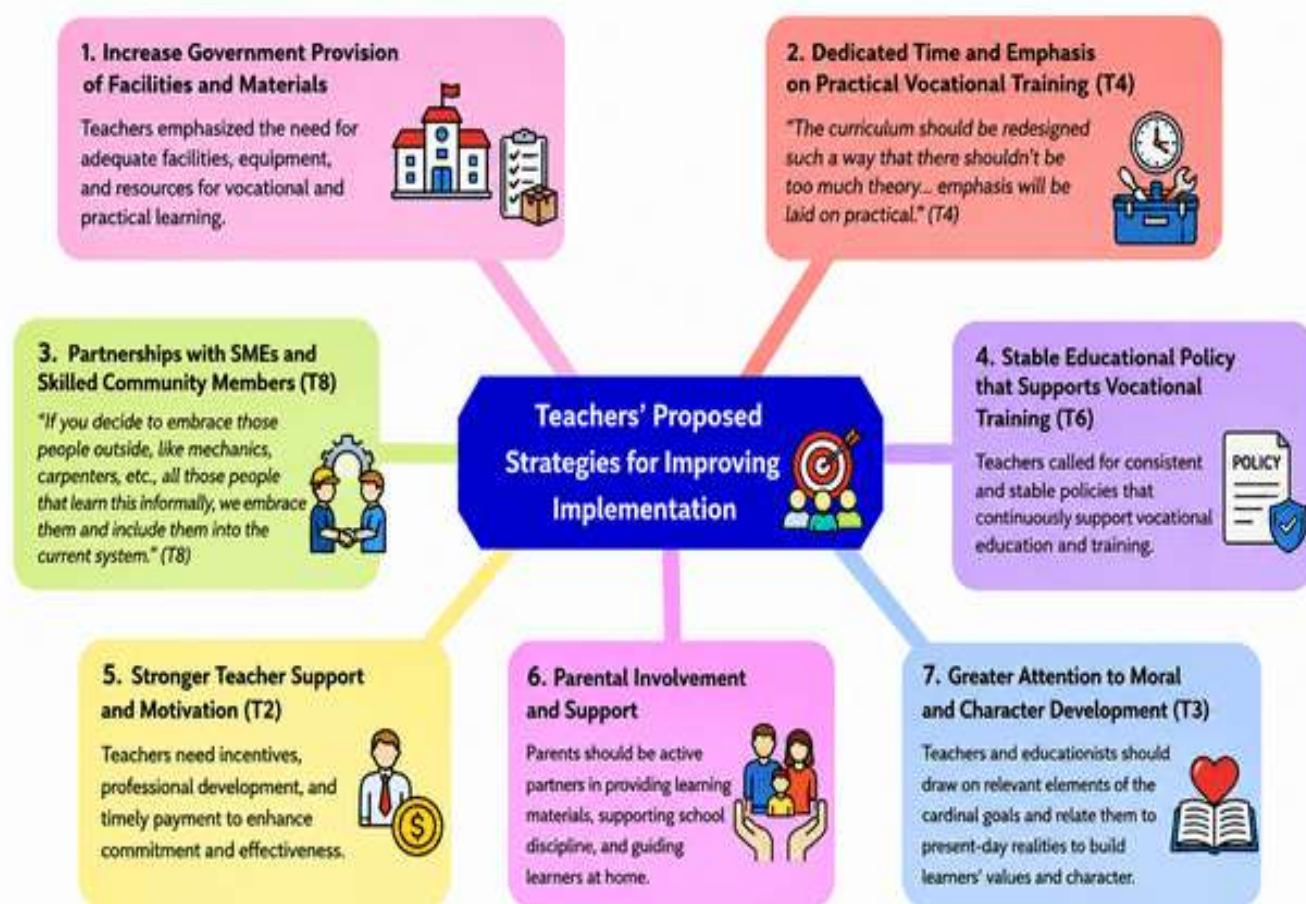


Figure 8: A Mindmap Diagram Illustrating Teachers' Proposed Strategies for Improving Implementation

Participants also called for stable educational policy, stronger teacher support, parental involvement, and greater attention to moral development. T6 advocated an educational policy that would consistently support vocational training, while T2 emphasized teacher incentives and timely payment. T3 called for teachers and educationists to draw on relevant elements of the cardinal goals while relating them to present conditions.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings indicate that teachers in Kwara Central perceive current schooling practices as only partially reflecting Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals. Intellectual development was regarded as relatively well accommodated through formal academic instruction. Character development and respect for authority received mixed assessments, with teachers identifying both positive school influences and challenges associated with discipline, family practices, and wider social influences. Physical talent development was perceived as constrained by the curriculum's limited attention to learners' diverse abilities. Vocational education was the most strongly identified area of weakness because of inadequate facilities, funding, equipment, practical opportunities, and trained personnel. Community participation was perceived as dependent on stronger connections between schools, families, and communities. Cultural heritage was perceived by some teachers as incorporated through relevant school subjects, although evidence for this goal was less extensive. Across the goals, teachers identified inadequate resources, policy instability, teacher preparation, parental involvement, and the examination-oriented character of schooling as important conditions affecting implementation.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that teachers' perceptions of Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals are differentiated rather than uniformly positive or negative. The strongest area of perceived accommodation was intellectual development, which is consistent with the formal organization of secondary schooling around academic subjects, examinations, and progression. However, the accounts also show that intellectual development can become narrowly associated with following the prescribed scheme of work and obtaining certificates. This distinction is important because Fafunwa's framework presents intellectual development as one component of a broader conception of the educated person.

The findings on physical talent development indicate a tension between standardized curriculum requirements and learners' diverse abilities. T3's reference to singing and drumming and T7's emphasis on drawing and other talents suggest that teachers recognize abilities that may not receive sufficient curricular attention. From a human-development perspective, the issue is not merely the inclusion of extracurricular activities but the availability of real opportunities for learners to identify, develop, and exercise capabilities. The finding therefore supports a broader conception of education in which learners' talents are treated as part of educational development rather than as secondary to examination results.

Character development and respect for authority produced more complex findings. Some participants perceived schools as important sites of moral formation and behavioural refinement, while others described declining discipline and weaker respect for teachers and elders. These differences demonstrate that teachers' perceptions are shaped by the interaction between school practices and learners' wider social environments. T2's account of the influence of parents and T1's discussion of the multiple agents of education reinforce the view that character development cannot be assigned to schools alone.

The findings on vocational education provide the clearest evidence of a gap between curricular provision and practical realization. Although trade subjects are formally included, teachers repeatedly described theoretical teaching, inadequate materials, insufficient facilities, and limited practical opportunities. This corresponds with Fafunwa's emphasis on vocational competence and the dignity of labour and is consistent with the broader literature on resource and implementation challenges in Nigerian education (Adeyemi & Uko-Aviomoh, 2004; Osuala, 2004). It also accords with recent competency-based education research, which emphasizes the importance of practical application and identifies implementation challenges within Nigerian secondary schools (Ojo et al., 2026).

The vocational findings are particularly significant from a capability perspective. A curriculum may formally provide for vocational subjects, yet learners may not acquire the associated capability when workshops, equipment, materials, trained teachers, or practical time are absent. T6's explanation that teachers cannot personally finance materials and T8's description of the absence of workshops and laboratories illustrate how institutional resources influence the conversion of curriculum provisions into learning opportunities. The finding

therefore moves the analysis beyond the question of whether vocational education exists to the more important question of whether students can actually learn and use vocational skills.

The findings on community participation also support Fafunwa's emphasis on education as a social process. T6's observation that some students have limited knowledge of their communities suggests that schooling and family life may not always provide sufficient opportunities for community connection. This is consistent with the view of African Indigenous education as closely embedded in everyday social life. Yet contemporary community participation should not be understood simply as conformity to traditional arrangements. It can include civic engagement, service learning, school-community partnerships, collaborative problem solving, and inclusive participation.

The positive account of cultural heritage provided by T4 indicates that contemporary schooling can provide space for cultural learning. Nevertheless, the evidence is more limited than that relating to vocational education, character, or institutional constraints. The finding should therefore be interpreted cautiously. It suggests that some curriculum areas support cultural understanding but does not establish that cultural heritage is comprehensively integrated across public secondary schools in Kwara Central.

The institutional constraints identified by participants are consistent with Conflict Theory's emphasis on the distribution of educational resources and opportunities. Where schools lack workshops, laboratories, libraries, textbooks, computers, and practical materials, access to particular forms of educational development is constrained. Policy instability also weakens institutional continuity, as illustrated by T6's account of repeated changes in educational policy. These conditions demonstrate that the realization of educational goals depends not only on teacher commitment but also on the institutional resources and policy environment within which teachers work.

At the same time, the findings suggest that Fafunwa's goals should not be transferred mechanically from their historical context to contemporary schooling. Respect for authority, for example, is relevant to responsible social conduct but must coexist with critical reasoning, democratic citizenship, accountability, and respect for rights. Cultural heritage must be understood in the context of Nigeria's cultural and linguistic plurality. Vocational education should be inclusive of gender, disability, and socioeconomic differences rather than reproducing restrictive divisions of labour. These considerations allow the holistic orientation of Fafunwa's framework to remain relevant while recognizing the realities of contemporary education.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how public secondary-school teachers in Kwara Central perceive the extent to which current schooling practices reflect Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals. The findings indicate partial accommodation of the goals. Teachers perceived relatively stronger attention to intellectual development and identified evidence that schools contribute to character formation, respect for authority, and cultural learning. At the same time, they identified significant limitations in the development of physical talents, practical vocational competence, and community participation. These limitations were associated with inadequate facilities and materials, theoretical delivery of practical subjects, teacher preparation, policy instability, examination-oriented practices, and family and community influences.

The study therefore concludes that, from the perspectives of the participating teachers, contemporary public secondary schooling in Kwara Central reflects the holistic purposes represented by Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals only to a limited and uneven extent. The findings do not constitute a national assessment of Nigeria's education system. Rather, they demonstrate how teachers in the study setting understand the relationship between contemporary schooling and a historically significant African educational framework. Fafunwa's goals remain useful as a holistic point of reference when interpreted in ways that recognize contemporary competencies, democratic citizenship, cultural diversity, inclusion, learner agency, and changing social and economic conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government and education authorities should provide functional workshops, laboratories, libraries, computers, instructional materials, and other facilities required for practical and holistic learning in public secondary schools.
2. The curriculum should give greater attention to practical and competency-oriented learning, including structured opportunities for learners to develop vocational skills and diverse talents alongside academic knowledge.
3. Schools should establish partnerships with qualified artisans, small and medium-sized enterprises, community organizations, and other skilled practitioners to provide supervised practical learning where school-based facilities are limited.
4. Education authorities should maintain greater consistency in educational policies so that teachers and schools can implement curriculum objectives without frequent disruptive changes.
5. Teacher professional development should strengthen teachers' capacity to deliver practical, competency-based, moral, cultural, and learner-centred education.
6. Parents and communities should be more actively involved in supporting learners' education, providing necessary learning materials, reinforcing positive values, and creating opportunities for constructive community participation.
7. Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals should be applied as a flexible and critical framework that accommodates contemporary democratic values, cultural diversity, gender equity, disability inclusion, learner agency, and changing labour-market requirements.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to eight public secondary-school teachers in four Local Government Areas of Kwara Central Senatorial District. The findings represent participants' professional perceptions and do not provide direct evidence of student outcomes. The study also did not include parents, students, policymakers, private schools, classroom observations, or documentary analysis. Consequently, the findings should be understood as context-specific qualitative evidence rather than a representative assessment of Nigerian secondary education. Further studies involving multiple states, education zones, school types, stakeholder groups, observations, and documentary evidence would provide a broader basis for examining the contemporary realization of Fafunwa's goals.

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Appendix: Evidence Linking Fafunwa's Seven Goals to Participant Accounts

Fafunwa's goal	Participant evidence	Code/classification	Interpretation
Development of latent physical skills	"A lot of students have skills, different skills, maybe singing, drumming, a lot different things, but due to what was laid in our curriculum, these kids are not bringing them out." (T3)	NOT ACCOMMODATED AND ACHIEVED	Limited curricular space for identifying and developing diverse learner talents.
Development of character	"There's no way, no matter who the education is, there's always difference between someone who goes to school... is really shaped, more refined..." (T7)	ACCOMMODATED AND WELL ACHIEVED	Schooling is perceived to contribute to character formation, although other accounts identify disciplinary challenges.
Respect for elders and authority	"We have class rep, so an authority in the class... a student is learning that wherever situation [they] find yourself, you must obey those who are above you." (T4)	ACCOMMODATED AND WELL ACHIEVED	School hierarchies provide opportunities to learn responsibility and respect for authority.
Development of intellectual skills	"It is what we have in our scheme that we follow as a teacher." (T3)	NOT ACCOMMODATED AND ACHIEVED	Academic learning is strongly structured, but curriculum rigidity may restrict wider intellectual and extracurricular development.
Vocational skills and honest labour	"Most of the time what they do majorly is theoretical aspects... [because of] the issue of money." (T6)	CHALLENGES	Practical vocational learning is constrained by funding and material requirements.



Sense of belonging and community participation	“Some of them have not even been to their community. They don’t even know where they were raised and the community we live in.” (T6)	NOT ACCOMMODATED AND ACHIEVED	Weak family/community engagement can limit learners’ community belonging and participation.
Understanding, appreciation, and promotion of cultural heritage	“There are some subjects that we teach that help students to understand their cultural ties better.” (T4)	ACCOMMODATED AND WELL ACHIEVED	Some curriculum areas provide opportunities for cultural understanding and continuity.