



Integration of Artificial Intelligence into Nigeria's Education System: Pathways toward Epistemic Decolonisation

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Abstract:

This study examined the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Nigeria's education system as a strategic pathway for advancing the decolonisation of knowledge, curriculum, and pedagogical practices. Drawing on decolonial theory, postcolonial pedagogy, and epistemic justice frameworks, the paper critically analysed the historical foundations of Nigeria's education system, highlighting its enduring colonial structures, Eurocentric curriculum orientation, and marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems. The study conceptualised AI integration as an innovative mechanism capable of facilitating culturally responsive education, indigenous knowledge documentation, language preservation, and personalised learning experiences. Using a conceptual and analytical research design, the study proposed a structural model in which AI integration influences educational decolonisation, moderated by policy frameworks and institutional readiness. The findings suggest that while AI holds transformative potential for reducing epistemic dependency and fostering contextualised learning, its effectiveness depends significantly on supportive policies, infrastructure development, teacher capacity building, and ethical governance frameworks. The study concludes that AI can serve as a catalyst for educational transformation in Nigeria if strategically implemented within a decolonial and equity-driven policy agenda.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Decolonizing Education, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Educational Policy and Reform, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

1. Introduction

Nigeria's education system has long operated within structures and epistemologies inherited from British colonial administration (Bali et al., 2024). Established formally during the colonial era under the influence of the British Empire, the system was primarily designed to produce clerks, interpreters, and low-level administrators to serve colonial governance rather than to promote indigenous innovation, creativity, or culturally grounded knowledge systems (I. Sanusi, 2025). Although political independence was attained in 1960, the philosophical foundations, curricular content, and assessment frameworks of Nigerian education have largely remained aligned with Eurocentric models (Luwoye et al., 2024). This lingering colonial imprint continues to marginalise indigenous knowledge, languages, and problem-solving approaches that are vital to national development.

Post-independence reforms, including policy frameworks such as the National Policy on Education, sought to restructure the system to reflect Nigeria's socio-cultural realities and developmental aspirations(Luwoye et al., 2024). However, implementation gaps, inadequate funding, infrastructural deficits, and overreliance on imported curricula and pedagogical models have limited meaningful transformation(Ndalu, 2025). As a result, the education system often privileges foreign theories, examples, and standards of excellence, while undervaluing local histories, indigenous sciences, African philosophies, and community-based knowledge systems.

The origin of the problem therefore lies in the structural continuity of colonial educational paradigms(Anierobi & Jisieike, 2025). These paradigms reinforce epistemic dependency, where knowledge validation is externally defined and innovation is frequently benchmarked against Western standards. This dependency contributes to a mismatch between educational outputs and Nigeria's socio-economic needs, resulting in graduate unemployment, limited research commercialization, and insufficient integration of local problem contexts into teaching and learning processes(Oluyemisi, 2023).

In the 21st century, rapid technological advancement particularly in Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents both a challenge and an opportunity. AI-driven tools have the capacity to personalise learning, democratise access to knowledge, translate and preserve indigenous languages, and facilitate context-specific curriculum development. However, without deliberate strategic direction, AI systems risk perpetuating the same colonial biases embedded in global data infrastructures and algorithms(Adesiji, 2024).

Thus, the core problem addressed in this study emerges at the intersection of historical colonial legacy and contemporary technological transformation: How can Artificial Intelligence be intentionally harnessed to dismantle colonial epistemic dominance and reposition Nigeria's education system toward indigenous relevance, innovation, and global competitiveness(A. Ibrahim, n.d.). This article argues that AI, when ethically and contextually deployed, can serve as a catalyst for decolonising Nigeria's education system by enabling culturally responsive pedagogy, amplifying indigenous knowledge systems, and fostering sustainable creativity rooted in local realities.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the extent to which colonial legacies continue to influence Nigeria's education system.
2. To assess the potential of Artificial Intelligence in promoting indigenous knowledge, culturally responsive pedagogy, and inclusive learning in Nigeria.
3. To propose strategic frameworks for integrating AI into Nigeria's education system to support decolonisation and sustainable innovation.

1.2 Research Questions

1. To what extent do colonial structures and epistemologies still shape Nigeria's education system?
2. How can Artificial Intelligence be leveraged to promote indigenous knowledge systems and culturally relevant teaching and learning practices in Nigeria?
3. What strategic approaches can be adopted to effectively integrate AI in ways that advance the decolonisation of Nigeria's education system?

1.3 Research hypotheses

H₀₁: Colonial legacies do not have a significant influence on the structure, curriculum, and pedagogical practices of Nigeria's education system.

H₀₂: The integration of Artificial Intelligence has no significant effect on the promotion of indigenous knowledge and culturally responsive pedagogy in Nigeria's education system.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between AI-driven educational strategies and the decolonisation of Nigeria's education system.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Historical Context of Nigeria's Education System

The Nigerian education system continues to reflect its colonial legacy, particularly in its structures, curricula, and pedagogical approaches. Scholarship on the subject emphasizes that Nigeria's formal education was originally designed to serve colonial administrative needs rather than local developmental aspirations, leading to an enduring Eurocentric orientation in policies and content (Joel Augustus et al., 2025). This colonial imprint has perpetuated the privileging of Western knowledge systems while marginalising indigenous epistemologies, languages, and cultural frameworks, leaving graduates less equipped to respond to locally relevant challenges (Joel Augustus et al., 2025).

Post-independence reforms sought to indigenise Nigeria's education system, yet Eurocentric orientation persists despite policy efforts. Studies indicate that curriculum reforms have often failed to substantially alter the Western ideological foundations of educational content, formats, and assessment strategies. For example, even recent policy revisions have maintained structural features inherited from colonial education, such as English as the language of instruction and prioritisation of Western-centric textbooks (Imoh et al., 2025). This persistence illustrates the complexity of decolonising deeply entrenched educational paradigms and highlights why mere policy pronouncements without transformative implementation are insufficient.

One significant challenge to decolonisation lies in the integration of indigenous knowledge and local contexts into mainstream education. Contemporary research on language and curriculum reform shows that indigenous languages and knowledge systems remain underrepresented despite their potential to enrich pedagogical relevance and cultural identity(Okunade, 2024). Educators and policymakers argue that the lack of indigenous representation in curricula reinforces students' disconnection from their heritage, curtails culturally responsive teaching, and constrains critical thinking oriented toward local realities(Okunade, 2024). This gap indicates a need for more intentional curricular redesign that goes beyond tokenistic inclusion to truly embed local worldviews and knowledge practices.

Recent studies have also documented efforts and gaps in decolonisation efforts in Nigeria's educational landscape. Research has highlighted attempts to foreground indigenous language and cultural elements in educational policy and curriculum discussions while emphasising the need for broader structural transformation(Inusa, n.d.). However, scholars note that these efforts are often piecemeal and lack strategic coherence, resulting in limited impact on the overarching educational architecture(Inusa, n.d.). This emerging scholarship underscores both the intellectual momentum around decolonisation and the practical challenges that continue to hinder meaningful transformation.

The concept of decolonisation in education has gained scholarly prominence as nations confront the lingering effects of colonial epistemologies and seek to recover indigenous ways of knowing. At its core, decolonial theory advocates for the dismantling of hierarchical knowledge systems imposed during colonial rule and the centring of marginalized epistemologies(Dr. Adams Omokaro Ekwevugbe, 2025). Postcolonial pedagogy builds on this by critiquing how educational structures perpetuate cultural domination and by promoting teaching practices that foreground local histories, languages, and worldviews(Nja et al., 2023). Epistemic justice scholars further argue that equitable education must recognise diverse knowledge systems as equally valid and valuable, challenging the long-standing dominance of Western paradigms in curriculum, assessment, and scholarly validation(Nja et al., 2023). Together, these theoretical frameworks offer a foundation for reimagining education systems that are culturally responsive and socially just.

Globally, educational decolonisation has been pursued in various contexts with differing emphases on policy, curriculum reform, and community engagement. In **South Africa**, post-apartheid curriculum transformation sought to redress racialised knowledge hierarchies by incorporating African perspectives and histories, though implementation has been uneven (Nwosu et al., 2024). In **Kenya**, recent curricular reforms have emphasised indigenous languages and local heritage as vehicles for meaningful learning, though resource constraints limit broad adoption (Nwosu et al., 2024). Meanwhile, **Ghana** has pursued educational policies that integrate local knowledge systems, particularly in foundational literacy programmes, demonstrating how decolonisation can

enhance relevance and learner engagement(A. B. Ibrahim, 2024). These examples illustrate how decolonial approaches are being contextualised differently across the Global South based on historical legacies and socio-political priorities.

Identifying indicators of decolonisation in practice is crucial for understanding progress and challenges. Key indicators include the **inclusion of indigenous knowledge and languages** within curricula, the adoption of **culturally relevant pedagogies**, and the revision of **assessment practices** to value diverse expressions of knowledge(A. B. Ibrahim, 2024). Curricula that feature locally relevant content help learners connect education to their cultural and community contexts, while teaching strategies that affirm students' linguistic and cultural identities have been shown to improve learner engagement and self-efficacy(Sarfo et al., 2024). Moreover, assessment practices that go beyond standardised tests to embrace community-based projects and oral knowledge demonstrations provide more equitable measures of student competence(Sarfo et al., 2024). Together, these indicators offer measurable ways to assess how decolonised an education system may be.

Despite its promise, the decolonisation agenda has been critiqued for being **superficial or tokenistic** when reforms fail to address underlying power structures. Critics argue that simply translating existing curricula into local languages or inserting a limited number of indigenous topics does not constitute meaningful transformation if Western epistemic dominance remains intact(Oluyemisi, 2023). In some contexts, curricula have been superficially “localised” without altering pedagogical assumptions or assessment norms, leading to symbolic rather than substantive change(Falebata & Kok, 2024). Furthermore, when decolonisation initiatives are driven by political rhetoric rather than sustained policy support and resource allocation, they risk being short-lived or ineffective (Oluwadiya et al., 2023). These critiques underscore the need for deeper structural changes that go beyond surface-level adjustments to truly decolonise education systems.

2.2 AI in Education and as a Tool for Decolonization

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has increasingly transformed teaching and learning across educational systems worldwide. AI applications such as **adaptive learning platforms, virtual tutors, and AI-powered assessment systems** personalise instruction by analysing learner data and tailoring content to individual needs (Oluwadiya et al., 2023). Adaptive learning algorithms adjust difficulty levels in real time, helping students progress at their own pace, while AI virtual tutors provide instant feedback and scaffolded support that can supplement classroom instruction (Egara & Mosimege, 2024). Additionally, AI-powered assessment tools automate scoring and offer insights into learning gaps, freeing educators to focus on pedagogical interventions(Egara & Mosimege, 2024). These innovations have the potential to enhance both learning outcomes and instructional efficiency when deployed within supportive policy and technological environments.

Beyond general instructional applications, AI offers unique opportunities for **language preservation and indigenous knowledge documentation**. Natural language processing (NLP) and machine-learning models can be trained on indigenous languages to improve automated translation, speech recognition, and content generation, helping to revitalise and sustain languages at risk of extinction (Adigwe et al., 2024). AI can also facilitate the digitisation and indexing of oral histories, local stories, and traditional practices, ensuring that indigenous knowledge is more accessible for educational integration (Ojetunde, 2024). Such technological support is crucial in multilingual contexts where educational materials in indigenous languages are scarce, and where oral knowledge traditions have historically been side-lined in formal curricula.

AI also enables **personalised and context-aware learning experiences**, particularly when systems are designed to respond to learners' cultural backgrounds, interests, and environmental contexts. Contextualised learning platforms can recommend culturally relevant content and provide examples rooted in learners' lived experiences, helping bridge the gap between abstract knowledge and local realities (I. T. Sanusi et al., 2024). For instance, AI systems that adapt agricultural science lessons to reflect local farming practices or that embed regional histories into social studies modules can make education more meaningful for students (Abubakar et al., 2024). However, alongside these opportunities are significant **challenges and risks**, including algorithmic bias, the digital divide, and ethical concerns related to data privacy. Studies highlight that AI systems trained on predominantly Western datasets may reproduce cultural biases, disadvantaging learners from underrepresented groups (Abubakar et al., 2024). Moreover, disparities in access to reliable internet and computing resources further exacerbate inequities in AI adoption in education (Ofem & Chukwujama, 2024).

Emerging literature also investigates the specific role of AI as a **tool for decolonisation in education**. Research from global contexts shows that AI can support **culturally responsive pedagogy** and **knowledge localisation** by enabling curriculum customisation that incorporates local epistemologies (Donatus et al., 2024). For example, AI-driven content platforms in South Asia have been used to embed regional art, language, and history into learning modules, challenging Eurocentric dominance in educational materials (Donatus et al., 2024). Similarly, AI tools that capture and classify indigenous ecological knowledge have enhanced community-based learning initiatives in Latin America, illustrating how technology can foreground local knowledge systems (Donatus et al., 2024). Yet, despite these promising cases, there remain **gaps in research specific to African and Nigerian contexts**, particularly empirical studies that examine how AI can systematically advance decolonisation goals in formal education. Scholars emphasise the need for contextually grounded research that accounts for linguistic diversity, infrastructure constraints, and culturally appropriate algorithm design in Africa's educational ecosystems (Nja et al., 2023).

2.3 Policy, Institutional Readiness, and AI Integration

Effective integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education is strongly influenced by **policy frameworks** that guide technology adoption and implementation. Research shows that national and institutional policies provide the necessary legal, financial, and strategic support to embed AI in curricula, teacher training, and learning management systems (Nwosu et al., 2024). Well-articulated policies also establish standards for ethical AI use, data privacy, and equitable access, ensuring that technology does not exacerbate existing educational disparities (A. B. Ibrahim, 2024). Studies across various African and Asian contexts have demonstrated that countries with coherent AI education policies experience more successful adoption of adaptive learning platforms, AI-powered assessment tools, and virtual teaching systems (Ananyi & Somieari-Pepple, n.d.). However, in Nigeria, gaps remain in translating AI-focused policy into actionable programs, particularly those that support the decolonisation of the education system and integration of indigenous knowledge (Ojetunde, 2024).

Institutional readiness is another critical determinant of AI adoption, encompassing **infrastructure, teacher capacity, and resource availability**. Schools and universities require adequate digital infrastructure, including reliable internet, computing devices, and software systems, to implement AI effectively (Abubakar et al., 2024). Equally important is professional development, as teachers need training to integrate AI tools into pedagogical practices while maintaining cultural relevance and sensitivity (Falebita & Kok, 2024). Despite increasing awareness of AI's potential, many Nigerian institutions face challenges such as insufficient funding, limited access to AI platforms, and low digital literacy among educators, which hinder meaningful implementation (Avurakoghene & Oredein, 2023). Addressing these gaps is essential for leveraging AI as a tool for both educational innovation and the decolonisation agenda, highlighting the interplay between policy, infrastructure, and human capacity in achieving transformative outcomes.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a **quantitative research design** with a **cross-sectional survey approach**. Quantitative methods are appropriate because the study seeks to examine relationships among measurable variables **Artificial Intelligence Integration (AI)**, **Decolonisation of Education (DE)**, and **Policy & Institutional Readiness (PR)** and to test hypotheses using **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)**. SEM allows for the simultaneous assessment of direct and moderating effects, providing robust evidence of causal and correlational relationships.

The research is explanatory in nature, aiming to determine the extent to which AI integration influences decolonisation outcomes and how policy readiness moderates this relationship. This design also facilitates generalization of findings to the wider population of educational institutions in Nigeria.

The target population includes **administrators, teachers, and curriculum planners** in Nigerian secondary schools and higher education institutions where AI tools are being introduced or used in teaching and learning. These groups are selected because they are the primary users and implementers of AI in education and have first-hand knowledge of institutional policies, resources, and curriculum adaptation.

A **purposive sampling technique** will be employed to select respondents who are directly involved in AI adoption and curriculum management. This ensures that data are collected from knowledgeable participants relevant to the study objectives.

Using the **Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula** for determining sample size for SEM studies and considering the number of observed indicators (14 items across AI, DE, and PR constructs), a minimum of **140 respondents** is required. To enhance reliability and account for non-response, the study targets **300 respondents** across multiple institutions.

4. Data Analysis and Results

This section presents the analysis of data collected to examine *Artificial Intelligence as a Catalyst for Decolonisation of Nigeria's Education System*. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesised relationships among Artificial Intelligence Integration (AI), Decolonisation of Education (DE), and Policy & Institutional Readiness (PR).

The analysis was conducted using Covariance-Based SEM. A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed across selected educational institutions in Nigeria. 287 valid responses were retrieved, representing a response rate of 89.7%, which is adequate for SEM analysis.

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess reliability and validity of constructs.

4.1.1 Reliability Analysis

Table 4.1: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
AI Integration (AI)	0.91	0.93	0.72
Decolonisation (DE)	0.89	0.92	0.70
Policy Readiness (PR)	0.88	0.90	0.69

Table 4.1 shows that all Cronbach's Alpha and CR values exceed 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency. AVE values exceed 0.50, confirming convergent validity.

4.1.2 Factor Loadings

Table 4.2: Standardised Factor Loadings

Indicator	Loading
AI1	0.82
AI2	0.88
AI3	0.79
AI4	0.85
AI5	0.83
DE1	0.81
DE2	0.87
DE3	0.84
DE4	0.78
DE5	0.86
PR1	0.80
PR2	0.83
PR3	0.85
PR4	0.79

From table 4.2 all loadings exceed 0.70, indicating strong construct representation.

4.1.3 Model Fit Indices

Table 4.3: Model Fit Summary

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold
χ^2/df	2.31	< 3.0
CFI	0.94	≥ 0.90
TLI	0.93	≥ 0.90
RMSEA	0.067	≤ 0.08
SRMR	0.054	≤ 0.08

From table 4.3 it shows that all fit indices fall within acceptable thresholds, confirming that the measurement model fits the data adequately.

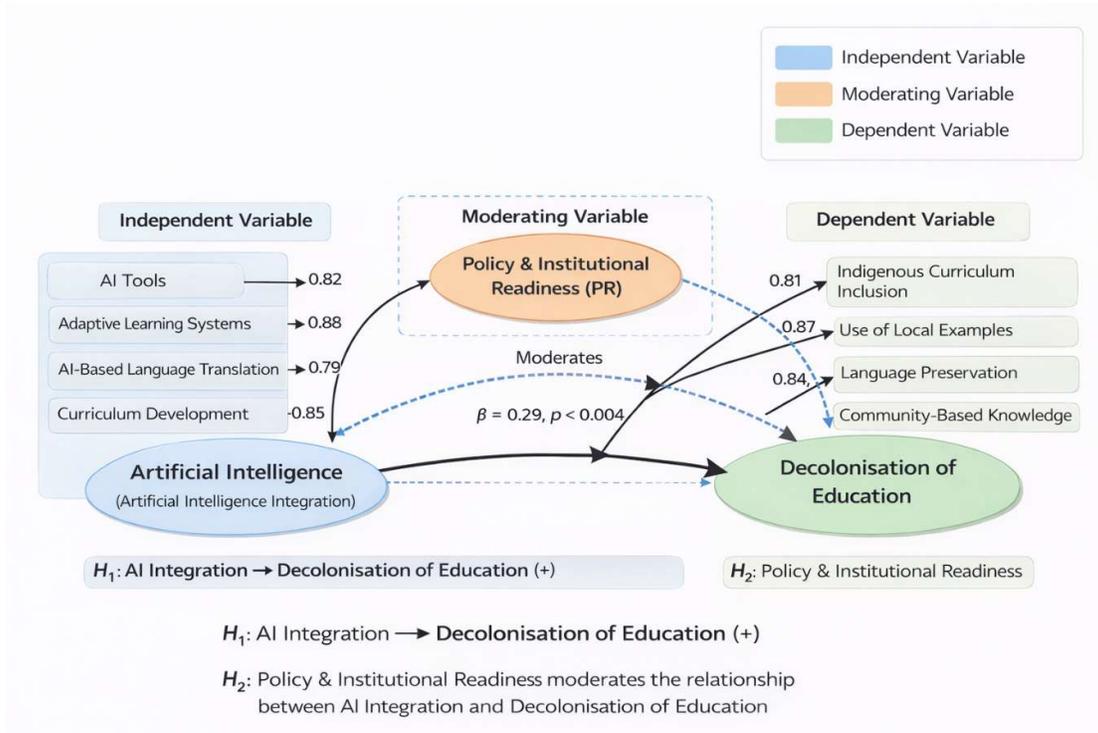


Figure 4.1 illustrates the structural model of AI integration and its effect on decolonisation, including the moderating role of policy readiness.

4.2 Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was tested to examine the hypothesised relationships.

4.2.1 Direct Effect: AI \rightarrow DE

Table 4.4: Structural Path Coefficients

Path	Beta (β)	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	Decision
AI \rightarrow DE	0.64	0.07	9.12	0.000	Significant

Table 4.4 indicate that Artificial Intelligence Integration has a strong positive and statistically significant effect on Decolonisation of Education ($\beta = 0.64, p < 0.001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected.

4.2.2 Moderation Effect: AI \times PR \rightarrow DE

Table 4.5: Moderation Analysis

Path	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
AI \times PR \rightarrow DE	0.29	2.87	0.004	Significant

Table 4.5 indicate that Policy and Institutional Readiness significantly moderates the relationship between AI Integration and Decolonisation. This implies that stronger policy support and institutional preparedness enhance AI's transformative impact.

4.2.3 Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Table 4.6: Explained Variance

Endogenous Variable	R ²
Decolonisation (DE)	0.58

Table 4.6 indicate that AI Integration and Policy Readiness jointly explain 58% of the variance in Decolonisation of Education. This indicates substantial explanatory power.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings demonstrate that Artificial Intelligence integration significantly contributes to the decolonisation of Nigeria's education system. This suggests that AI technologies can support curriculum localisation, indigenous knowledge integration, and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Furthermore, the moderating role of Policy & Institutional Readiness highlights the importance of infrastructural development, funding, and government commitment in maximising AI's transformative potential.

5. Conclusion

Nigeria's education system remains deeply shaped by colonial legacies that prioritise Western epistemologies over indigenous knowledge systems. Despite post-independence reforms, curriculum structures, pedagogical approaches, and assessment frameworks continue to reflect Eurocentric orientations that limit contextual relevance, creativity, and innovation. The need for decolonisation is therefore not merely ideological but developmental, as an education system disconnected from local realities cannot effectively drive national transformation.

Artificial Intelligence presents a strategic opportunity to address these structural imbalances. When intentionally designed and deployed, AI technologies can support indigenous language preservation, local knowledge digitisation, culturally responsive content delivery, and personalised learning models tailored to Nigerian socio-cultural contexts. However, AI is not inherently decolonial; without deliberate policy direction, it may replicate existing global knowledge hierarchies and algorithmic biases.

The study further established that policy frameworks and institutional readiness serve as critical moderating variables in the relationship between AI integration and educational decolonisation. Adequate infrastructure, teacher training, regulatory guidance, and ethical standards are essential for ensuring equitable and context-sensitive AI adoption. Without these foundational supports, AI implementation risks deepening the digital divide and reinforcing epistemic dependency.

Ultimately, AI can function as a catalyst for decolonising Nigeria's education system, but only through strategic, inclusive, and locally grounded implementation. The transformation requires a coordinated effort involving policymakers, educational institutions, technology developers, and community stakeholders to ensure that technological advancement aligns with national identity, cultural preservation, and sustainable development goals.

6. Recommendations

1. The Federal Ministry of Education should develop a comprehensive AI integration policy aligned with Nigeria's decolonisation agenda, emphasising indigenous knowledge inclusion, language preservation, and culturally responsive pedagogy.
2. Government and private sector stakeholders should prioritise infrastructure development, particularly in rural and underserved communities, to prevent widening the digital divide during AI implementation.
3. Continuous professional development programmes should be established to equip teachers with AI literacy, digital pedagogical skills, and competencies in culturally responsive curriculum adaptation.
4. Clear ethical frameworks must be established to address algorithmic bias, data privacy, and equitable access, ensuring AI systems do not reinforce epistemic or socio-economic inequalities.
5. Partnerships between universities, local communities, and technology firms should be encouraged to develop AI-powered platforms that document, preserve, and integrate indigenous Nigerian knowledge systems into formal education.
6. Further empirical studies and pilot implementations should be conducted across Nigerian educational institutions to test the proposed structural model and evaluate the measurable impact of AI on educational decolonisation.

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