

Innovative Approaches for Inclusivity of Public Primary School Teachers in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

To pursue a professional development in diversity and equity, the primary school teachers whose roles are foundational require the adoption of innovative approaches to ensure inclusivity which are imperative towards the building of equitable learning environment. Hence, this study examines innovative approaches for inclusivity of public primary school teachers in Oyo state, Nigeria. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population consists of public primary school teachers in Oyo State which is 22942. A sample size of 414 was drawn from the population via multi-stage sampling procedure. Two hypotheses guided the study. The questionnaire was validated by educational experts and its reliability was done via test-retest method. The data collected via the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found that innovative approaches have relative significance relationship on teachers' inclusivity in Oyo State. The result also revealed via ANOVA ($F_{(6, 395)} = 75.762, p = 0.000 < 0.05$) that innovative approaches (Participatory leadership, Motivation programmes, Digital networking, Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building and mental wellness) joined together had significant relationship on teachers' inclusivity in the public primary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study concluded that the innovative approaches (independent variable) and the teachers' inclusivity (dependent variable) have linear and joint significant relationship. However, the researchers suggested that all the innovative approaches should be adequately practiced without bias and public schools' authority should invest in profitable professional development programmes for the teachers such as teacher tech literacy training to ensure digital inclusion.

Keywords

Innovative approaches, Inclusivity, Teachers, Primary schools, Oyo State.

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1. Introduction

Inclusivity simply means the policy of including all types of people irrespective of their religion, race, language, status, physical ability, or gender in a programmer, process, product, or system. It can be operationally defined as the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people or professionals who might otherwise be sidelined, excluded or marginalized such as teachers or learners in the public schools system which is very important for fostering positive and effective learning environments. Moreover, Ambindwile and Amos (2024) emphasized that teachers are expected to teach in inclusive classrooms by observing stipulated strategies under their control and practice them. Inclusivity is necessary for every professional to ensure commitment and loyalty to the organization and enhancing job performance in organization's as well as attaining organizational goals. It is a fact that teachers play the pivotal roles of shaping the future generations by laying a good foundation for the pupils (learners). There are innovative strategies that would ensure inclusivity of teachers in the school system in order to create an enabling environment, ensuring professional development, and fostering collaborative bonding. Hence Espiritu & Abao-an (2025) found the need for targeted professional development, particularly in enhancing collaborative practices and leveraging technological innovations for ensuring a more consistent and effective application of inclusive teaching strategies across all classrooms.

In the teaching profession being a noble one, it is expected that an inclusive policy without bias should be the working policy but it seems that it is not being effectively practiced across all the primary schools in Oyo state. In order to ensure that the sustenance of inclusive policy in the school system across the Nigeria including the primary schools in the thirty-three local government areas of Oyo state among all the teachers, it is expected of the schools to devise innovative approaches to ensure that equity is sustained and maintained as well as managing diversity among employees (teachers) in a multicultural workplace. These strategies would go a long way in complementing the provision of continuous professional development programmes that are very relevant the teachers' career aspiration and progression; creation of enabling and supportive environment; while emphasizing professional collaboration within the teaching network and there must be open communication and necessary feedback. All these can be achieved by prioritizing training as a vital human resource practice on centering on the various learning needs based on individual differences. There should be flexibility in the teaching strategies that would apply and consequently put up advocacy for establishing the culture that promotes equity, strengths in diversity and ensuring inclusivity.

Every sector of human endeavor adopts varieties of innovation to meet up with the demands of the society from time to time. This is also applicable to the education sector because educative innovation, according to Dopico (2020) is a constant dynamic in the process of improving the educational system which responds to the criteria of need, opportunity, coherence and replicability, the introduction of changes and modifications in the academic guidelines which contributes to the progress of teaching and the quality of education.

Inclusivity in the school system is imperative to ensuring social institutional integration for the education stakeholders and the society at large. This goes a long way by making it difficult to separate integration from inclusion which strategically solve the problem of marginalization, sidelining or neglect of some group of individuals who are entitled by rights to benefit from the common good. It should be noted that inclusivity is a form of motivation that would improve the job performance and job satisfaction of the teachers as corroborated by Ukutegbe, Isaac & Ileuma (2024) who submitted that motivation strategies being practiced had positive influence on teachers' job satisfaction to a high extent. However, it seems that the necessary approaches or strategies that would ensure equity and inclusivity as well managing diversity challenges among the primary school teacher are not fully practiced in the public primary schools in Oyo state, Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigative innovative approaches that could ensure inclusivity in the aforementioned schools.

A. Statement of Problem

As stated in the National Policy on Education by the Nigerian government, there are objectives of primary education expected to be achieved through the jobs performed by the teachers who are teaching and discharging assigned responsibilities in their areas of expertise. At present, there seems to be shortfall of inclusivity resulting to discouragement which has adversely affected their jobs of teaching the learners (pupils) in the classrooms.

This issue which seems to have been taken with levity over the past decades, has become a concern for school authority and stakeholders to make sure that innovative approaches are adopted to ensure inclusivity.

This twenty first (21st) century as a digital era, still has some teachers that are being excluded from professional development opportunities, decision-making processes, and equitable working conditions. This problem go a long way to undermining the quality of education impacted to the learners by the teachers. It important to address these challenges, it requires adequate systemic strategies termed innovative approaches which are expected to be adopted as workable policies that would ensure that the public primary teachers are given their rightful places and enjoy the benefits of inclusivity as well as ensuring recognition, adequate empowerment, and enabling them to take the driver's seat of foundation of education in the society. To this end, this study examined the influence of innovative approaches on the inclusivity of primary school teachers in Oyo state.

B. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the innovative approaches for inclusivity of public primary school teachers in Oyo state. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Investigate the joint influence of innovative approaches (Participatory leadership, Motivation programmed, Digital networking, Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building and Mental wellness) on inclusivity of public primary school teachers in Oyo state;
- Investigate the relative influence of innovative approaches (participatory leadership, motivation programmes, digital networking, open feedback, inclusive capacity building and mental wellness) on inclusivity of public primary school teachers in Oyo state.

C. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated for this study and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- H₀₁: There will be no joint significant influence of innovative approaches (participatory leadership, motivation programmes, digital networking, open feedback, inclusive capacity building and mental wellness) on inclusivity of public primary school teachers in Oyo state;
- H₀₂: There will be no relative significant influence of innovative approaches on inclusivity of public primary school teachers in Oyo state.

2. Literature Review

This section is discussed under conceptual review, empirical review and theoretical consideration as highlighted below.

A. Conceptual Review

(a) Concept of Inclusivity

According to Hodkinson (2011), the concept of inclusivity is a complicated ideological construct that has the potential to subjugate and dominate socially vulnerable populations or a group of people. This simply means that inclusivity is expected to be seen or practiced by way of complete equality, complete sense of belonging, rights, and responsibility whereas it is frequently implemented as tolerance.

Beckham (2023) emphasized that creating, nurturing, and growing inclusive cultures of belonging is key to thriving in today's marketplace. Hence, he suggested six ways to make inclusivity a core component as starting with empathy; analyzing current training programs; make diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) measurable and part of performance reviews; center DEI training on finding the solutions rather than having the answers; Establish lines of feedback for employees and present the case for inclusion inclusively.

Jardinez, & Natividad (2024) emphasized the transformative nature of inclusive education in fostering a learning atmosphere that promotes diversity, empathy, and acceptance, contributing to students' overall development. Furthermore, Ainscow (2020) reiterated that policies ought to be founded on definitions of inclusion and equity that are widely accepted. Evidence about the effects of current practices on all students' attendance, engagement, and academic performance should guide strategy selection.

In this 21st century of digital transformation, there is also digital inclusivity. According to Bradbrook and Fisher (2005), the five Cs of digital inclusion are connectivity, capability, content, confidence, and continuity. Tomczyk, Mascia, Gierszewski, & Walker. (2023) hinted that digital inclusion interventions should concentrate on removing obstacles because inclusion in the digital society is crucial in the modern world.

(b) Participatory leadership

Another term for Participatory leadership is democratic leadership. Wang, Hou & Li (2022) submitted that participative leadership is a democratic leadership that involves subordinates in organizational decision-making and management, with the aim of effectively enhancing employees' sense of ownership and actively integrating their personal goals into organizational goals. It is a type of leadership that is characterized in practice by some features: first, in the process of employee participation in decision-making, leaders and subordinates are on an equal footing and trust each other completely, and organizational issues are resolved through democratic consultation. In addition, participative leadership in general involves a wide range of employees in decision-making but the final decision is still made by the leaders of the organizations or the group. Shonk (2025) admitted that participative leadership promotes more collaborative decision making than the traditional directive leadership used in many organizations in

which the result can be more engaged employees and enhanced organizational performance, but there are downsides to keep in mind.

(c) Motivation programmes

Chen (2025) described an employee motivation programme as a structured initiative designed to increase employee engagement, productivity, and satisfaction in the workplace. These programmes include rewards, recognition, career development, and wellness initiatives. It noted further that a well-designed programme aligns employee goals with organization's objectives to boost performance and reduce turnover. In the design of motivation programme for ensuring organizational success, organization's should focus on four key areas namely: clear performance expectations, timely rewards, fairness in recognition, and a balance of monetary and non-monetary incentives. Moreover, Lepak (2024) hinted that employee motivation reward programmes have become an effective tool to motivate employees and encourages a healthy work environment as well as being able to create a sense of competition among colleagues that fosters innovation and collaboration in the workplace

(d) Digital networking

Digital networking has to do with the practice of using digital tools and platforms to build professional relationships. Suder (2025) sees digital networking as the use of online digital platforms to connect with others and build relationships. Examples of digital networking are attending digital networking events, engaging with others on social platforms, developing an online blog to share professional insights and expertise with others, and connecting in online forums or industry-specific networks, hosting a guest on podcasts to mention but a few. Gaurav (2020) opined that digital networking business reduces or eliminates the need for physical proximity through digital technology. Moreover, Medina (2022) emphasized that digital networking is an important element to build relationships in combination with offline networking citing the instance of social networks that allow you to connect before, while, and after attending an offline event or programme.

(e) Open feedback

Open-ended feedback promotes opportunities for co-regulation and metacognition when students become active agents in the assessment process (Torres, 2022). Open-feedback according to Shtull (2022) means reciprocal exchange rather than a top-down directive with dos and don'ts which encompasses both constructive delivery and constructive response. This comes with many benefits to feedback when delivered skillfully to include making team members feel valued and appreciated by boosting their confidence, catalyzing professional growth among employees, improving workplace communication, fostering trust between colleagues in the workplace, empowering team members to uncover their unique strengths, etc.

(f) Inclusive capacity building

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2025) see Capacity building as the process of developing and strengthening mainstream schools' capacity to meet all learners' needs, rather than distributing additional resources for learners with additional support needs.

Inclusive capacity-building is an approach or initiative that recognizes the importance of training and development. It refers to a process where people, organizations, and society need to be consistently strengthened, adapted, and maintained over time to achieve certain pre-determined goals. Ologunorisa (2022) enumerated six ways to practice inclusive capacity building in digital development to include: Sharing impact stories because storytelling is an important medium that allows for the communication of narratives that evoke emotions; Training and tutorials; Provision of a mentorship program that allows for building skills, knowledge, and understanding of digital public goods; Accessibility, usability, and inclusion; Highlighting use cases because they provide stakeholders in the digital ecosystem with the step-by-step guidelines on deploying the platform's products to accomplish their business objectives and funding awareness by way of providing a database of relevant funding opportunities and events to stakeholders in the digital ecosystem.

(g) Mental wellness

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to contribute to his or her community. It is a crucial element of health and well-being that supports both our

individual and group capacity to decide, form connections, and influence the world we live in. McGroarty (2021) defined mental wellness as an internal resource that helps us think, feel, connect, and function; it is an active process that helps us to build resilience, grow, and flourish. This definition characterizes mental wellness as a dynamic, renewable, and positive resource, and as an active process that requires initiative and conscious action. It recognizes mental wellness as an internal experience that encompasses multiple dimensions:

B. Empirical Review

Adeniyi, Owolabi, & Olojede (2015) investigated some determinants of inclusive education practice in Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design. Samples of 227 teachers and head teachers/principals were purposively selected. Data were collected using two inventories, Materials and Manpower Inventory, and Attitudinal Inventory with reliabilities of 0.75 and 0.81 respectively. 'Material' was found to have contributed most significantly while 'experience' was the least in the order of magnitude. They concluded that since material, mind-set, manpower, experience and qualification jointly determined the success of inclusive education, stakeholders should ensure availability of relevant materials and as well recruit more professionals and para-professionals for the implementation of inclusive education practice in Nigeria.

Koliqi & Zabeli (2022) conducted research with a quantitative design and included 499 teachers from 40 schools in Kosovo using instruments titled: Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusion Scale (TAIS) and Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) to collect data. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistical tests. Results showed positive attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education. Secondary level teachers have more positive attitudes towards inclusion than those from primary ones. Correlation results found a negative relationship between teachers' and educational qualification and experience of teachers with students with special needs. The findings highlight the need to develop teaching skills and provide systematic support for teachers, while placing them as a priority in education agendas to ensure the success of inclusion.

C. Theoretical Consideration

This study is anchored on the equity theory of motivation developed by John Stacey Adams in 1963. The Adams' equity theory of motivation says that to be motivated, individuals need to perceive that the rewards they receive for their contributions are fair, and these rewards are similar to those received by their peers. However, if the individuals feel that their rewards (benefits) are not fair, they will feel distressed and would try to change things to create a sense of fairness.

According to the theory, motivation is influenced by how equally peers see rewards and contributions. From the standpoint of leadership and management, this means that in order to ensure the highest levels of motivation, engagement, and performance, a sense of justice should be established within a team when it comes to the inclusion of primary school teachers. This can be accomplished in one of two ways. The first is by addressing the real connection between reward and contribution, and the second is by addressing perceptions of the primary school teachers.

This theory is relevant to this study because it addresses inclusivity and equity issues in the administration of a diverse and multicultural work environment as obtainable in the primary schools. Meanwhile, in alignment with the aforementioned, Ndu-Ogbuji (2020) discovered that significant and positive relationship exist between the dimensions of equity and effective school administration. It holds because there exists a strong connection between administration and equity issues in education as far as teaching and learning process as well as work environment is concerned.

4. Methodology

Descriptive research design was adopted for this study. Nwankwo and Emunemu (2015) posited that "descriptive survey's main purpose is to describe some samples in terms of simple proportion and percentages of participants or respondents to different questions". The population is public primary school teachers in Oyo State as 22942. A sample size of 414 was sampled from the population via multi-stage sampling techniques. The data collected via the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

5. Results

Table 1: Relative Significant Relationship between innovative approaches (Participatory leadership, Motivation programmes, Digital networking, Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building and Mental wellness) on inclusivity of public primary school teachers in Oyo state

Coefficients ^a							
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Remark
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.562	.265		2.118	.035	
	Participatory leadership	.065	.032	.067	2.020	.044	S
	Motivation programmes	-.004	.043	-.003	-.087	.931	NS
	Digital networking	.016	.044	.012	.359	.720	NS
	Open feedback	.061	.038	.055	1.580	.115	NS
	Inclusive capacity building	.120	.033	.157	3.635	.000	S
	Mental wellness	.090	.033	.117	2.705	.007	S

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Inclusivity in Public Primary schools'

S = Significant at $p < 0.05$; NS = Not Significant at $p > 0.05$

Table 1 showed the six indices with their unstandardized regression weights. The coefficients indicates the level to which innovative approaches (Participatory leadership, Motivation programmes, Digital networking, Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building and Mental wellness), to teachers' inclusivity and this is indicated by β -Value viz: Mental wellness made the highest ($\beta = .117$; $t = 2.705$; $p = .000 < 0.05$) which was significant, followed by Inclusive capacity building ($\beta = .157$; $t = 3.635$; $p = .000 < 0.05$) which was also significant. Ranked next was participatory leadership ($\beta = .067$; $t = 2.020$; $p = .044$) which also shows significant. However, the open feedback with ($\beta = -.055$; $t = -.087$; $p = .931 > 0.05$), Motivation programmes with ($\beta = -.003$; $t = -.087$; $p = .931 > 0.05$), digital networking with ($\beta = .055$; $t = 1.580$; $p = .115 > 0.05$) which was not significant. Therefore, the hypothesis 1 was rejected for mental wellness, inclusive capacity building and participatory leadership but, was not rejected for open feedback, digital networking and motivation programmes. This implies that innovative approaches have relative significance relationship on teachers' inclusivity in Oyo State since three of the indices were positively rejected as against the three indices that were accepted based on the multiple hypothesis tested in this study.

- **H₀₂:** There will be no joint contributions of innovative approaches (Participatory leadership, Motivation programmes, Digital networking, Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building, and mental wellness) on Teachers' inclusivity in Primary Schools in Oyo State, Nigeria

Table 2: Joint contributions of innovative approaches (Participatory leadership, Motivation programmes, Digital networking, Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building, and mental wellness) on Teachers' inclusivity in Primary Schools in Oyo State, Nigeria

Model Summary	
R	.757 ^a
R Square	.573
Adjusted R Square	.566
Standard Error of the Estimate	.31143

ANOVA ^a						
Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	P-value	Decision
Regression	51.437	6	7.348	75.762	.000 ^b	Reject P<0.05
Residual	38.311	395	.097			
Total	89.748	402				

a. Predictors: (Constant), Participatory leadership, Motivation programmes, Digital networking, Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building, Mental wellness.

a. Teachers' inclusivity b. Predictors (constant), Participatory leadership, Motivation programmes, Digital networking, Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building, Mental wellness.

Table 2 indicated the result of hypotheses 2 formulated for joint significant relationship between innovative approaches (Participatory leadership, Motivation programmes, Digital networking), Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building, Mental wellness), to teachers' inclusivity. The model summary showed (R Square = .573). The results indicated that the six (6) constructs of innovative approaches included in the regression model contribute over 57%% towards variations in all the three aspects of teachers' inclusivity used in this study. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) F-test is significant in this study i.e. ($F_{(6, 395)} = 75.762, p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This indicates that the independent variables (innovative approaches) and the dependent variable (teachers' inclusivity) have linear and joint significant relationship.

6. Discussion of findings

A. Relative contributions of innovative approaches (Participatory leadership, Motivation programmes, Digital networking, Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building and Mental wellness) on inclusivity of public primary school teachers in Oyo state

The results of the multiple regression showed the innovative approaches (Participatory leadership, Motivation programmes, Digital networking, Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building and Mental wellness) on inclusivity of public primary school teachers in Oyo state, and this is indicated by β -Value viz: Mental wellness made the highest ($\beta = .117; t = 2.705; p = .000 < 0.05$) which was significant, followed by Inclusive capacity building ($\beta = .157; t = 3.635; p = .000 < 0.05$) which was also significant. Ranked next was Participatory leadership ($\beta = .067; t = 2.020; p = .044$) which also shows significant. However, Open feedback with ($\beta = -.055; t = -.087; p = .931 > 0.05$) Motivation programmes with ($\beta = -.003; t = -.087; p = .931 > 0.05$), Digital networking with ($\beta = .055; t = 1.580; p = .115 > 0.05$) were not significant. Inclusivity brings fairness in the organisation by Participatory leadership, Motivation programmes, Digital networking, Open feedback, inclusive capacity building and Mental wellness which is in agreement with Petriashvili (2024) who submitted that staying relevant and being up-to-date in their work, professionals should engage in Continuous Professional Development (CPD), which can include attending workshops, training courses, conferences, self-directed and online learning. It is also in line with Lepak (2024) who emphasized that employee motivation reward programmed have become an effective tool to motivate employees and encourages a healthy work environment.

Therefore, the hypothesis 3 was rejected for Mental wellness, Inclusive capacity building and Participatory leadership but, was not rejected for Open feedback, Digital networking and Motivation programmed This implies that innovative approaches have relative significance relationship on teachers' inclusivity in Oyo State since three of the indices were positively rejected as against the three indices that were accepted based on the multiple hypothesis tested in this study.

B. Joint contributions of innovative approaches (Participatory leadership, motivation programmes, Digital networking, Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building and mental wellness) on inclusivity of public primary school teachers in Oyo state

Furthermore, the results of this study indicated that the six (6) constructs of innovative approaches included in the regression model contribute over 57%% towards teachers' inclusivity in this study. The Analysis of Variance

(ANOVA) F-test is significant in this study i.e. ($F_{(6, 395)} = 75.762, p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This indicates that the independent variables (innovative approaches) and the dependent variable (teachers' inclusivity) have linear and joint significant relationship.

. The result statistically revealed that innovative approaches (Participatory leadership, Motivation programmes, Digital networking, Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building and Mental wellness) joined together had significant relationship on Teachers' inclusivity in the public primary Schools in Oyo State, Nigeria. This corroborated Azrul, Azlin, Alias & Kadir (2024) who found that digital tools and networking improve accessibility, streamline communication, and enable global collaboration which are promoting inclusivity and diversity within the workplace. The findings of this study debunked the claims of Koliqi & Zabeli (2022) who viewed teachers' inclusivity by way of attitude which differs from approaches or strategies claiming that primary level teachers have lower positive attitudes towards inclusion.

7. Conclusion

The innovative approaches (independent variable) and the teachers' inclusivity (dependent variable) have linear and joint significant relationship. This means participatory leadership, motivation programmes, Digital networking, Open feedback, Inclusive capacity building and Mental wellness have relative significance relationship on teachers' inclusivity in Oyo State as well as having significant relationship on teachers' inclusivity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is necessary to recommend that:

- All the innovative approaches should be adequately practiced without bias in the public primary schools.
- Public Schools' authority should endeavor to invest in relevant and profitable professional development programmed for the teachers such as teacher technology literacy training and other digital compliant trainings.
- Government at all levels (federal, state and local government areas) or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should be encouraged to fund Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven Professional Development platforms.
- It is needful for teachers and other professionals in the public school system to leverage on the opportunities provided by digital inclusion in the 21st century.

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