

The Influence of Culturally Responsive Teaching on Adolescents' Cultural Identity Formation in Kumbo Central Sub-Division

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Abstract: This study examined the influence of culturally responsive teaching on adolescents' cultural identity formation in secondary schools in Kumbo Central Sub-Division. The study was grounded on the observation that many adolescents in the area show a weak cultural identity, often reflected in poor use of their indigenous language and a growing distance from local cultural values, a pattern linked in part to teaching practices that do not sufficiently reflect learners' own cultural realities. The study adopted a concurrent mixed methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. A sample of 328 students was drawn from six secondary schools using stratified and simple random sampling, and 10 teachers and administrators were purposively selected for in depth interviews. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and a semi structured interview guide, and analysed using descriptive statistics, simple linear regression, and thematic analysis. The findings showed that culturally responsive teaching has a statistically significant positive effect on adolescents' cultural identity formation, accounting for 12.7% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.127$, $\beta = 0.356$, $p < 0.001$). Descriptive results showed that teachers frequently use local examples, proverbs, and stories to support learning, and students reported feeling encouraged to take pride in their cultural background as a result. The qualitative findings supported this pattern, revealing that teachers view culturally responsive methods as an effective way to make lessons easier to understand, more participatory, and more engaging, even where the official curriculum itself remains largely unchanged. Teachers described the use of oral tradition, proverbs, and riddles as tools that sharpen students' reasoning while reconnecting them with their cultural heritage. The study concluded that culturally responsive teaching represents a practical and immediate pathway toward educational decolonisation, one that individual teachers can pursue even in the absence of broader curriculum reform. The study recommended structured teacher training in culturally responsive methods, the development of shared cultural teaching resources, greater opportunity for students to share their own cultural knowledge in class, and the formal recognition of culturally responsive practice in teacher appraisal.

Keywords: Culturally responsive teaching, cultural identity formation, educational decolonisation, adolescents, Kumbo Central Sub-Division.

Introduction

Education does far more than pass on facts and skills. It shapes how young people see themselves, where they feel they belong, and how they relate to the world around them (Tchombe, 2013). Yet across much of Africa, schooling still carries the weight of its colonial past. Classrooms often lean heavily on Western knowledge systems while giving little space to indigenous ways of knowing, local languages, and community values (Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011). Cameroon is no exception. Years after independence, the country's two education subsystems, shaped by British indirect rule and French assimilation policy, still influence how teachers teach and what gets valued in the classroom

(Alemnge, 2021). The French colonial approach in particular left a lasting mark, since it was built on the belief that no African culture was worth preserving in its own right (Fonlon, 1964).

Cameroon has not ignored this problem. The 1995 National Forum on Education called for a schooling system rooted in local realities while still promoting national unity (Alemnge, 2021). This was followed by Law No. 98/004 of 1998, which for the first time gave legal backing to the teaching of national languages and cultures in schools (Njika, 2018). More recently, the 2018 primary curriculum reform introduced National Languages and Cultures as a compulsory subject and moved toward competency-based teaching, an approach that treats learners as people who

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arrive in the classroom with their own experiences, talents, and ways of understanding the world, rather than blank slates waiting to be filled (Njika, 2018). Even so, researchers such as Tabe and Nyindem (2025), and Lukong (2025) warn that gestures like Mother Tongue Day or the occasional mention of African authors in the syllabus mean little unless they are backed by real changes in how teachers are trained, how learners are assessed, and how schools function day to day.

One of the practical ways schools can respond to this challenge is through culturally responsive teaching. This is teaching that treats students' cultural backgrounds and lived experiences not as obstacles to learning but as resources for it (Gay, 2010). Ladson-Billings (1995) describes this kind of teaching as one that builds students up intellectually, socially, emotionally, and even politically, by weaving their own cultural references into what and how they are taught. Gay (2010) adds that this means recognising and valuing students' cultures openly in the classroom, building a bridge between what happens at home and what happens at school, and varying teaching methods to fit how different learners actually learn. This is not just theory. Tchombe's (2019) work among the Bamileke people in Cameroon's West Region found that children who took part in everyday cultural activities like farming and trading picked up real arithmetic skills through them, guided by parents who used deliberate strategies, explaining tasks clearly, acknowledging effort, engaging children's interests, and passing on practical skills such as bargaining. This shows that culturally grounded learning is already happening informally in Cameroonian communities, and the question is whether schools can build on it rather than working against it.

This matters most during adolescence, a stage of life Erikson (1968) describes as centred on the struggle between forming a clear sense of identity and slipping into confusion about who one is. Phinney (1990) took this idea further for young people from minority or indigenous backgrounds, describing how they typically move from an unexamined sense of their ethnic identity, through a period of actively questioning and exploring it, toward eventually arriving at a settled, personally owned identity. Marcia (1966) offered a related way of thinking about this process, describing four possible identity statuses depending on whether a young person has explored their identity, committed to one, both, or neither. Umaña-Taylor et al. (2014) built on this further, showing that a secure ethnic or racial identity depends both on exploring one's cultural background and on arriving at a clear sense of what that background means personally.

For adolescents in Kumbo Central Sub-Division, this process carries particular weight. The area lies within Bui Division in Cameroon's North West Region and is home to majorly the Nso' people, whose cultural life includes the Lamnso' language, established systems of traditional

governance, and long-standing ways of teaching the young through proverbs, folktales, and hands-on community life (Wiysahnyuy & Ngalim, 2023). Nyuyshu et al. (2025) describe how Nso' traditional education values, things like farming, respect for elders and traditional authorities, and participation in indigenous games, build a strong sense of communal identity. Yet secondary schools in the area continue to operate largely within the Anglophone subsystem, where the language of instruction, the curriculum content, and the teaching methods remain largely shaped by European traditions. This leaves adolescents moving daily between two different worlds, one that affirms their culture at home, and another at school that often does not (Wiysahnyuy & Ngalim, 2023). Nyuyshu et al. (2025) link this disconnect to a wider erosion of respect and moral grounding among Nso' youth, while Tchombe and Tani (2016) found that when young people do engage with indigenous games, proverbs, and folktales, it strengthens their problem-solving skills and their ability to manage their emotions.

This study draws on three theoretical perspectives to make sense of this picture. Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory frames adolescence as the stage where identity itself is the central task to be worked out. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory holds that learning and development happen through social interaction, language, and the cultural tools a community provides, which fits naturally with the idea of using culture inside the classroom rather than outside it. Nsamenang's (1992) eco-cultural theory of social ontogenesis grounds this further in an African context, arguing that a child's development is shaped by their surrounding culture and community life, and that identity grows out of active participation in that cultural world rather than in isolation from it.

While curriculum reform and language policy in Cameroon have received some research attention (Ndille, 2018; Jehovah, 2021), far less is known about how teaching practice itself, specifically the extent to which teachers actually teach in culturally responsive ways, affects how adolescents in Kumbo come to see and value their own cultural identity. This article addresses that gap by examining the influence of culturally responsive teaching on adolescents' cultural identity formation in secondary schools in Kumbo Central Sub-Division.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is the stage of life when young people wrestle most with the question of who they are, and this struggle for identity never happens out of the culture surrounding them. A well-formed cultural identity supports healthy self-esteem, self-efficacy, and the kind of cultural sensitivity young people need in an increasingly connected world.

Yet many secondary school adolescents today show a weak sense of cultural identity, often reflected in poor command

of their indigenous language and a growing distance from local cultural values. In Kumbo Central, for instance, students frequently avoid speaking Lamnso', fearing it will leave them with what is mockingly called a Bansa' tongue and spoil their spoken English. This kind of thinking gradually pushes indigenous culture to the margins of young people's lives.

Teaching practice sits at the heart of this problem. Whether a lesson draws on students' own cultural knowledge or shuts it out depends largely on how the teacher chooses to teach, not simply on what the syllabus says. Yet little is known about how far teachers in Kumbo Central actually practise culturally responsive teaching, or whether doing so has any real bearing on how adolescents come to value their own cultural identity. This study therefore investigates the influence of culturally responsive teaching on adolescents' cultural identity formation in secondary schools in Kumbo Central Sub-Division.

Research Objective

The main objective of this study was to investigate the influence of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) on adolescents' cultural identity formation in Kumbo Central Sub-Division.

Research Question

What is the influence of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) on adolescents' cultural identity formation in Kumbo Central Sub-Division?

Research Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant influence of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) on adolescents' cultural identity formation in Kumbo Central Sub-Division.

Ha: There is a significant influence of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) on adolescents' cultural identity formation in Kumbo Central Sub-Division.

Literature Review

Conceptually, the study rests on two central ideas: culturally responsive teaching and cultural identity formation. Culturally responsive teaching refers to an approach where teachers draw on students' own customs, experiences, and cultural backgrounds as resources for instruction, rather than treating them as irrelevant to learning (Gay, 2000). Tchombe (2013) argues that education should as much as possible reflect the specific cultural realities of learners, a view equally advocated by Dumbuya (2025), who calls for African educators to adopt culturally sensitive pedagogies such as storytelling, community-based learning, and experiential education. Beyond pedagogy, this approach speaks to core psychological needs. Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory holds that validating a student's cultural background feeds directly into their sense of belonging, competence, and connection, all of which drive

motivation and engagement. Supporting this, Nyuyshu et al. (2025) found strong agreement among 361 Nso' adolescents that proverbs, folktales, and myths remain important tools for passing on traditional knowledge and values, suggesting real potential for culturally responsive teaching to strengthen cultural identity where it is practised. However, its success is not automatic. It depends on teacher training, school support, and whether examination systems reward it, a tension that is especially visible in Cameroon, where GCE examinations still lean heavily on content that has not been meaningfully adapted to local culture.

Cultural identity, on its part, refers to a person's sense of belonging to a cultural group, shaped by shared values, traditions, language, and social structures (Zajda & Majhanovich, 2021). Nsamenang and Tchombe (2011) note that this is not merely a preference but a right recognised under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, and they call for African cultural and educational patterns to be strengthened within curricula rather than replaced. Erikson (1968) frames adolescence as the stage where identity formation becomes the central task, while Sall and Nsamenang (2011) describe this as the point where young people work to bring their personal experiences into alignment with their sense of belonging to a wider cultural group. Where this process is disrupted, Mikolyski (2008) notes it can undermine self-efficacy, making it harder for adolescents to set goals or trust in their own competence. African-centred models add an important dimension here. Nsamenang's (1992) eco-cultural theory and Rogoff's (2003) work both frame identity not as an individual achievement but as something that becomes real through participation in family, community, and cultural life, a view that contrasts with the more individualistic assumptions found in Erikson's and Phinney's (1989) models.

Theoretically, the study draws on three frameworks: Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development, Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, and Nsamenang's Eco-Cultural Theory of Social Ontogenesis.

Erikson (1968) frames adolescence as the stage of Identity versus Role Confusion, where young people work to build a stable sense of self by drawing on their past experiences, cultural background, and future aspirations, a process Marcia (1980) describes as involving both exploration and commitment. Within the Nso' context, this stage aligns with what Mzeka (1993) calls wánle nsùm/ngòn, marked by initiation rites that offer adolescents structured cultural grounding. The theory has been critiqued for its Western, individualistic assumptions (Côté & Levine, 2002), since African identity formation tends to be relational and communal rather than a solitary achievement (Nsamenang, 1992), and for its rigid, linear stages, which Rogoff (2003) argues do not reflect how development actually unfolds in many non-Western settings. Even so, Erikson's theory remains useful here because it explains why a school system

dominated by foreign content can leave adolescents struggling to answer the question of who they are culturally, and why teaching that draws on students' own stories, traditions, and lived experience, the essence of culturally responsive teaching, helps resolve rather than deepen this confusion.

Vygotsky (1978) argues that learning and identity develop through social interaction, language, and cultural tools, meaning adolescents come to understand themselves largely through the cultural experiences their environment provides. When schools favour foreign languages and content over local ones, they risk cutting learners off from the very tools needed to build a secure cultural identity, a concern reinforced by Angu's (2019) finding that switching from a natal language to a colonial one can disrupt how concepts are stored and processed. Vygotsky's idea of the Zone of Proximal Development, learning achieved with guidance from a more knowledgeable other, extends naturally to elders and community members in an African setting, though Tchombe (2019) notes that Vygotsky's model gives little visibility to the learner's own active role, prompting her Mediated Mutual Reciprocity Theory as a corrective. For this study, the relevance is clear. Teachers who use culturally familiar examples and tasks guide adolescents within their zone of proximal development in a way that is meaningful to them, strengthening rather than side-lining their cultural identity.

Nsamenang's (1992) Eco-Cultural Theory of Social Ontogenesis holds that a child's development is shaped chiefly by their eco-cultural context, the everyday interplay between culture, community, and social experience, with identity emerging through active participation in cultural life rather than isolated self-discovery. Adolescence falls within what Nsamenang calls the social entrée stage, corresponding to Mzeka's (1993) *wánle nsùm/ngòn*, during which initiation rites confer communal recognition and reduce the ambiguity that often accompanies this period of life. The theory has drawn criticism for generalising a single Nso'-derived account across Africa's many distinct cultures (Hountondji, 1996), for not fully accounting for how colonial structures continue to shape post-colonial education (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; wa Thiong'o, 1986), and for presenting traditional practices somewhat uncritically. Nonetheless, the theory speaks directly to this study's concerns, since it holds that adolescents develop a stronger cultural identity when teachers draw on local life, storytelling, and community-based practices in their instruction, precisely the practices that culturally responsive teaching seeks to bring into the classroom.

A number of empirical studies support the value of culturally responsive teaching. Tchombe (2019) studied Bamileke parents, children, and adolescents in Cameroon's West Region, using a descriptive survey design with a sample of 49 parents, 15 children, and 34 adolescents, and

found that everyday cultural activities such as farming and trading helped children develop arithmetical skills, aided by parenting strategies she terms Mediated Mutual Reciprocity, which included communicating learning experiences directly, acknowledging children's efforts, and passing on practical skills like bargaining, with most parents actively creating opportunities for this kind of learning. In a related vein, Olanrewaju and Omeghie (2024) used a qualitative approach grounded in Interest Theory to examine how culturally responsive practices affect motivation among minority and culturally diverse students in increasingly mixed public school settings, finding that connecting classroom content to students' lived experiences sparked what they call situational interest, making learning noticeably more meaningful and engaging. Serpell (2011), working with Chewa community elders and Bemba-speaking teachers and pupils at Kabale Basic School in Zambia, used ethnographic methods, case study, and interviews to explore how peer cooperation supports what is locally understood as socially responsible intelligence, and found that intelligence in this context is not judged by cognitive ability alone but by social responsibility as well, such that a person seen as clever but socially irresponsible is viewed as dangerous to the community, a finding that aligns with Dasen's (2011) observation that African concepts of intelligence, such as *n'gloulèlè* among the Baoulé, prize responsibility, respect, and community contribution over academic skill on its own. Together, these studies point to a consistent pattern: when teaching and learning are anchored in a community's own cultural practices and values, they become more effective and more meaningful to learners, reinforcing the case for culturally responsive teaching as a route to stronger cultural identity formation.

Methodology

This study used a concurrent mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative data collected simultaneously and integrated at the interpretation stage, to both measure the relationship between culturally responsive teaching and cultural identity formation and understand the lived realities behind the numbers. The study was conducted in Kumbo Central Sub-Division, Bui Division, North West Region of Cameroon, home to majorly the Nso' people, whose distinct language and cultural practices remain comparatively well preserved (Wiysahnyuy & Ngalim, 2023), making it a fitting context for examining whether classroom teaching draws on or ignores this heritage.

From an accessible population of 2,386 students across six secondary schools, a sample of 335 students in Form 3, Form 4, and Lower Sixth was drawn using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, selected through stratified and simple random sampling. Ten teachers and administrators were purposively selected for interviews. A structured questionnaire, using a four-point Likert scale, and a semi-structured interview guide were used for data collection.

Both instruments were validated for face, content, and construct validity, and reliability testing returned Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of 0.84 for culturally responsive teaching and 0.86 for cultural identity formation, with an overall composite of 0.89.

Data were collected over four weeks in April and May 2026, with a 97.91% questionnaire return rate and full completion of all 10 interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, with simple linear regression testing the effect of culturally responsive teaching on cultural identity formation at 0.05 level of significance. Qualitative data were analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase

framework. Ethical procedures were followed, with research authorisation sought from the Faculty of Education, in The University of Bamenda, including following guidelines for research with minors, and a consent form signed by the Principals and PTA chairpersons of the schools. The research also ensured anonymity, voluntary participation, and cultural sensitivity throughout.

Results

Research Question: What is the influence of culturally responsive teaching on adolescents' cultural identity formation in Kumbo Central Sub-Division?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Culturally Responsive Teaching

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
My teachers use local proverbs or wise sayings to explain some lessons.	116 (35.4%)	174 (53.0%)	28 (8.5%)	10 (3.0%)	3.21	0.721
My teachers use examples from our daily life in Kumbo to help us learn.	175 (53.4%)	133 (40.5%)	18 (5.5%)	2 (0.6%)	3.47	0.630
Teachers sometimes tell us stories (folktales) from our culture during lessons.	87 (26.5%)	172 (52.4%)	29 (8.8%)	40 (12.2%)	2.93	0.916
My teachers encourage us to share what we know about our cultural values.	77 (23.5%)	160 (48.8%)	70 (21.3%)	21 (6.4%)	2.89	0.834
Our teachers always encourage us to feel proud of our cultural backgrounds.	179 (54.6%)	102 (31.1%)	35 (10.7%)	12 (3.7%)	3.37	0.817

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Students' responses point to a fairly active use of culturally responsive teaching in Kumbo Central. The clearest pattern was around teachers drawing on local, everyday life, with 93.9% of students agreeing that teachers use examples from daily life in Kumbo to aid learning (Mean = 3.47), and 88.4% reporting that teachers use local proverbs or wise sayings to explain lessons (Mean = 3.21). A similarly strong pattern emerged around cultural pride, with 85.7% of students agreeing that teachers encourage them to feel proud of their cultural background (Mean = 3.37). Folktales appeared somewhat less consistently, with 78.9% agreement (Mean = 2.93), and students were a little more divided on whether they were actively encouraged to share their own cultural knowledge in class, with 72.3% agreement (Mean =

2.89). Taken together, these figures suggest that while teachers are clearly incorporating cultural material into their teaching, some practices, particularly those that invite students to actively contribute their own cultural knowledge, remain less developed than others.

Testing of Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant influence of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) on adolescents' cultural identity formation in Kumbo Central Sub-Division.

A simple linear regression was conducted to test whether culturally responsive teaching significantly predicts adolescents' cultural identity formation at 0.05 level of significance and results presented below.

Table 2: Model Summary table for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Adolescents' Cultural Identity Formation

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.356 ^a	.127	.124	.63364
a. Predictors: (Constant), Culturally Responsive Teaching Methods				

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The second hypothesis examined the effect of culturally responsive teaching on adolescents' cultural identity formation. The regression analysis revealed an R Square value of .127, indicating that teaching methods account for 12.7% of the variation in the students' cultural identity.

Table 3: ANOVA Table for Culturally Responsive Teaching Methods and Adolescents' Cultural Identity Formation

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18.969	1	18.969	47.245	.000 ^b
	Residual	130.890	326	.402		
	Total	149.859	327			

a. Dependent Variable: Cultural Identity Formation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Culturally Responsive Teaching Methods

Source: Field Survey, 2026

This model was found to be statistically significant ($F = 47.245$, $p < .001$).

Table 4: Coefficient table for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Adolescents' Cultural Identity Formation

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.997	.264		3.779	.000
	Culturally Responsive Teaching	.566	.082	.356	6.873	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Cultural Identity Formation

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The Coefficients table shows a Beta value of .356 and a B-coefficient of .566 ($t = 6.873$, $p < .001$). This demonstrates that for every unit increase in the use of culturally responsive teaching, such as the use of local proverbs and folktales, there is a significant 0.566 increase in the cultural identity formation of the adolescents. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected, and this establishes that there is a significant effect of culturally responsive teaching on adolescents' cultural identity formation in Kumbo Central Sub-Division.

Qualitative Findings

Interviews with teachers reinforced and helped explain these quantitative patterns, producing four recurring themes: oral tradition for mastery, use of proverbs and riddles, pedagogical efficacy, and innovation and captivation.

Teachers repeatedly pointed to the oral nature of African knowledge systems as a reason for leaning on stories and riddles in the classroom, since much of this knowledge was never written down and can only really be accessed through

folklore (TR02). Proverbs and riddles in particular were described as tools that make lessons more participatory and easier to master, with one teacher noting that such methods sharpen students' reasoning and problem-solving abilities (TR05), and another describing near-excellent mastery when this approach is used (TR07).

The most dominant theme, raised by half the teachers interviewed, was pedagogical efficacy, the idea that culturally responsive teaching allows teachers to make a fixed curriculum easier to understand by delivering it in ways that reflect students' own culture and, where possible, their own language (TR01; TR09). This point matters because it shows teachers see culturally responsive teaching as a workaround for curriculum limitations they cannot personally change. Teachers also spoke of these methods as a source of innovation and renewed student interest, describing how bringing cultural material into lessons captivates students who might otherwise lose focus (TR06; TR10). One Philosophy teacher went further, describing lessons built entirely around folklore assignments, through

which students extract philosophical meaning from their own cultural stories, and noted plainly that identity sits at the centre of this process (TR04).

Discussion

The findings of this study show that culturally responsive teaching has a real and measurable effect on adolescents' cultural identity formation in Kumbo Central secondary schools. Quantitatively, culturally responsive teaching accounted for 12.7% of the variation in students' cultural identity, with a statistically significant positive relationship between the two. This was supported by the qualitative data. Teachers described drawing on proverbs, folktales, riddles, and everyday local examples not simply to fill time or add colour to lessons, but because these tools genuinely help students grasp difficult content, sharpen their reasoning, and stay engaged. What comes through clearly when both sets of findings are placed side by side is that teachers are not waiting for a rewritten curriculum before they act. Many are already reshaping how they deliver the existing syllabus, and in doing so, they are quietly doing the work of decolonisation from the classroom floor upward, even where policy and textbooks lag behind.

This pattern fits comfortably alongside earlier empirical work. Tchombe's (2019) study of Bamileke families found that everyday cultural activities like farming and trading, guided by parents' own culturally rooted teaching strategies, helped children build real arithmetical skill. The present study extends this same logic into the formal classroom, showing that when teachers, rather than parents, act as the ones who mediate learning through cultural material, students respond in a comparable way, with stronger engagement and a clearer sense of cultural belonging. The consistency between these two studies suggests that the mechanism at work is not specific to the home or to any one cultural group. It seems to be a broader principle, that learning sticks and identity strengthens when the material feels like it belongs to the learner.

The findings also align closely with Olanrewaju and Omeghie (2024), who found that connecting academic content to students' lived experience sparked what they called situational interest, making learning more meaningful for culturally diverse students. Teachers in Kumbo described almost exactly this effect, noting that bringing folklore and local examples into a lesson recaptures students who had started to lose interest. The two studies converge on the same idea even though they were conducted in different settings, which strengthens the case that this is not a coincidence tied to one particular school system, but something closer to a general feature of how culturally responsive teaching works.

Turning to theory, these findings sit comfortably within Erikson's (1968) account of adolescence as the stage where identity versus role confusion must be resolved. Where

classroom teaching draws on a student's own cultural world, it appears to give adolescents exactly the kind of material Erikson describes as necessary for resolving this crisis, a way of answering the question of who they are culturally, using content that already feels familiar and personally meaningful. The teacher who spoke of identity standing at the centre of folklore-based lessons captures this almost exactly. The findings also support Vygotsky's (1978) view that language, stories, and cultural tools are not incidental to learning but central to it. When teachers use proverbs and riddles as instructional tools, they are, in Vygotsky's terms, offering students a familiar cultural bridge into new material, working within a zone of proximal development that feels less foreign and more navigable because it is built from tools the learner already recognises.

Furthermore, the results reflect Nsamenang's (1992) eco-cultural theory. He argues that African children develop best through participatory engagement with their own community and culture. The findings of this study show that this same principle holds even within a formal school system that was never designed with this philosophy in mind. Teachers are, in effect, recreating small pockets of eco-cultural participation inside an otherwise foreign structure, using storytelling and communal cultural material as substitutes for the community-based learning Nsamenang describes as ideal. This suggests that culturally responsive teaching may function as a practical, teacher-led bridge between a still largely colonial school system and the eco-cultural grounding that African developmental theory holds to be essential, even before broader policy or curriculum reform catches up.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the influence of culturally responsive teaching on adolescents' cultural identity formation in secondary schools in Kumbo Central Sub-Division, and the evidence gathered points to a clear answer. Culturally responsive teaching matters, and it matters in a way that is both statistically measurable and visible in the everyday experience of students and teachers alike. Where teachers bring proverbs, folktales, and examples drawn from local life into their lessons, students do not just understand the content better, they come away with a stronger sense of who they are culturally. What stands out most is that this is happening largely through the initiative of individual teachers rather than through any sweeping curriculum reform. Many teachers in Kumbo have found ways to teach the existing, largely unchanged syllabus in ways that still honour their students' cultural background, proving that decolonisation does not have to wait for policy to catch up before it can begin in the classroom.

At the same time, the study makes clear that this is uneven and somewhat fragile progress. Some aspects of culturally responsive teaching, like actively inviting students to share their own cultural knowledge, remain less developed than

others, such as simply using local examples to explain a concept. This suggests that culturally responsive teaching in Kumbo is still growing, shaped by individual teachers' effort and creativity rather than by any consistent institutional support or training. If this pedagogical approach is left to depend entirely on individual initiative, its benefits will likely remain scattered and inconsistent across schools. The findings therefore point to a need for deliberate, structured support if the gains already visible in Kumbo classrooms are to be extended and made more consistent.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following actions are recommended.

1. **Introduce structured teacher training on culturally responsive teaching.** The Ministry of Secondary Education, through Regional Pedagogic Inspectorates, should organise regular in-service workshops that specifically train teachers in how to weave local proverbs, folktales, and community examples into subject teaching, rather than leaving this to individual teachers' own initiative and creativity.
2. **Build a shared bank of culturally responsive teaching materials.** School authorities and subject inspectors in Kumbo Central should coordinate the collection of local proverbs, folktales, and Nso' cultural references relevant to different subjects, and compile these into a simple reference document teachers can draw from, reducing the current reliance on individual teachers' personal cultural knowledge.
3. **Create more space for students to share their own cultural knowledge in class.** Since this was the weakest area in the findings, teachers should be encouraged to build short, regular activities into lessons, such as asking students to explain a concept using an example from their own family or community, rather than only receiving cultural examples from the teacher.
4. **Involve traditional and community leaders in teacher orientation.** Schools should invite local cultural custodians, and community elders or representatives to occasionally speak with teachers about Nso' proverbs, stories, and values, giving teachers a more authentic and accurate cultural well to draw from in their lessons.

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