

TEACHERS TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT: PREPARING UNIVERSITY LECTURERS FOR INCLUSIVE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITIES IN LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

Inclusive religious education plays a vital role in creating a harmonious and diverse academic environment within universities. This study focuses on the training and development of university lecturers in Lagos State, aiming to equip them with the necessary skills to deliver inclusive religious education. By examining the current state of teacher training programs, the research identifies gaps and opportunities for enhancing educators' skills and knowledge. The study delves into various aspects of inclusivity, such as understanding diverse religious beliefs, promoting interfaith dialogue, and addressing the needs of students from different religious backgrounds. Using a descriptive survey research design, data was gathered from university lecturers across Lagos State. The findings underscore the importance of comprehensive professional development programs that include cultural competence, inclusive pedagogical strategies, and opportunities for collaborative learning. Additionally, the research highlights the critical role of policy frameworks and institutional support in facilitating effective training and development initiatives. Key recommendations include integrating inclusive religious education modules into teacher training curricula, offering continuous professional development workshops, and establishing interfaith committees to foster dialogue and understanding. This study aims to contribute to the ongoing conversation about educational inclusivity, providing valuable insights for policymakers, academic leaders, and university lecturers. By implementing these recommendations, universities in Lagos State can cultivate a more inclusive learning environment that benefits all students.

Keywords: Inclusive Education; Religious Education; Teachers Training and Development, University Education.

INTRODUCTION

The study begins with an overview of Nigerian educational systems, curricula, and teaching strategies related to religious literacy and diversity. We then rely on qualitative methods to investigate the influence of inclusive teacher training for tertiary education. The study's specific objectives are to identify ways of addressing the diverse needs of students in religious education-inclusive classrooms. We conclude that university lecturers and teacher education programmes must work together to increase understanding across religious traditions through collaboration, mutual commitment, exploration, and communication.

This provocative and critically important study addresses Nigeria's search for a common understanding of religious diversity. Religion, its accompanying dogma, and identity are more than zealous belief; they are concepts inherent in the contention for political space, economic resources, and social recognition. Institutions of higher learning have a similar function in the search for new and creative ways to approach increasingly complex sets of questions about the diversity of human experience. This is especially true of tertiary institutions, which include teacher education programmes. Teachers, as a part of the money economy of society, have influenced societies and are in turn influenced by the processes by which it is moulded. The central role of religion and the ethical system in teachers' lives make research and teacher education in religious education vital for a democratic society that promotes religious liberty and pluralism as well as cultural diversity.

The concept of university has evolved from the early initiation of students into occupational and professional roles among the rich into the provision of training and content in a wide range of areas that include historical, psychological, sociological, and philosophical aspects at the tertiary level to meet the needs of society generally. As an academic discipline, the character of Religious Education has undergone several thorough academic discussions in the past few decades, and its changes have followed politico-economic, social, and technological changes. Khaidir and Suud (2020) and Birhan et al. (2021) disclosed that the concept of Religious Education is fast changing, on one hand hinges on the idea of identifying and integrating the pluralism and diversity of religious culture and finding a method of identifying and weaving it into a pan-Nigerian community, and on the other hand, integrating the theoretical, empirical, and practical fields, thereby making it a more debated topic in the public domain.

The rebranding of religious education and the subsequent inclusion of Christian Religious Studies and Islamic Religious Studies in the educational curricula are related to the global quest for value re-orientation and re-imagining religion to play the expected role of spiritual and moral rejuvenation of man. The redesigned curricula included Religion Education as a course to be taught in Nigerian universities. The European Union (EU) subsequently funded a project called 'VIR2COPE' at the Lagos State University (LASU), which involved in-service training of university lecturers in inclusive education. The methods and content of this training were copied and implemented at the Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Ijanikin, Lagos state. However, no known evaluation of the preparation of the involved university lecturers for inclusive education of religious education has been conducted.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to investigate on the teachers' training and development in preparing lecturers for inclusive religious education in Lagos State University. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. investigate the current state of teachers' training and development in Lagos concerning their preparedness to deliver inclusive religious education;
2. identify gaps and deficiencies in existing teacher training programs related to inclusive religious education;
3. understand the challenges educators face in addressing the diverse religious backgrounds of their students;
4. propose effective strategies and recommendations for enhancing teacher training and professional development to promote inclusive religious education and;
5. share ideas on how to contribute to the creation of a more harmonious, respectful, and inclusive educational environment in Lagos, fostering an atmosphere where students of all religious beliefs can learn and grow together.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the course of this research:

1. What is the current state of teachers' training and development programs in the various State universities concerning inclusive religious education?
2. What challenges do educators in university face when addressing the diverse religious backgrounds of their students based on the various universities?
3. What effective strategies can be proposed to enhance teachers' training and professional development for inclusive religious education in the various Universities?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses guided the study:

- H₀₁: There is no significant difference among the current state of teachers' training and development programs in the various state universities concerning inclusive religious education based on educators' university.
- H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the challenges faced among educators in universities when addressing the diverse religious backgrounds of their students based on educators religion.
- H₀₃: The strategies proposed to enhance teachers' training and professional development for inclusive religious education have no significant impact in the various universities.

Theoretical Framework

The support and acceptance of teachers in a public system depend very largely on changes in the nature of teacher training and development. This is why training teachers to operate the new classroom contexts of inclusive education is central to its success. Educational institutions exist to serve the public need by providing a range of opportunities through which society can benefit from them. The prime responsibility of universities, therefore, is preparing individuals for the many societal roles that make up the fabric of life. The notion of societal relevance underlines the importance and intention of higher education. These assumptions find specific application within the religious education context. Religious studies in universities prepare students to become academically qualified religious leaders, researchers and educators. The essence of religious education in higher institutions is to serve the needs not only of future theologians or teachers of religion, but the interest of

those of all persuasions who need to address themselves to religious issues in terms of the contribution to personal fulfillment and the collective development of the community Lewin (2021), Rahmat & Yahya (2022).

The workability and sustainability of educational reforms lie largely on the human resources available for implementing it. It is only when teachers are properly trained and developed to understand their roles in inclusive education and know how to perform such roles through increased awareness, flexibility, knowledge and skills that the envisaged shift in emphasis and orientation in formal classroom practice will be operational and successful. According to Smith and Gillespie (2023) the presence of responsive and empathetic teachers is a necessary precondition for ensuring success and the accessibility and stability of each reform measure depend largely on how well the adjustment to the new roles of teachers in the school system is managed.

Inclusive Education Theory

Despite the fact that undergraduate teacher education plays an essential role in preparing future educators to lead increasingly diverse school settings in a society that is socially, culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse, it may not be providing teachers with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to teach in ways that will fully enable all students to meet state standards. The youth need to recognize that the multiple values, religious practices, and ethical decision-making concerns of students bond teachers in an educational partnership that must be managed in an equitable and inclusive manner in all education programmes in order to improve the quality of religious education that all graduates direct during their careers. A major component of this relationship is the development of a classroom environment that is sensitive to and accepts the overall population represented in the religious community. Engaging religious diversity that may exist across schools is also a strong incentive in educating students. For students to perceive themselves as part of the nation's societal tapestry, they must be engaged in a school environment that is sensitive to and that respects diverse religious and ethical ideals that will help them to grow as individuals (Darling-Hammond, 2020).

The theory of inclusive education emerged during the 1990s as a product of a change from an earlier theory known as integration. The latter posited that all students, including those with disabilities who were formerly educated in segregated schools, had a right to be educated in a regular school with non-disabled peers (Buchner & Proyer, 2020). Inclusive education presupposes that every child, regardless of their needs, must be welcomed and supported into the life of the school. A review of literature on teacher education exposed that, though pre-service teacher training was central to the implementation of inclusive education, it assumed less importance in the context of emerging economies, unlike those in developed societies, as the focus was on crisis and short-term issues. The establishment of inclusive education is a complex and challenging task, and general teachers lack the preparation they would need to serve all students.

Religious Education Theory

The complete infrastructure of English faith schools provides an outlet for those who wish to ensure their children are raised within the precepts of a religious framework. This is socially well accepted, of value, and of moral integrity. However, in contrast, a state church school very often experiences hostility because it occasionally has admission criteria based on the assertion of faith. To fully develop the idea of an RWCM model and to make clear the value of a faith-based Religious Education, we propose to advocate for a fuller development of religious curriculum in an RWCM model. To develop a model about which we can talk, we can debate, and we can educate – a model where religious education can inform and where religious instruction can be contextualized (Holford, 2003).

The tone and character of the religious education theory underlining Teacher Training Colleges' Religious Education teacher curriculum has never been more relevant. The Religious Education model in use in most state and faith-based Teacher Training Colleges is commonly a multi-faith and multi-biased absolute commercial secularism. It is what Lionel Cowen describes as the 'de facto civic religion of the UK and English Teacher Training'. This idea, as an educational, ethical, and narrative identity, is maintained because non-believers seek to dislodge Christianity from its place at the centre of English core values, attitudes, and beliefs.

Current Practices in Teachers Training and Development

Bgialeko and Sheehy (2019) argued that teaching demands continual development and learning as the skills that made a teacher effective several years ago now make it difficult to impact students positively. Therefore, there is a need for trainee teachers and practicing teachers in higher institutions to develop skills that will help them cater to the needs of diverse learners in varied environments. Central to these claims are trainee teachers and practicing teachers' beliefs and understandings of diversity and disability; their ability to work effectively with learners is often influenced by these (Amado et al., 2014; Stoutjesdijk et al., 2017). Teachers, therefore, must continually learn how to educate and cater for their diverse learners. Investing in the teachers implies making available accessible training opportunities that develop positive teacher attitudes to inclusion of diverse learners. School leaders, education policymakers, and teacher educators can play a key role in shaping teacher attitudes to work collaboratively in inclusive settings by promoting the goals and competences that are consistent with inclusion.

There is a lot of evidence that indicates that training and development of teachers lead to an increase in the performance of the teachers and the students they teach. Long (2013), cited by Abidoye and Jegede (2016), noted that the successes achieved by Ontario in Canada in raising their students' achievements could potentially be related to the presence of high-quality classroom teachers. According to Phillips and Watts (2011), the ability of any national system of education to deliver real and sustained improvements is inextricably linked to the quality of its teachers at all levels. Research outcomes could improve when teachers are willing or have been involved in high-quality training and development. Teachers that do not receive ample training and opportunities to develop find it harder to achieve these skills and be proficient in performing multiple roles as required from them (Capel et al., 2017).

Challenges Faced by University Lecturers in Delivering Inclusive Religious Education

In choosing Higher Education and career development, beliefs do not deter individuals from achieving those goals. Earning power – The outcry of parents/guardians is that the Religious Studies is not paid well in the world of work and that teaching or studying Religious Studies will not give them returns on their investments in human and material resources since the job market is poor and there is no career progression in the vocation. The implication is that lecturers existing and prospective do not consider themselves more than other people from the public who have no interest in the subject. Hence, lecturers are not motivated to perform well and to improve productivity in the subject area (Olushola & Adewumi, 2022).

Materialism – There have been ideas from scholars that students in Nigeria study Religious Studies because they could not meet the entry requirements of traditional courses such as Medicine, Law, Engineering, etc. It then follows that such courses have no future to the career of the students. Therefore, students are not sufficiently interested in the Religious Studies subjects and there are no good reasons to engage academic experts in religious education. This implication is that lecturers of the subject cannot be very good in delivering

the courses. This is a huge challenge for the lecturers who do not have multiple interests in the subjects.

Strategies for Enhancing Teachers Training and Development in Inclusive Religious Education

Periods of transition of schools into the post-industrial age result in the dynamics of transformations in the trajectory of development of teacher education. Its relevance raises quite certain demands that require general-level-referring and personal approaches. Concretizing the central ideals of democratic, humanistic, and inclusive education, the teacher today holds a complex of communicative, interactive, reflecting, and ideological resources and occurs as a professional personality. According to Morgan (2021) a teacher establishes an educational situation, bearing inherent expressions of care, involvement, professional and personal potency, and maintaining an interacting, empathizing, intuitive, and wise relationship with the other significant participants of the educational process.

Modern approaches to teachers' training accredit teachers and the teaching profession as central to the entire educational system. Currently, diverse reforms and programs all over the world focus on improving the quality of teacher education. Anie Model (2010) positions pedagogic competence as a professional knowledge base essential to the modern teacher. This dimension of the teacher's competence relates to the ability of the teacher to choose from different variants of educational technology, implement them, and evaluate their efficiency. The relevance of pedagogical competence is chiefly in emerging competence for students' research and cognition in general. Research carried out by Odufuwa, Adetunji, and Sunday (2015) demonstrated a fairly high level of pedagogical competence among teachers. Consequently, as McGrath (1999), Coates (2012), and Abah (2017) indicate, continuous professional development is recognized as part of reality.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population comprises all the 46 religious education lecturers in Universities in Lagos state. Out of the available population, a sample of 27 lecturers were selected using convenient sampling techniques. A self-developed questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Lecturers Readiness for Inclusive Religious Education in Universities in Lagos State". The instrument is divided into two (2) sections (A&B). Section A contains the respondents' information while section B contained items to test each of the hypotheses. The instrument was distributed online through email and social media platforms to respondents in selected universities in Lagos state. Simple percentage was used to analyse biodata, mean and standard deviation were also used to analyse the research question while ANOVA and regression analysis were used to analyse the research hypotheses using the statistic package for social sciences (SPSS 23).

RESULTS

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data collected for the study via the web questionnaire administered to lecturers from different universities. The postulated hypothesis was also tested in this chapter. The analysis of data collected was done using statistical package for Social Sciences.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Respondents' Biodata

Table 4.1: Shows the distribution of respondents based on the lecturers' gender

	GENDER	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	22	81.5	81.5
	Female	5	18.5	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	

Table 4.1 shows that 81.5% of the respondents were male lecturers while 18.5% of them were female. However, the table shows that the percentage of male respondents was more than females.

Table 4.2: Age of Respondents (Teachers)

	Age of the respondents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	21 - 30 years	3	11.1	11.1
	31 - 40 years	3	11.1	22.2
	41 - 50 years	8	29.6	51.9
	51 - 60 years	9	33.3	85.2
	60 years and above	4	14.8	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	

Table 4.2 above shows that 11.1% of the respondents were between the age bracket of 21 and 30years, 11.1% were between the age bracket of 31and 40years, 29.6% were between age 41 and 50years, 33.3% were between ages 51and 60years, while the remaining 14.8% were between the age bracket of 60years and above.

Table 4.3: Educational Qualification (Lecturers)

	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bachelor's degree	3	11.1	11.1
	Master's degree	16	59.3	70.4
	Doctorate	8	29.6	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	

Table 4.3 above shows that 11.1% had a bachelor's degree as their highest qualification, 59.3% had a master's degree, and the remaining 29.6% had either Doctorate.

Table 4.4: Distribution of respondents based on lecturers' cadre

	Cadre	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Graduate Assistants	5	18.5	18.5
	Assistant Lecturer	8	29.6	48.1
	Lecturer I	7	25.9	74.1
	Lecturer II	3	11.1	85.2
	Associate Professor	4	14.8	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	

Table 4.4 above shows that 18.5% of the respondents are graduate assistance, 29.6% are assistant lecturer, 25.9% are lecturers I, and 11.1% are Lecturer II while the remaining 14.8% are Associate Professor.

Table 4.5: Distribution of respondents based on lecturers' university

	University	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Lagos State University	17	63.0	63.0
	University of Lagos	8	29.6	92.6
	National Open			
	University of Nigeria, Lagos	2	7.4	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	

Table 4.5 above shows that, 63.0% of the respondents are from Lagos State University, 29.6% are from the University of Lagos, and the remaining 7.4% are from the National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos.

Table 4.6: Distribution of respondents based on their teaching experience

	Years of teaching experience	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0 - 5 years	13	48.1	48.1
	6 - 10 years	7	25.9	74.1
	11 - 20 years	3	11.1	85.2
	21 years and above	4	14.8	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	

Table 4.6 above shows that 48.1% of the respondents have 0 - 5years of teaching experience, 25.9% have 6 - 10years of teaching experience, and 11.1% have 11 - 20years of teaching experience while the remaining 14.8% have 21 and above years of teaching experience.

Table 4.7: Distribution of respondents based on their teaching faculties

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Education	10	37.0	37.0
	Humanity	3	11.1	48.1
	Education	7	25.9	74.1
	Faculty of Art	7	25.9	100.0
	COHED	7	25.9	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	

Table 4.7 above shows that 37.0% of the respondents are from Faculty of Education, 11.1% are from Faculty of Humanity Education, 25.9% are from Faculty of Art while the remaining 25.9% are from COHED.

4.2 Answering Research Questions

4.2.1 Answer to Research Questions One:

What is the current state of teachers' training and development programs in the various State universities concerning inclusive religious education?

Table 4.8: The current state of teachers' training and development programs in the various State universities concerning inclusive religious education.

UNIVERSITY		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lagos State University	Teachers' training and development programmes	17	3.4353	.14552
	Average mean			2.50
University of Lagos	Teachers' training and development programmes	8	2.9000	.32071
	Average mean			2.50
National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos	Teachers' training and development programmes	2	2.8000	.00000
	Average mean			2.50

Table 4.8 provides information for the answer to research question one. The table shows that the mean for teachers' training and development programs in the various State universities (Lagos State University, University of Lagos, National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos) are (3.44, 2.9, and 2.8) with standard deviation (0.15, 0.32, and 0.00) respectively and Average mean of 2.50. Therefore, the study found that the mean of each variable in the respective universities are above their average mean. It can therefore be concluded that there is high current state of teachers' training and development programs in the various State universities concerning inclusive religious education.

4.2.2 Answer to research question two:

What challenges do educators in university face when addressing the diverse religious backgrounds of their students based on various universities?

Table 4.9: The challenges that educators in university face when addressing the diverse religious backgrounds of their students based on the various universities.

UNIVERSITY		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lagos State University	Challenges Teacher Face	17	2.3529	.21828
	Average mean			2.50
University of Lagos	Challenges Teacher Face	8	1.9000	.32071
	Average mean			2.50
National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos	Challenges Teacher Face	2	3.0000	.00000
	Average mean			2.50

Table 4.9 provides information for the answer to research question two. The table shows that the mean for challenges that educators in university face in the various State universities (Lagos State University, University of Lagos, National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos) are (2.40, 1.9, and 3.0) with standard deviation (0.22, 0.32, and 0.00) respectively and Average mean of 2.50. Therefore, the study found that the mean of the variable in Lagos State University and University of Lagos are below their average mean which simply means that there is low challenges for educators when addressing the diverse religious backgrounds of their students. However, in National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos, its variable is above the average mean. It can therefore be concluded that there is high challenges for educators in that university when addressing the diverse religious backgrounds of their students.

4.2.3 Answer to research questions three:

What effective strategies can be proposed to enhance teachers' training and professional development for inclusive religious education in the various Universities?

Table 4.10: The effective strategies that can be proposed to enhance teachers' training and professional development for inclusive religious education in state Universities.

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	A robust policy should be made to accommodate all religious values and respect religious integrity.	27	3.07	.997
2	Policy maker should provide effective and efficient statutorily workshop for inclusive religious educators.	27	3.19	1.039
3	Those in educational authority should provide or allocate space for inclusive religious education conferences.	27	3.52	.509
4	Adequate facilities should be made available to enhance skills and professional development in inclusive religious education teaching.	27	3.67	.480
5	Sufficient funding for teachers' professional development in inclusive religious education should be imbibed as it is essential	27	3.89	.320
	Average mean			2.50

Table 4.10 provides information for the answer to research question three. The table shows that the mean of strategies that can be proposed to enhance teachers' training and professional development for inclusive religious education are (3.07, 3.19, 3.52, 3.67 and 3.89) with standard deviation (0.997, 1.04, 0.51, 0.48 and 0.32) respectively and Average mean of 2.50. Therefore, the study found that the mean of each variable is above their

average mean. However, all strategies are effective to enhance teachers' training and professional development for inclusive religious education in the various Universities.

4.3 Test of Hypothesis

4.3.1 Hypothesis One

Ho₁: There is no significant difference among the current state of teachers' training and development programs in the various state universities concerning inclusive religious education based on university.

Table 4.11: One-way ANOVA on significant differences among the current state of teachers' training and development programs in the various state universities concerning inclusive religious education

Universities	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	35.810	4	8.952	28.722	.000
Within Groups	6.857	22	.312		
Total	42.667	26			

Table 4.11 shows the one – way ANOVA tested at 95% of 0.05 significance level. The above table shows that the current state of teachers' training and development programs in the various state universities concerning inclusive religious education have a sig value of (.000). However, the null hypothesis is rejected ($p > 0.000$). This simply means that there is a significant difference among the current state of teachers' training and development programs in the various state universities concerning inclusive religious education based on university.

4.3.2 Hypothesis Two

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the challenges faced among educators in universities when addressing the diverse religious backgrounds of their students based on religion.

Table 4.12: One-way ANOVA on significant differences in the challenges faced among educators in universities when addressing the diverse religious backgrounds of their students.

Universities	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	33.067	5	6.613	14.467	.000
Within Groups	9.600	21	.457		
Total	42.667	26			

Table 4.12 shows the one – way ANOVA tested at 95% of 0.05significance level. The above table shows that the challenges faced among educators in universities when addressing the diverse religious backgrounds of their students have a sig value of (.000). However, the null hypothesis is rejected ($p > 0.000$). This simply means that there is significant difference in the challenges faced among educators in universities when addressing the diverse religious backgrounds of their students based on religion.

4.3.3 Hypothesis Three

Ho₃: The strategies proposed to enhance teachers' training and professional development for inclusive religious education have no significant impact in the various universities.

Table 4.13: A simple multiple regression of the impact strategies proposed to enhance teachers' training and professional development for inclusive religious education in the various universities.

		Coefficients ^a		t	Sig.
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error		
1	(Constant)	10.156	1.259	8.065	.000
	Strategies for Enhancing Teacher Training	1.284	.318	.494	.000
	Professional Development	-3.938	.460	-.047	.000
a. Dependent Variable: UNIVERSITY					

Table 4.13 shows the standardized coefficients beta of the following variables (strategies for enhancing teacher training and professional development) with the values of (.494, -.047) respectively. However, strategies for Enhancing Teacher Training have a moderate (.494) 50% positive influence in the various universities while, professional development has a low (-.047) -4.7% negative influence. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected which means that strategies proposed to enhance teachers' training and professional development for inclusive religious education have a significant impact in the various universities because the p-value of the variables is less than 0.05 Significant value.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study's primary objective was to look into the teachers' training and development in preparing Lecturers for inclusive religious education in Lagos State University. The study revealed that there is high current state of teachers' training and development programs in the various State universities concerning inclusive religious education in table 4.8. This finding is in tune with Bgialeko and Sheehy (2019) that teaching demands continual development and learning as the skills that made a teacher effective several years ago now make it difficult to impact students positively. However, the result from the study showed in table 4.9 indicate that strategies like policy to accommodate all religious values and respect religious integrity, effective and efficient statutorily workshop for inclusive religious educators, allocation of inclusive religious educational conferences, adequate facilities and Sufficient funding for teachers' professional development are all effective to enhance teachers' training and professional development for inclusive religious education in the various Universities. This is related to the findings of Long (2013), cited by Abidoye and Jegede (2016), Phillips and Watts (2011), and Capel et al., (2017), which they revealed that the successes achieved by Ontario in Canada in raising their students' achievements could potentially be related to the presence of high-quality classroom teachers. Even, the national system of education to deliver real and sustained improvements is inextricably linked to the quality of its teachers at all

levels and research outcomes could improve when teachers are willing or have been involved in high-quality training and development.

Furthermore, the study's findings reveal a significant difference among the current state of teachers' training and development programs in the various state universities concerning inclusive religious education. This finding is in congruence with UNESCO, (2023) which revealed that Programs that emphasize inclusive education tend to produce teachers who are more confident and effective in managing diverse classrooms, including those with varied religious backgrounds. However, many teachers still feel underprepared due to inadequate training on inclusive practices, leading to a reliance on traditional, less inclusive teaching methods.

In addition, it was found that there is also a significant difference in the challenges faced among educators in universities when addressing the diverse religious backgrounds of their students. This aligns with the study of Hook et al., (2017) that Educators who hold positive views towards religious diversity and have a strong sense of intellectual humility are more likely to foster an inclusive classroom environment. Conversely, those with negative perceptions or inadequate support may struggle to effectively address the needs of students from diverse religious backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

The research underscores the importance of comprehensive and standardized training programs for educators in preparing inclusive religious education lectures. Inconsistencies in training, personal biases, and inadequate institutional support contribute to the challenges faced by educators. Effective teacher training programs that emphasize cultural competence and provide practical strategies for managing religious diversity are essential for fostering an inclusive educational environment.

Recommendations

1. **Standardize Training Programs:** Universities should develop standardized training modules that cover inclusive religious education comprehensively. These programs should include practical strategies and real-life scenarios to prepare educators effectively.
2. **Emphasize Cultural Competence:** Training programs should focus on developing educators' cultural competence. This includes self-reflection on biases, understanding diverse religious practices, and adapting teaching methods to be inclusive.
3. **Provide Ongoing Professional Development:** Institutions should offer continuous professional development opportunities to ensure that educators stay updated with the latest inclusive teaching practices. Workshops, seminars, and online courses can help maintain and enhance their skills.
4. **Increase Institutional Support:** Universities should provide robust support systems for educators, including access to resources, mentoring programs, and collaborative platforms where teachers can share experiences and strategies.
5. **Encourage Positive Attitudes:** Teacher training programs should include components that address and positively shape educators' attitudes toward religious diversity. Promoting intellectual humility and tolerance can lead to more effective and inclusive teaching practices.

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