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## EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND EQUALITY OF INDIGENESHIP EDUCATION IN RIVERS STATE

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### ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relationship between educational leadership and equality of indigeneship education in Rivers state. The equality of indigeneship education was sub divided into three (3) dimensions, vis-a-vis; socio-cultural/religious, gender and language inequalities, which were used to correlate with educational leadership in Rivers state. The study formulated three (3) research questions and hypotheses respectively and the maximally maintained inequality theory was also used to guide the study. Using a correlational and survey design, the study sampled one hundred and thirty (130) educational leaders from two (2) state owned universities in Rivers State and members of the Rivers state House of Assembly who represent educational leaders in Rivers state. A four point Likert type scale questionnaire was structured to elicit responses from the respondents. The data collected through primary and secondary sources were analyzed with the SPSS computer application using descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the research questions and the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance, respectively. The results of the findings from the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient revealed that there is a strong relationship between educational leadership and the equality of indigeneship education. The implication of this finding is that lecturers, principals and law makers who constitute the stock of educational leaders have a role to play in ensuring indigenous students have equal education based on gender, language, religion and culture. The study therefore recommended among other things, that educational leaders should put in place and implement laws that discourage all forms of discrimination against indigenous education and foster equality in Rivers State.

**Keywords:** Education, Leadership, Educational Leadership, Educational Equality, Indigeneship Education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Every organization that operates within a nation has leaders at different levels that coordinate both human and material resources to achieve predetermined goals. These leaders are expected to possess the abilities to motivate, inspire, direct and organize everyone within the organization for the main aim of achieving set objectives. To buttress this point, Anunobi (2018) described leadership as a practical skill that involves decision making, motivation, management of dynamic groups, and self-awareness. Leadership places a responsibility on an individual to consciously make efforts to inspire people towards attainment of their highest potentials, which is achievable through motivation. The educational sector is a very unique sector where effective leadership is required for successful achievement of goals and to avoid collapse of educational standards and values. Hence, effective leadership is of utmost concern to educational stakeholders. Agi, Kalagbor and Harrison (2016), asserts that management and leadership are essential in effective and efficient direction and utilization of the resources for the achievement of results, successes, improvement of the education goals and in turn national development goals. Thus, much as resources especially in educational system, without optimal mix, deployment, direction, guidance and motivation cannot achieve any goals, leadership becomes inevitable. At all tiers of the educational system, effective leadership is strongly linked to the influential role in inspiring, motivating, affirming and challenging the workforce (teachers and others) in optimizing the curriculum and adjoining resources for the realization of specified goals (Agi, Kalagbor & Harrison, 2016).

For the purposes of setting goals of education, FRN (2014) cited in Ololube (2018) put forward the policies, philosophies and goals of Nigerian education, which includes the development of an individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen; total integration of the individual into the immediate community, the Nigerian society and the world. Therefore, the onus lies on educational leaders who can be referred also as school leaders to navigate their different roles, skills and abilities to bring to reality the goals of the Nigerian educational system. The application of leadership processes to the actualization of school goals. This situation here is whether leadership means a role for one person when it is defined as a process of influencing others to accomplish task, or, viewed as a social process that is inherent in a social system and which is experienced by members of the school at different levels of their participation (Hoy & Miskel, 2008 cited in Agi, Kalagbor & Harrison, 2016).

Consequently, educational leaders do not lead alone but runs a participative leadership style, where every other stakeholder or participant within the school has a part or role to play in the decision making and overall leadership process. Yukl (2002) cited in Hoy and Miskel (2008) defined leadership broadly as a social process in which a member(s) of a group or organization influence the interpretation of internal and external events, the choice of goals or desired outcomes, organization of work activities, individual motivation and abilities, power relations and shared orientations. This definition sees educational leadership as a term applied to school administrations that strive to create positive change in educational policy and process (Agi, Kalagbor & Harrison, 2016). Creating change on the part of educational leadership requires setting of achievable goals and bridging gaps of inequalities and social imbalances that exists within the educational landscape.

The educational leader by his office and character is expected to exhibit high level of integrity, fairness and balance devoid of discrimination of any group, nepotism, favoritism, and injustice that will lead to inequality in the running of the educational institutions. Giving

credence to this claim, Ololube (2018, p. 9) elaborates on the character of institutional leaders, “effective leaders cultivate vital attitudes, characteristics and qualities that are pertinent to educational leadership and management. Character development is a priority to leadership and core qualities makes leadership successful.” Bearing that in mind, educational leaders should practice equity and fairness in the discharge of their leadership duties, taking cognizance of the fact that human resources (teaching and non-teaching staff and students) within the school are diverse and complex both in ethnicity, tribe, language and behavior, it is pertinent to note, that the national policy on education has also stated that, the provision of equal access to qualitative educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education should be encouraged within and outside the formal school system (FRN, 2014) cited in (Ololube, 2018). Thus, economic, religious, socio-cultural, political, ethnic, racial, gender or societal status factors should not be the basis for educational leadership, but the inculcation of national consciousness, integration and unity within the confines of the national policy on education.

## **BACKGROUND**

Equal and unbiased opportunity should be given to all citizens to access education for the purposes of developing them with appropriate skills, mental, social and physical abilities to empower the citizens to contribute positively to nation building. According to Kimani, Kara and Njagi (2013), the purpose of education is to equip the citizenry with values, skills and knowledge to reshape their society and eliminate inequality. Therefore, educational leaders should strive to eliminate from the school leadership and management every form of gender, economic, socio-cultural, language or religious inequality. Equality in education is a complex and controversial issue that transcends the field of education and is subject to unique political, economic and cultural factors. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2007), Suggests that “a fair and inclusive system that makes the advantages of education available to all is one of the most powerful levers to make society more equitable” (p. 10). This belief is generated from its mission, which is to “promote the policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world” (OECD, 2014, par 1).

This places a demand on all educational leaders to work with all educational stakeholders and the government to instate a school climax where every student will see themselves as equal, with absolute fairness and equity. In 2007, the OECD put forward ten practical steps which, it was hoped, would reduce school failure and make society fairer. The report offers an important, comparative perspective on how different countries have handled equity in education. It identified three key areas essential to the delivery of equity in education: the design of education systems, classroom practices, and resourcing. All countries have unique features in their education system. It is important to explore equity issues from a ‘within country’ perspective as well as from a comparative perspective.

Equality in education is not just the average amount of education provided but, also, its distribution across the population. Levin (2003) cited in Zhang, Chan & Boyle (2014) argues the aim of government policy “cannot and should not be equality in the sense that everyone is the same or achieves the same outcomes” (p. 5). In fact, a state does not have the capacity to ensure that every citizen will achieve the same level of outcome or satisfaction in education. It is, however, able to create reasonable opportunities for people to develop their capacities and to participate fully in society. In other words, a state has the potential to be equal, enabling and empowering for all individuals (Lynch & Baker, 2005). As yet, opportunity is not distributed

fairly and therefore, individuals are not afforded an equal chance to compete in society. This brings to bear the needed change on the part of educational leaders to ensure fairness and equality in education for the indigenous people.

Based on the idea of equality in education, a fruitful academic conference was held as part the annual Global Education Systems Day series at the Faculty of Education, Monash University, in November 2012. It attracted experienced and emerging scholars from 15 countries and regions (Australia, Bangladesh, Belarus, Chile, China, Ethiopia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Mongolia, Mozambique, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, United States of America, Vietnam and Zanzibar) who presented work on education equality issues in their countries. The presentations covered various equity issues such as indigenous and minority groups, religion, equity as a concept, gifted students, social class, gender and rural students, in a range of research fields – mathematics education, education policy, teacher education, language learning and teaching and e-learning, at different levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary). This event provided a platform for in-depth, academic dialogue on equality in education, not only bringing out new ideas and information on current national events but also challenging existing and dated ideologies. The conference showed that equality in education varies depending on the national contexts examined and that diverse levels of equality exist at different developmental stages of the same national context.

The OECD has defined term equity in education thus: Equity in education has two dimensions. The first is fairness, which basically means making sure that personal and social circumstances – for example gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin – should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential. The second is inclusion, in other words ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all – for example that everyone should be able to read, write and do simple arithmetic. The two dimensions are closely intertwined: tackling school failure helps to overcome the effects of social deprivation, which often causes school failure (2007, p. 10). The dimension of fairness in educational equity refers to the issues of equal opportunities to education, including regional, urban-rural, social class, gender and ethnic equities. The dimension of inclusion in educational equity mainly discusses the issues of equal rights to education, which indicates that the design of the education system must ensure everyone has equal rights to access education (OECD, 2007). Equal access to education can be maximally achieved if the indigenous ways of learning are not neglected, hence, the need for equality in indigeneship education.

The united nations educational, scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO, 2013) stressed the importance of educating youth in their own cultures, as well as using indigenous languages to educate them, during the discussion on culture and education in the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Opening the discussion, a UNESCO representative observed that millions of children continued to be taught in languages they did not use or even understand. The speaker added that the participation of indigenous peoples in designing curricula was still limited, and education still fell short of eliminating prejudice and discrimination targeted at indigenous peoples. The lack of indigenous education, emphasized a representative of indigenous youth, would continue to set indigenous youth apart from their own cultures. Stressing that education was the key to self-determination, she recommended that educational instruction take place in indigenous languages (UNESCO, 2013).

The unique methods of learning that incorporates the rich cultural heritage and lifestyles of people living within a locality for the aim educating them can be seen as equality in indigeneship education. Wodon and Cosentino, (2019) asserts that Indigenous Peoples tend to

have less access to and poorer quality of education than other groups. Their education often does not incorporate curricula and teaching methods that recognize their communities' histories. The world consists of 370 million Indigenous people from over 90 countries. This 2019 world indigenous day was christened "Indigenous languages, which is inextricably linked to their right to quality education". This is to show the inequalities that exist in indigenous education all over the world. According to the UN, Indigenous Peoples make up approximately 5 per cent of the world's population, but account for 15 per cent of the poorest. They represent 5,000 different cultures and speak a majority of an estimated 7,000 languages worldwide. Forty percent of these are at risk of disappearing, which jeopardizes the cultures and knowledge systems to which they belong. The UN has also declared 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages to highlight the importance of revitalizing and preserving Indigenous languages and showcasing their rich contribution to cultural and knowledge diversity.

Indigenous Peoples often do not have access to schooling in their traditional languages, and the curriculum and teaching methods do not incorporate nor recognize sufficiently their communities' histories, cultures, ways of learning, and traditional knowledge. While socio-economic outcomes are often worse for Indigenous Peoples than for other groups, the available data typically provide only an incomplete picture about poverty, exclusion, and their priorities and perspectives about education. This is in part because their identity and ways of living encompass both individual and collective rights, and cultural, social and economic aspects. Household surveys often focus on individuals and households, and less on communities. As a result, in education as well as in other areas, policymakers should consult with Indigenous Peoples to ensure effective and inclusive development policies which is central to the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (Wodon & Cosentino, 2019).

What can be done to improve education outcomes for Indigenous Peoples? A recent World Bank publication on Equity and Inclusion in Education in World Bank Projects calls for identifying and dismantling exclusionary practices. It also provides examples of initiatives, including some from World Bank projects, that have taken into account the needs and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples. This shows that a wide gap exists in language, religion, socio-economic status, and information communication technology and gender issues among students all over the world, especially as it concerns indigeneship education. This study seeks to investigate the role of educational leadership in fostering equality in indigeneship education in Rivers state.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Nigeria, educational standard is constantly falling owing to the sharp and unethical practices of corruption, gross mismanagement of human and material resources, disunity, discrimination, inequality and nepotism within the system. Socio-cultural, religious, gender and language inequalities were identified as factors responsible for the unattainability of equality by educational leaders in indigeneship education in Nigeria, particularly Rivers state. Literature reveals that education in Southern Nigeria is not the same in the North. For some socio-cultural or religious reasons, most Northerners are not educated due to religious, social and cultural ideologies, little wonder they were categorized under educationally disadvantaged states. Gender inequality is also a predominant factor that has plagued the achievement of educational equality in indigeneship education in Rivers state, Nigeria.

Most of our indigenous cultures debar the girl child from education, with the claim that they are meant to serve as domestic aids and not to be formally educated, which is clearly

denying females the right to education, breeding high level of illiteracy among women in Nigeria and resulting in sharp gender inequality. Nigeria has been rated as the world's headquarters of poverty by many international organizations, due to the millions of children not in school and dropping out of school annually. Out of school children are constantly increasing due to economic inequality and hardship in the land. Sadly, only children of the rich have access to quality education, and the poor are exposed to severe pitiable learning conditions. There are reported cases of government schools where children/students learn under trees, dilapidated classrooms, and inadequate learning aids etc, caused by economic inequality.

In well developed nations like China and Japan, they learn in their indigenous languages, unfortunately, in Nigeria, we borrowed English language and relegated to the background our mother tongue, forcing our children to copy the English language without any reference to our indigenous languages, resulting in language inequality. It is against this backdrop, that this study seeks to investigate how educational leaders can achieve equality in indigenship education in Rivers state.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate educational leadership and equality in indigenship education in Rivers state. The purpose specifically is to:

- Determine the relationship between educational leadership and socio cultural/religious inequality in indigenship education in Rivers State.
- Determine the relationship between educational leadership and gender inequality in indigenship education in Rivers State.
- Determine the relationship between educational leadership and language inequality in indigenship education in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were designed to guide the study:

- What is the rationale that educational leadership permits socio-cultural/religious inequality in indigenship education in Rivers State?
- What is the rationale that educational leadership permits gender inequality in indigenship education in Rivers State?
- What is the rationale that educational leadership permits language inequality in indigenship education in Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- Educational leadership is not significantly related to socio-cultural/religious in equality in indigenship education in Rivers State.
- Educational leadership is not significantly related to gender inequality in indigenship education in Rivers State.

- Educational leadership is not significantly related to language inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers State.

### **Significance of the Study**

Educational and instructional leaders, stakeholders, government, educational laws and policy makers at all levels will benefit hugely from this study. The study will serve as an eye opener into long neglected issues of educational marginalization, cultural and social inequalities, gender disparity, the school needs, promotion of national unity and integration, core values and ethos of our educational and national ideologies. The study will be of invaluable significance to girls who have been barred from going to school because of their gender, which is never their making. It will create the much needed awareness and sensitization they need to inspire, motivate and ignite in them the passion for education. They will have a better understanding of who they are, and the enormous potentials in them to contribute relevantly to building their community and society like their male counterparts. They will understand that girls and boys are equal; one and the same, hence, have no limits in their abilities to develop optimally and be productive.

The study will eradicate learning difficulties occasioned by language inequalities. Introducing indigenous education in the school curriculum, where students from a particular locality will be allowed to learn in their mother tongue, thereby liberating them from the slavery and compulsion of learning only in English language. This will give students the leverage to learn at their own pace, especially in those schools situated in rural settlements and villages. This will also reduce the emphasis on English language and promote our local language and rich cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the advent of the imperialists caused a great damage to our cultural heritage, cherished values and norms, which has retained most of us in the delusion and mental slavery. Values of respect, decency, honesty and patriotism are fast going extinct. However, this study will remind us of our indigenous technology, values and social justice passed down to us by our ancestors, revisiting our traditional medicine, food, cultures, dressing, and communal living where everyone was equal, classless and selfless. Equality in indigenous education will build in us the confidence to grow our educational system within the context of our unique cultural ideologies and philosophies. There is a paradigm shift from traditional ways of learning to new information age where ICT is used to simplify and facilitate the process of teaching and learning. This study will also help to bridge the gap, by encouraging educational and instructional leaders to procure ICT resources to address the inequalities that exists within schools at all levels of education.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Concept of Educational Leadership**

Educational leadership can also be referred to as school leadership. The application of leadership processes to the actualization of school goals. This situation here is whether leadership means a role for one person when it is defined as a process of influencing others to accomplish task. Or, viewed as “a social process that is inherent in a social system and which is experienced by members of the school at different levels of their participation (Hoy & Miskel, 2008 cited in Agi, Kalagbor & Harrison, 2016). Consequently, educational leaders do not lead alone but runs a

participative leadership style, where every other stakeholder or participant within the school has a part or role to play in the decision making and overall leadership process.

Yukl (2002) cited in Hoy and Miskel (2008) defined leadership broadly as a social process in which a member(s) of a group or organization influence the interpretation of internal and external events, the choice of goals or desired outcomes, organization of work activities, individual motivation and abilities, power relations and shared orientations. This definition sees educational leadership as a term applied to school administrations that strive to create positive change in educational policy and process (Agi, Kalagbor & Harrison, 2016). Creating change on the part of educational leadership requires setting of achievable goals and bridging gaps of inequalities and social imbalances that exists within the educational landscape.

FRN (2004, p. 56) cited in Agi, Kalagbor and Harrison (2016) clearly puts forward the philosophical foundation of educational leadership in the Nigerian educational system, which underlies the necessity of:

- Ensuring adequate and effective planning of all educational services;
- Provide efficient administrative and management control for the maintenance and improvement of the system;
- Ensure quality control through regular and continuous supervision of instructional and other educational services amongst others.

Educational leaders are saddled with potent responsibilities in ensuring the school or institution is effectively managed with resources distributed and utilized equitably to all groups within the school system without any form of discrimination. Hence, equality should be a core character possessed by school leaders.

Educational inequality is the unequal distribution of academic resources, including but not limited to; school funding, qualified and experienced teachers, books, and technologies to socially excluded communities. These communities tend to be historically disadvantaged and oppressed. More times than not, individuals belonging to these marginalized groups are also denied access to the schools with abundant resources. Inequality leads to major differences in the educational success or efficiency of these individuals and ultimately suppresses social and economic mobility (Williams, 2003). Much of educational inequality is attributed to economic disparities that often falls along racial lines and much modern conversation about educational equity conflates the two, showing how they are inseparable from residential location and, more recently, language. Educational inequality between white students and minority students continues to perpetuate social and economic inequality (Williams, 2003).

Throughout the world, there have been continuous attempts to reform education at all levels (Haycock, 2001). With different causes that are deeply rooted in history, society, and culture, this inequality is difficult to eradicate. Although difficult, education is vital to society's movement forward. It promotes "citizenship, identity, equality of opportunity and social inclusion, social cohesion as well as economic growth and employment" and for these reasons, equality is widely promoted (Shrivastava & Shrivastava, 2014). Unequal educational outcomes are attributed to several variables, including family of origin, gender, and social class. Achievement, earnings, health status, and political participation also contribute to educational inequality within the United States and other countries (Ferreira & Gignoux, 2014).

## **Educational Inequality: Global Perspective**

Indigenous education is often being undermined, as students from richer homes patronize foreign education due to socio-economic inequalities. This is in consonance with the view of Attewell and Newman (2010), stating that, moreover, to the extent that student who study abroad tend to come from economically and socially more privileged families in their home societies, their access to Australasian, European, and North American universities may act to consolidate class differences and socioeconomic divides in their home countries by providing greater educational opportunities to already-privileged students at home compete for places in oversubscribed and well-funded institutions.

“Multiple forces drive the burgeoning students demand for a university education overseas” (Altbach & Knight 2006; IOM 2008: pp. 111-113 in Attewell & Newman, 2010). One common motivation is to gain a prestigious credential and attain fluency in English-stepping stones to a better job in one’s home country. Some undergraduate pursue an education overseas because they did not succeed in the intense competition for access to a prestigious university in their native country; here, oversea study functions as a safety valve where domestic educational opportunities are restricted (Attewell & Newman, 2010). The implication of this assertion is that indigenous languages are not fully appreciated, hence, the unending scuttle for western education where English is spoken as an official language for interaction, instruction and learning. Other universities have entered into collaborative arrangements whereby students remain in home-country institutions but take courses sponsored by or credentialed by western universities. These are known as “cross-border programs” and they are currently enrolling at least 300,000 students (IOM, 2008, p. 113).

Due to poor educational standards caused by deplorable educational infrastructure, inadequate instructional resources, sub-standard instructional manpower, pitiable educational ICT and technology, etc., it has created a huge gap, and encumbered the progress of indigeneship education, which has consequently propelled affluent homes and countries to abandon their home-based education, in order to patronize foreign education with foreign cultures. Hence, inequality in indigeneship education is a global phenomenon.

## **Concept of Indigeneship/Indigenous Education**

The term “indigenous,” when used with education, is generally recognized to refer to the first inhabitants of an area that was later colonized by another, more powerful, group of people who then forced their language and culture on the original inhabitants. In Australia and Canada, the term “Aboriginal” is still used; in Canada, “First Nations” is also popular; and in the United States, “Native American,” “American Indian,” “Alaska Native,” and “Native Hawaiian” are used to describe the country’s indigenous peoples. However, the term “indigenous” is becoming more popular globally. The colonial approach to education is related to the anthropological concept of ethnocentrism, where each ethnic group tends to think itself superior to other groups, and which propels more powerful, dominant groups to subordinate or demand the cultural assimilation of less powerful groups they conquer and colonize (Reyner & Singh, 2014).

The subordinate, indigenous group can be expected to adopt the religion, language, and customs of the dominant group, and schools are used to promote this conversion. However, ethnic minorities often resist forced assimilation. Much of the recent history of indigenous education globally has involved the conflict between efforts at decolonization, which was

exemplified by the United Nations' adoption in 2007 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and continued efforts to assimilate thousands of indigenous ethnic minority groups (Reyner & Singh, 2014). The variety of these groups is indicated by the fact that it is estimated by linguists that there are over six thousand languages spoken across the globe today (though assimilationist education is lowering that number), and each language can represent a unique culture. Since European nations colonized much of the world in the last few centuries, they are usually the group imposing, through schools, their language and culture on indigenous peoples in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia, and the islands in the Pacific Ocean. However, China's recent actions in Tibet also meet this definition, and the actions of Scandinavian countries in regard to the Sámi in their northern regions also qualify.

Abidogun (2013) gives an overview of current thinking on indigenous education. The contributing authors to Ah Nee-Benham and Cooper (2000) examine the question of what philosophy should drive thinking about indigenous education, and Tuhiwai (2012) examines how and by whom indigenous education should be researched. Huffman (2010) looks at recent research-based explanations for indigenous academic performance, starting with cultural discontinuity theory, where the culture of the teacher as well as the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools may be in conflict with a child's home culture. This explanation supports bilingual, bicultural education. Critical theorists maintain that indigenous children are provided an inferior education so that the dominant group can maintain its position of power and continue to exploit ethnic minorities as sources of cheap labor. A final explanation is found in poverty.

This view holds that children of any "race" or ethnic group who live in poverty are denied the health care, nutrition, home literacy environment, and other factors they need for school success. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) provides an extensive review of research supporting the use of curriculum and instructional practices that build on the cultural and linguistic background of indigenous students. Many studies contrast "Western" linear thinking and knowledge with indigenous traditional circular and spiritual knowledge (e.g., Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005). Historically indigenous traditional knowledge has been devalued and ignored in schools in colonized lands. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) provides a strong argument for the continued importance of traditional Native values and ways of thinking for modern youth. Willeto (1999) in Abidogun (2013), a study of Navajo youth, demonstrates that students do not have to lose their native language and culture to be more academically successful, as assimilationist ideology maintains (Reyner & Singh, 2014).

### **Socio-cultural/ Religious Inequality in Indigeneship Education**

Socio-cultural and some religious practices have been observed to constitute inequality in indigeneship education in Nigeria. The majority ethnic groups are the Igbos, Yorubas, and Hausas/Fulanis. The Igbos are mostly in the Eastern region, the Yorubas in the Western region, and the Hausas/Fulanis in the Northern region. While the Igbos and the Yorubas, who are predominantly Christians, accepted education during the missionary movement of the middle and late 19th century, the Hausa/Fulani in the Northern region, who are predominantly Muslim, resisted Christianity and Western education and were supported by the British colonial leadership (Aguolu, 1979; Clignet & Foster, 1964; Davis & Kalu-Nwiwu, 2001 cited in Onwuameze, 2013). This clearly shows that ethnicity and religiosity creates a wide gap in our educational opportunities and access.

The Education and Systematic Group Inequalities in Nigeria Published its report on 14 Sep 2017 and it states thus:

“On the night between 14 and 15 April, 2014, 276 girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram from their school in Chibok in Borno State in Northeastern Nigeria. The Islamist terrorist group does not believe that girls should attend school, and these girls were targeted precisely because they were in school. However, conservative views on gender and education is only one reason why many girls in Northern Nigeria are missing out on education. Due to large systematic inequalities related to religion, ethnicity and region, many girls are suffering from a triple disadvantage when it comes to educational inequality. This policy brief provides an overview of the types and magnitudes of educational inequalities in Nigeria and offers some policy recommendations on how to respond to these inequalities”.

Furthermore, brief Points were outlined from the above report, it states thus: “Nigeria is one of the countries with the sharpest educational inequalities in Africa. Girls receive far less education than boys. Northerners receive far less education than Southerners. Muslims receive far less education than Christians. The above group inequalities tend to reinforce each other. If anything, educational inequalities in Nigeria have been increasing over the years. Policy makers should strive to reduce systematic educational group inequalities. There is a need for better data on educational quality and performance in developing countries”.

The credibility and authenticity of the above outlined report is indisputable. Certain cultures and religious practices tend to create disharmony among citizens and indigenous people in language. Religious fanaticism has led to the abduction of hundreds of innocent girls in the North, denying them their rights to education. Culture is also a major factor that causes educational inequality in indigeneship education, as some cultures will never permit the practice of modern and western education no matter its inherent benefits. Hence, it has been established by available literature the availability of socio-cultural/religious inequality in indigeneship education in Nigeria, and particularly in Rivers State.

### **Gender based Inequality in Indigeneship Education**

Gender inequality is the preference of one gender (either male or female) to be superior to the other, denying them of opportunities they are equally qualified for. According to Sanda and Kurfi (2013), the gender constructs are shaped by ideological, historical, religion ethnic, economic and cultural determinants which are translated into social, economic and political inequalities where men’s activities and their gender attributes are perceived as essentially superior to women’s. In this dimension, Bosezup (2007) argues that gender inequality stemmed from colonization as an instrument to strategize the perpetuation of women subordination, subjugation and exploitation.

There is an enabling expression of a universal right to education in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Right, and there are other provisions on gender equitable education in Committee for Eradication of Discrimination against Women. The most significant expressions of these rights are found on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989), the International Convention on Economic, Social and cultural Rights, (ICESCR, 1966), and the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO, 1960 in Ezekwe & Uchechukwu 2019).

Report of statistics from the study carried out by Omoregie and Ihensekhien (2009) on persistence of gender inequalities in education revealed that for primary, secondary and

university enrolments, there existed higher percentage of male's enrolment at the different levels of education in Nigeria. For instance, statistics from UBEC Abuja in 2006 revealed that there were more male enrolment at the basic level of education with a total of 107,973,895 (56.26%) while that of the female was 83,917,306 (43.73%). The Census in Nigeria covering the periods 1991 and 2006 likewise revealed that there were more males in school than females. In 1991, the ratio was males 50.04% and females 49.96%. In 2006, the ratio was males 51.21% and females 48.79%. These data revealed that there is a gender inequality in education right from the primary level. There seems to be so many underlying causative factors responsible for this and which included: general/higher level of preference by parents of male children to females based on cultural, traditional and religious practices; limited resources of families in terms of financial constraints and parents level of educational dispositions.

The 1999 constitution of Nigeria prohibits discrimination on grounds of gender, however, customary and religious laws continue to restrict women's rights. In Nigeria, there are still societies which see a woman as subservient to man, in mental and biological capacity. This is why in spite of glaring monumental achievement of Women in the country and phenomenal rise of the role women play in Nigeria, gender sensitivity or perception of women having mental equality to man has remained unappreciated (Ezekwe & Uchechukwu, 2019). According to Wikipedia, (2015) discrimination is action that denies social participation or human rights to categories of people based on prejudice. Sequel to this definition it connotes different treatment of two equally qualified individuals on account of their gender, race, age, disability, religion etc. The Convention on the elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly defined discrimination against women as any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Discrimination or inequality can emanate from an individual, group or a particular gender not having fundamental freedom, equal access to opportunities in political and public life as well as opportunities in education and employment. Invariably it affects the economic outcomes of equally productive workers based on the differential treatment on grounds of gender. One major factor is the issue of male dominance in access to educational opportunities. The opportunity cost of foregoing school for female children is very high due to the male roles and society preference for male children. In some communities the female children are not sent to school like their male counterparts due to some cultural/religious practices.

Oganwu (1996) cited by Omoregie and Ihensekhien (2009) equally identified that Nigerian women and their counterparts in other African countries have been debased and dishonoured by the thought that every woman is supposed to consider motherhood as the principal purpose of her existence. She is expected to produce children, cook, mend and wash clothes and take care of men and be subordinate to male authority. In indigeneship education, some of these beliefs are in line with cultures and customs, however, it negates global policies of equality between male and female gender. Therefore, the onus lies on the shoulders of educational leaders and stakeholders to take drastic steps to address these issues of gender inequality in Rivers state.

Federal government in a move to curb the level of gender disparity in country has made some efforts that still did not yield much result. According to Omoregie and Ihensekhien (2009), there is still much gender inequality in Nigerian Education in spite of all steps taken by the

Federal Government to give equal gender opportunity to education such as the provision of the Universal Free Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 and today, the Universal Basic Education (UBE). The female gender is still lacking behind in education and this has much implication in the social-economic status of the females in the nation. If drastic measures are not taken, education in Nigeria may be all male affairs as the females dominate the markets, the farms and the homes to make more babies and increase poverty in the land. Gender inequality between males and females has contributed to educational inequalities in terms of making career choices, where some courses are highly dominated by male than female and such has great implications not only on the education sector but the nation as a whole.

Girls in Nigeria face sets of barriers to equal educational opportunity. These include child marriage, early pregnancy, domestic labour and human trafficking. According to Wikipedia Online Press, Nigeria is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children subjected to trafficking in persons. It further states that trafficked Nigerian women and children are recruited from rural areas within the country's borders – women and girls for involuntary domestic servitude and forced commercial sexual exploitation and boys for forced labour in street vending, domestic servitude, mining and begging (Nworgu, 2015).

In the far North, some muslim parents are reluctant, for cultural and religious reasons, to send their daughters to school. Even in the Southern part of the country, Rivers state in particular, many parents are reluctant training their female children. Their reason is traceable to old customs and values which see female education as unnecessary as the women folk are deemed to have been designed for child birth and domestic chores for the husband to be. In addition, men's perception of the educated women as a 'threat' to them in politics and economy, has also made it difficult for families to train their daughters. These discriminations towards girl's education act as barriers as fewer girls enroll and many who do often times drop out of school. The disparity between male and female gender education is amply displayed by the monopoly which men enjoy in the higher level of the economy and polity. This explains why it is common seeing Nigerians sending their sons to school before the daughters are considered (Nworgu, 2015).

Equality of resources and economically generated inequalities in education: the primacy of social class education is intimately integrated into the economic systems of society in two distinct ways. On the one hand, access to, and successful participation in, education is generally dependent of having the economic resources to avail fully of the opportunities that education can offer. On the other hand, schools and colleges are major institutions of selection and stratification for the labour market; they mediate life chances within the economy. Because the distribution of economic resources plays such a key role in determining the quality of education one receives, and because education is such a powerful determinant of life chances, equality in education cannot be thought of separately from economic equality.

### **Language Inequality in Indigeneship Education**

Language is a means of communication and reveals our cultural identities. The language of instruction used by education centers has a very crucial role in terms of providing quality education and succeeding in producing well equipped students both academically and psychologically. It is hardly possible to think of education without a language. Language is used to keep and transfer knowledge. Students gather knowledge through discussion, reading, writing, and listening. Teachers in their part provide their knowledge with the use of the most important language skills. Language represents the medium through which we encounter reality. It also

represents to a uniquely human ability, an ability that reflects the essence of what it means to be human. It is a system allows people to communicate or transfer proposition among themselves (Hotgraves, 2008). According to Abdi (2017), Uganda and other Africans have been disadvantaged whereby the language of instruction is largely foreign to students. Research findings on use of mother tongue as a means of instruction in the lower primary indicate that there is a relatively low level of adherence to the language policy in the first three years of primary school (Piper, 2010).

On the contrary, mother tongue as a medium of instruction is quite disregarded in primary schools in both rural and urban areas, and English is still employed as a medium of instruction due to the prestige attached it. Furthermore, the mother tongue has more advantages including pedagogical, psychological satisfaction and helps develop positive self-esteem. Effective communication leads to more successful learning opportunities in classrooms where languages familiar to both children and teachers are used as language of instruction at least in the first three years. Moreover, when teachers teach effectively reading, writing and literacy in the mother tongues, students can develop adequate literacy skills that they can use in learning the official languages (Abdi, 2017).

Alidou and Brock-Utne (2006) posits that in many countries that were previously under colonial regimes, the official language tends to be the language of the former colonizers. In addition to official languages, several countries recognize national languages, which may be compulsory in education. It is worthy of note that the national language is not the indigenous language of learners; thereby creating language inequality. The choice of language in the educational system confers a power and prestige through its use in formal instruction (UNESCO, 2003). Moreover, the choice of the language or indeed the languages of instruction is a recurrent challenge in the development of quality education, the lack of scripts for the languages; the languages' inadequacy to describe modern science and technology, the economic problems to teach through a lot of indigenous languages; fear of national threats and unity of using so many language for education, the poor value given towards native languages (Alem, 2006).

In response to these challenges, various interventions have been undertaken. Prominent policies have been designed both at national and international levels. International agencies have for a number of years, recognized the close link between language and culture identity. Articles 14 and 17 of the UN draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and in 1996 UNESCO Barcelona Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights promote both linguistic and cultural self-expression of ethno linguistic communities and the need to provide educational structures that will help, maintain and develop the languages spoken by various linguistic communities. These declarations affirm that education should be at the service of linguistic and cultural diversity (SEAMEO, 2009). In general, there is a possibility for the society to appreciate and use the language it chooses for any purpose (Alidou& Brock-Utne, 2006).

A child's first comprehension of the world around him, the learning of concepts and skills, and his perception of existence, starts with the language that is first taught to him, his mother tongue. Our first language, the beautiful sounds of which one hears and gets familiar with before being born while in the womb, has such an important role in shaping our thoughts and emotions. A child's psychological and personality development will depend upon what has been conveyed through the mother tongue. With this in mind, as psychologists say, it matters tremendously that language expressions and vocabulary are chosen with care when we talk to children. Mother language has such an important role in framing our thinking, emotions and spiritual world, because the most important stage of our life, childhood, is spent in its imprints

(Hurisa, 2010). This shows the level of language inequality that exists when schools do not recognize the place of indigenous languages in Rivers state.

Besides, although mother tongue education is important, it is estimated that 221 million primary-aged children from minority language and ethnic communities do not have access to education in a language they know (Dutcher, 2004). The unsurprising result is that literacy rates among ethnic and linguistic minorities are particularly low (Pinnock,2009) .Where instruction, curriculum and materials are not in the mother tongue and do not take account of the child's known world, the result is widespread non-attendance, increased repetition and low achievement levels. In a study of data from 160 language groups in 22 developing countries it was found that not using mother-tongue languages was a major cause of non-enrolment and dropout. Those with access to instruction in their mother-tongue were significantly more likely to be enrolled and attending school.

The United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights 1948 affirms the right to education without discrimination. Article 2 of this fundamental document establishes the basic principle against discrimination on the grounds of language. In 1994, the Ethiopian education and training policy (ETP) was based on the principle that all nations and nationalities have the right to be educated in their own language and to preserve their culture. The United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights 1948 affirms the right to education without discrimination. Article 2 of this fundamental document establishes the basic principle against discrimination on the grounds of language. Article 5 of the 1960 Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education specifically recognizes the right of the members of national minorities to carry on 13 their own educational activities, including the use or teach of their own language.

Numerous other United Nations declarations and conventions affirm the rights of minorities, including Indigenous peoples, to learn and/or have instruction in mother tongue or their heritage language. Key documents include: the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child; the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992, Article 4); the ILO Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (1989, Article 28); the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Article 45); and the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. UNESCO declarations and conventions the first Article of the UNESCO Constitution sets forth the fundamental principle that language should not induce any kind of discrimination the human rights and fundamental freedoms are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion.

The 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education lays down the educational rights of minorities particular relevance to language, Article 5 holds that the members of national minorities have the right to carry on their own educational activities, including the use or the teaching of their own language, provided that this right is not exercised in a manner which prevents the members of these minorities from understanding the culture and language of the community as a whole and from participating in its activities.

### **Relationship between Educational Leadership and Equality in Indigeneship Education**

The literatures reviewed so far reveals that, educational leaders have roles to play in fostering equality in indigeneship education in Rivers state. In determining the relationship that exists

between the later and the former, it is expedient to consider the following ways to foster educational equality in indigeneship through the roles of educational leadership in Nigeria (Rivers state). In view of the recent advancement and modernization in the society, the use of ICT Information and Communication Technologies should be emphasized in the schools to bridge the digital divide in indigeneship education in Rivers state. With ICT, it is now possible for teachers and learners to interact without face to face or physical contact. This opportunity of ICT in the educational system should be exploited by governments, law makers and educational leaders at all levels so as to bring about the desired rapid educational development in Nigeria. This also implies that it may no longer be necessary to be physically present in classrooms to disseminate and receive knowledge. Satellite communication and internet facilities have opened a new form of modern education devoid of the huge investment in construction of classrooms and other physical structures especially at the higher levels. This idea of education-without classroom can foster rapid educational expansion in the education sector (Yusuf, 2003).

In respect to bridging gender inequalities in Rivers state, educational leaders are expected to perform the following roles; Education for the girl-child must necessarily be a priority in efforts to expand the educational level of the Nigerian Northern region. The traditional, cultural and religious barriers impeding girl-child education should be addressed and policies on women and girl-child education strengthened as well. All cultural and traditional practices, which tend to enhance gender inequality in education, should be discouraged at all levels of education (Olibie, Eziuzo, & Enueme, 2013). This is in view of the role of women to the development of their community (World Bank, 1997; Amali, 2006. Omoregie and Ihensekhien (2009) expressed that both federal, state and local governments should give financial assistance through scholarships or bursaries to female students and educate the parents and the general public so as to bring about a change in attitude toward women education. The non-governmental bodies (NGO) should be assigned to do this by the government. The governments through its legislative arm should promulgate laws against early marriage, unfavourable cultural practices against women/girl-child and using the females as hawkers on the streets which expose them to dangers that affect their education. Let there be a rule on quota system of 50:50 in admission of males and females to all institutions of learning from primary to tertiary level. That means ratio of admission should be 50 females to 50 males in all levels.

Efforts should be made by educational leaders in the area of science and technological education in order to boost the area. According to Yusuf (2003), science and technology is one major tool of development of any nation, society or region. They are the pillars of the wellbeing of every nation as well as the source of economic and social development (Abiodun, 2002). In view of the importance of this form of education to overall development, deliberate efforts must be made to develop science and technological education, especially in the area. If Nigeria must continue to be relevant in the global community at large and be counted among the twenty top (20-G countries) advanced nations in the world it must place emphasis on appropriate administration and management of science and technological education which would lead to technological development of all the regions in general.

Scholarship programme should also be strengthened and properly instituted to cater for the educational needs of the underprivileged /disadvantaged groups, marginalized groups and special groups. This would in no small measure help to reduce the gap of educational opportunities between the privileged and the less privileged people. It would also stem the tide of turnover rate in schools and colleges as well as tertiary institutions in the country (Yusuf, 2003).

Educational leaders are expected to lay serious emphasis on Prioritizing of indigeneship education in Rivers state. Overtime, less focus and attention is paid on key areas like science courses, agricultural, vocational and technical courses which reflects indigeneship education. These areas which is supposable the main bane of the Nigerian economy are poorly funded. Dogra (2011) identified that researches have shown that Nigeria is far behind countries like Japan in inculcating a scientific spirit amongst its students. Countries like Russia, Sweden, Italy and Canada take awareness campaigns, from time to time to encourage literacy and reading amongst the children. Such initiatives are not given due importance in Nigeria. Consequently, it is safe to say that educational leadership has a role to play in creating the needed change and balance in the various forms of inequalities that exist in indigeneship education in Rivers State.

## **METHODS**

The study adopted a correlational and survey design. Survey studies are usually appropriate in cases of social and behavioural sciences which are examples of field's research involving understanding and controlling relationships between variables. The population of the study consisted of the entire members of the Rivers State House of Assembly (RSHA) which consist of thirty two (32) members, Deans, HoDs, Lecturers of two (2) State Universities: Ignatius Ajuru University of Education with Four Hundred and Twenty Three (423) academic staff and Rivers State University with Six Hundred and Four (604) staff in Rivers State (Source: Establishment Department, Nominal role unit, 2019). The overall total of the population of the study summed up to One Thousand and Fifty Nine (1,059) persons. A sample of about 130 respondents were drawn for the study which represented approximately 12% of the total population. They were randomly selected from different institutions where educational leaders, stakeholders, policy and law makers exist. Vis-à-vis: members of the Rivers State House of Assembly (RSHA), Deans, HoDs, Lecturers of two (2) State Universities: Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Rivers State University.

A structured/close ended questionnaire was used as data collection instrument. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher called Educational Leadership and the Equality of Indigeneship Education in Rivers State Questionnaire (ELEIERSQ). The questionnaire was structured using the four point Likert-type scale of strongly agreed (SA) = 4, agreed (A) = 3, disagreed (D) = 2, and strongly disagreed (SD) = 1, extent of relationship between the variables. In answering the research questions, the mean scores of each item are compared with the real limit of the numbers:  $4+3+2+1 = 10$ ,  $10 \div 4 = 2.5$ . The questionnaire (instrument) for data collection was face-validated by four experts in educational management and leadership and one measurement and evaluation experts.

The questionnaire was administered personally with the help of a research assistant, who was directed on what to respond par adventure any question arises. Crombach Alpha coefficient was adopted as a measure of internal consistency for this study. And a reliability of .077 was gotten using the SPSS version 22 computer application. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as percentage, frequency, mean, standard deviation was used to analyze the research questions, Cronbach alpha for reliability analysis and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient for the analysis of hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance with the aid of SPSS V.22.0 computer package.

## RESULTS

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

No. of Questionnaire Issued	No. of Questionnaire Retrieved	Useful Questionnaire	Not Useful	%
130	112	108	4	83

Source: survey Data, 2020.

The table above shows the questionnaires distribution and retrieval. The researcher issued 130 questionnaires and from consistent visit, he retrieved 112, 108 were useful while 4 were not useful. This represents approximately 83% response rate and it was considered significant for the study.

**Research Question One:** What is the rationale that educational leadership permits socio cultural/religious inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers State?

Table 2: Socio-cultural/Religious inequality and Educational Leadership in indigeneship education in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Cultural practices creates inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers state.	2.59	1.03	Agree
2	Different religious beliefs cause inequality among indigenous students in Rivers state.	3.00	.814	Agree
3	Socio-cultural endeavours causes gender inequality in indigenous education in Rivers state.	2.82	.984	Agree
4	Some religious practices prohibits students from learning indigenous cultures and values in Rivers state.	2.51	.814	Agree
5	Equal access to education is unattainable due to unhealthy cultural and religious stance.	2.14	1.27	Disagree
6	Cultures/religion in Rivers state creates inequality between western and indigenous education (technology, curriculum and scope of schools).	2.73	1.09	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.63</b>		

Table 2 show the mean and standard deviation of respondents in response to the question of whether Socio-cultural/Religious inequality exists in indigeneship education in Rivers State. With a grand mean of 2.63 > 2.5 criterion mean, it shows that the educational leaders agreed that socio-cultural/religious inequality largely exist in indigeneship education in Rivers State. From the tables above, with the mean values of 2.59 (item 1), 3.00 (item 2), 2.82 (item 3), 2.51 (item 4) and 2.73 (item 6) respectively, educational leaders agreed that cultural practices, different religious beliefs, socio-cultural endeavours, some religious practices and culture/religion are factors chiefly responsible for socio-cultural inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers State. Except for item 5, with a mean of 2.14 where respondents disagreed that equal access to education is unattainable due to unhealthy cultural and religious stance. However, majority of the respondents agreed to the question raised.

**Research Question Two:** What is the rationale that educational leadership permits gender inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers State?

Table 3: Gender inequality and Educational Leadership in indigeneship education in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
7	Males and females do not have equal access to education in Rivers state.	2.68	1.02	Agree
8	Indigenous families prefer the males to be educated first before the females in Rivers state.	3.01	.875	Agree
9	Females are relegated to domestic chores rather than being educated in Rivers state.	2.62	1.14	Agree
10	Customs and traditions in Rivers state prohibits females from being educated.	3.00	.808	Agree
11	Males are more in schools than females in Rivers state.	2.83	1.02	Agree
12	Gender inequality between males and females is caused by high cost of education.	2.54	.868	Agree
13	Females are denied education due to early marriage and pregnancy in Rivers state.	2.65	1.14	Agree
14	Females are denied education because they are perceived as threats to their male counterparts if educated.	2.73	1.01	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.75</b>		

Table 3 above shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents in response to the question of gender inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers State. With a grand mean of 2.75 > 2.5 criterion mean, it shows that the educational leaders agreed that gender inequality largely exist in indigeneship education in Rivers State. From the tables above, with the mean values of 2.68 (item 7), 3.01 (item 8), 2.62 (item 9), 3.00 (item 10), 2.83 (item 11), 2.54 (item 12), 2.65 (item 13) and 2.73 (item 14) respectively, educational leaders agreed that males and females do not have equal access to education, Indigenous families prefer the males to be educated first before the females, Females are relegated to domestic chores rather than being educated, Customs and traditions in Rivers state prohibits females from being educated, Males are more in schools than females, Gender inequality between males and females is caused by high cost of education, Females are denied education due to early marriage and pregnancy in Rivers state, and Females are denied education because they are perceived as threats to their male counterparts if educated. These were the factors responsible for gender inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers State according to the responses given by educational leaders.

**Research Question Three:** What is the rationale that educational leadership permits language inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers State?

Table 4: Language inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers State and Educational Leadership

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
15	Indigenous language(s) is never used in teaching in all levels education in Rivers state.	2.76	.933	Agree
16	Only English language is used both for communication, teaching and learning in all schools in Rivers state.	2.75	1.05	Agree
17	Foreign languages like French, Spanish and German are introduced in the school curriculum rather than our indigenous language (mother tongue).	3.03	.807	Agree
18	The use of our mother tongue in teaching indigenous students is not permitted/included in the school curriculum in Rivers state.	2.88	.824	Agree
19	Lack of the use of mother tongue for teaching causes low self esteem among indigenous students in Rivers state.	2.22	1.05	Disagree
20	Cultural heritage and identity of rivers people is going extinct due to neglect of indigenous language in schools.	3.12	.996	Agree
21	Students taught in their mother tongue will do better academically.	2.89	.916	Agree
22	Lack of use of native languages in schools results in failure, low IQ, high dropout rates and other academic issues among indigenous students in rivers state.	2.73	.943	Agree
23	Lack of the use of native languages in schools, deprive indigenous students in rivers state of their rights and cultural identity before their western counterparts.	2.73	.982	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.79</b>		

The table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents in response to the question of Language inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers State. From the table above, with the mean values of 2.76, 2.75, 3.03, 2.88, 3.12, 2.89, 2.73 and 2.73 respectively, educational leaders agreed that Indigenous language(s) is never used in teaching in all levels education in Rivers state, Only English language is used both for communication, teaching and learning in all schools in Rivers state, Foreign languages like French, Spanish and German are introduced in the school curriculum rather than our indigenous language (mother tongue), the use of our mother tongue in teaching indigenous students is not permitted/included in the school curriculum in Rivers state, Cultural heritage and identity of rivers people is going extinct due to neglect of indigenous language in schools, Students taught in their mother tongue will do better academically, Lack of use of native languages in schools results in failure, low IQ, high dropout rates and other academic issues among indigenous students in Rivers state and Lack of the use of native languages in schools, deprive indigenous students in Rivers state of their rights and cultural identity before their western counterparts.

However, the respondents disagreed on item 27 with a mean of 2.22 that lack of the use of mother tongue for teaching causes low self-esteem among indigenous students in Rivers state. Therefore, with a grand mean of 2.79 > 2.5 criterion mean, it shows that the educational leaders evidently agreed that language inequality largely exist in indigeneship education in Rivers State.

## Test of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis One:** Educational leadership is not significantly related to socio-cultural/religious inequality in indigenship education in Rivers state

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Coefficient of Respondents Answer.

		SC/RI	EDL
<b>SC/ RI</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.386**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	108	108
<b>EDL</b>	Pearson Correlation	.386**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	108	108

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results from the table of analysis for hypothesis one stated above, showed that there is a significant relationship between socio-cultural/religious inequality and educational leadership in indigenship education in Rivers state, where (correlation value  $r = .386$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). The implication of this result is that educational leaders agreed that some religious and cultural practices have championed unequal educational opportunities and access to indigenious students in Rivers state. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis Two:** Educational leadership is not significantly related to gender inequality in indigenship education in Rivers state.

Table 6: Pearson Correlation Coefficient of Respondents Answer

		Gender Inequality	EDL
<b>Gender Inequality</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.151
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.120
	N	108	108
<b>EDL</b>	Pearson Correlation	.151	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.120	
	N	108	108

\*\* . Correlation is not significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results from the table of analysis for hypothesis two stated above, showed that educational leadership is not significantly related to gender inequality in indigenship education in Rivers state, where (correlation value  $r = .151$ ,  $p > 0.120$ ). This implies that educational leaders in Rivers state shares the opinion that gender inequality is not very conspicuous in indigenship education in Rivers state. Thus, the hypothesis was accepted.

**Hypothesis Three** Educational leadership is not significantly related to Language inequality in indigenship education in Rivers state.

Table 7: Pearson Correlation Coefficient of Respondents Answer.

		Language Inequality	EDL
<b>Language Inequality</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.357**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	108	105
<b>EDL</b>	Pearson Correlation	.357**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	105	105

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results from the table of analysis for hypothesis four stated above, showed that educational leadership is significantly related to language inequality in indigenship education in Rivers state, where (correlation value  $r = .357$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). The implication of this result is that educational leaders believe that language inequality is a bane of indigenship education in Rivers state. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings summarized above will be elaborately discussed to give a more factual and holistic backing to the study.

### Socio-Cultural/Religious Inequality and Educational Leadership

Hypothesis one of this study stated that “Educational leadership is not significantly related to socio-cultural/religious inequality in indigenship education in Rivers state”, the hypothesis was rejected because educational leadership is significantly related to socio-cultural/religious inequality in indigenship education in Rivers state, which was shown on the result analysis thus; correlation value  $r = .386$ ,  $p < 0.000$ . This finding is in line Olibie, Eziuzo and Enueme (cf., 2013) who posited that the educational disparity between the North and the South has also introduced educational inequalities and educational marginalization in most regions. Also, Onwumeze (cf., 2013) buttressed that the Northern region of Nigeria are predominantly Muslims while Christian dominate the Southern region, hence, educational opportunities in both regions are inequitable due to religious and cultural bias, sentiments and practices. Therefore it is expedient that educational leaders in Rivers state try to bridge the gap in order for ingenious students to enjoy equal educational opportunities irrespective of their religion or cultural disposition. Furthermore, due to large systematic inequalities related to religion, ethnicity and region, many girls are suffering from a triple disadvantage when it comes to educational inequality especially in the Northern region of Nigeria (cf., Education and Systematic Group Inequalities in Nigeria reports, 14 Sept. 2017) Culture is also a major factor that causes educational inequality in indigenship education, as some cultures will never permit the practice of modern and western education no matter its inherent benefits. Hence, it has been established by available literature and the findings of this study the existence of socio-cultural/religious

inequality in indigeneship education in Nigeria, and particularly in Rivers State, hence, calls for urgent attention.

### **Gender Inequality and Educational Leadership**

Hypothesis two of this study stated that “Educational leadership is not significantly related to gender inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers state”, the hypothesis was accepted because, educational leadership is not significantly related to gender inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers state, which was shown on the result analysis thus; correlation value  $r = .151$ ,  $p > 0.120$ . This finding is in contrast with Boseup (cf., 2007) who argues that gender inequality stemmed from colonization as an instrument to strategize the perpetuation of women subordination, subjugation and exploitation. According to Omoregie and Ihensekhien (cf., 2009), there is a gender inequality in education right from the primary level. There seems to be so many underlying causative factors responsible for this and which included: general/higher level of preference by parents of male children to females based on cultural, traditional and religious practices; limited resources of families in terms of financial constraints and parents level of educational dispositions. This succinctly put out the fact that females are undermined by most parents due to their level of exposure, education and cultural backgrounds, and these go a long way in creating educational imbalance in indigeneship education among students in the state. In the same vein, Ezekwe and Uchechukwu (cf., 2019), argues that despite the 1999 Nigerian constitutional prohibition of discrimination on grounds of gender, however, customary and religious laws continue to restrict women’s rights. In Nigeria, there are still societies which see a woman as subservient to man, in mental and biological capacity. This is why in spite of glaring monumental achievement of Women in the country and phenomenal rise of the role women play in Nigeria, gender sensitivity or perception of women having mental equality to man has remained unappreciated. Girls in Nigeria face sets of barriers to equal educational opportunity. These include child marriage, early pregnancy, domestic labour and human trafficking. (cf., Nworgu, 2015). The coherence in the views of different scholars in the issue of gender inequality, leaves educational leaders in Rivers state with the serious course of concern.

### **Language Inequality and Educational Leadership**

Hypothesis three of this study stated that “Educational leadership is not significantly related to language inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers state”, the hypothesis was rejected because, educational leadership is significantly related to language inequality in indigeneship education in Rivers state, which was shown on the result analysis thus; correlation value  $r = .357$ ,  $p < 0.000$ . This finding is in concert with Abdi (cf., 2017) who argues that in Uganda and other African countries, indigeneship students have been disadvantaged whereby the language of instruction is largely foreign to students. Alidou and Brock-Utne (cf., 2006) also posit that in many countries that were previously under colonial regimes, the official language tends to be the language of the former colonizers. In addition to official languages, several countries recognize national languages, which may be compulsory in education. It is worthy of note that the national language is not the indigeneship language of learners; thereby creating language inequality. Educational leaders in Rivers state need to institute positive changes to curb the language inequalities and difficulties faced by indigeneship students. The cultural identity, prestige and honour of indigeneship students is imbedded in their mother tongue, however, students in Rivers

state are only taught in English language, thereby breeding language gaps. Giving credence to this statement, Abdi (cf., 2017) opined that mother tongue has more advantages including pedagogical, psychological satisfaction and helps develop positive self-esteem. Effective communication leads to more successful learning opportunities in classrooms where languages familiar to both children and teachers are used as language of instruction at least in the first three years. Moreover, when teachers teach effectively reading, writing and literacy in the mother tongues, students can develop adequate literacy skills that they can use in learning the official languages.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of the study have revealed a very significant relationship that exists between educational leadership and equality of indigeneship education in Rivers state. Hence, it is safe to say that leaders of different educational institutions particularly secondary and tertiary levels, should endeavour to synergize their efforts to consciously make educational reforms that will bring about equality in the educational sector, particularly for indigenous students' benefit. It was observed from the findings of the study that sharp inequality in indigeneship education exists in areas of socio-culture, religion, gender, economic, language and ICT in Rivers state. The state house of Assembly which is the highest law making body in the land must deliberately sponsor and make laws in consonance with the executive to alleviate indigenous students from every socio-cultural and economic discrimination. Every child has a right to equal education whether an indigene or a foreigner.

## **Recommendations**

In view of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- The Rivers state government under its legislative arm in conjunction with school leaders should make laws that will abolish cultural and religious practices that create inequality in indigeneship education;
- Government and school leaders should organize town hall meetings, conferences and symposiums to adequately sensitise the public on the importance and improvement of girl child education as a way of eradicating gender inequality in the state;
- A state of emergency should be declared on education, where the government, NGOs, Private firms and Multinationals will jointly sponsor and adequately fund education by increasing budgetary allocation, giving scholarships and equitably distributing educational opportunities, so as to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor in the state;
- The Rivers state house of assembly should make laws that allows for at least one indigenous language to be used for instruction in all institutions of learning in the state to solve the problem of language divide;
- Every school leader should ensure that the schools are properly equipped with ICT resources to meet the teeming demands of indigenous students within the state.

## Suggestions for Further Studies

This study was centered on equality of indigeneship education in Rivers state, I therefore suggest that the scope of the research be broadened to cover other states and regions of the federation. There are also other issues on indigeneship education not totally captured in this study, thus, the following suggestions were made:

- The rights of indigenous students and educational leadership in Rivers state.
- Inequality in school fee payment between indigenes and non-indigenes in Rivers state universities.
- Multilingual Instruction and academic performance of indigenous students in Rivers state.

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