

EFFECT OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON INCLUSIVITY IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between school management strategies and inclusivity in multicultural classrooms in the public secondary schools in Delta State. The study was anchored on Banks' Multicultural Education Theory and Gay's Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory. The study addressed the problem of language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, inadequate teacher preparedness, and weak inclusive practices in culturally diverse classrooms. Both descriptive survey and ex-post facto designs were adopted. The population of the study comprised 7,500 teachers, while a sample of 364 teachers was selected using stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled School Management Strategies and Inclusivity Questionnaire (SMSIQ). The instrument was validated by experts, and a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, and simple linear regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that language barriers and cultural misunderstandings were significantly associated with reduced students' participation and classroom inclusivity, while teacher preparedness and school management strategies showed significant positive relationships with inclusive classroom practices. The regression results showed moderate to strong relationships among the variables, with R^2 values ranging from 0.48 to 0.58. The study concluded that inclusive leadership practices, teacher professional development, and culturally responsive policies are important for promoting inclusivity in multicultural classrooms. However, the study was limited to teachers in public secondary schools in Delta State and relied mainly on self-reported data. The study recommended that educational authorities should strengthen multicultural education policies and provide continuous teacher training on inclusive classroom management.

Keywords: multicultural classrooms, inclusivity, school management, teacher training, educational challenges.

Introduction

The increasing cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity of contemporary classrooms has made inclusivity a major concern in educational systems across the world. Global migration, urbanisation, technological advancement, and expanded access to education have contributed to the emergence of multicultural classrooms where learners from diverse backgrounds interact within the same learning environment. Although diversity enriches classroom experiences by promoting intercultural understanding, creativity, and collaborative learning, it also presents challenges relating to communication, participation, classroom management, and academic achievement. Schools that fail to establish inclusive structures often experience reduced student engagement, discrimination, social exclusion, and poor academic outcomes among minority learners (Ainscow, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). Inclusivity in education therefore requires deliberate institutional and administrative efforts aimed at ensuring that all learners, irrespective of cultural or linguistic background, feel respected, valued, and adequately supported within the learning process.

Multicultural classrooms are characterised by the coexistence of learners with diverse languages, cultural values, religious orientations, behavioural norms, and learning styles. Learners often interpret instructional activities differently based on their cultural experiences and social backgrounds. According to James A. Banks (2021), multicultural education seeks to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and social-class groups through equitable teaching practices and inclusive school structures. Similarly, Geneva Gay (2020) emphasised that culturally responsive teaching enables teachers to use students' cultural

experiences as meaningful tools for improving participation and academic success. In the same vein, Nieto (2020) maintained that culturally inclusive schools promote equity, mutual respect, and positive social interaction among learners from diverse backgrounds. These perspectives suggest that classroom inclusivity extends beyond the physical integration of diverse learners to the intentional creation of supportive educational environments that recognise and accommodate learner differences.

In Nigeria, multiculturalism remains a defining feature of the educational system because of the country's extensive ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity. Nigeria comprises over 250 ethnic groups with varying cultural traditions and languages, making classrooms naturally heterogeneous. Consequently, learners often enter schools with different communication patterns, behavioural expectations, and educational experiences that influence classroom participation and interaction. Research has shown that inadequate management of cultural diversity frequently contributes to marginalisation, discrimination, low participation, and poor academic adjustment among students from minority backgrounds. Sleeter (2021) argued that inadequate multicultural competence among teachers weakens inclusive classroom practices and limits students' opportunities for meaningful engagement in learning activities. Similarly, Ladson-Billings (2021) observed that culturally relevant teaching practices are necessary for improving participation and academic success among culturally diverse learners.

Language diversity constitutes one of the major barriers to inclusivity in multicultural classrooms. Language plays a central role in classroom communication, instruction, and social interaction. Students whose first language differs from the language of instruction often experience

difficulties understanding lessons, participating in discussions, and expressing themselves effectively during classroom activities. Such learners may gradually become withdrawn, passive, or academically disadvantaged. UNESCO (2020) reported that language barriers negatively influence learners' confidence, classroom interaction, and academic performance in culturally diverse educational settings. In many Nigerian schools where English serves as the dominant language of instruction, students from minority linguistic backgrounds frequently experience exclusion and unequal participation opportunities. These challenges further widen educational inequalities and weaken learners' sense of belonging within the classroom environment.

Apart from language barriers, cultural misunderstandings and stereotypes also constitute significant challenges in multicultural classrooms. Learners from different cultural backgrounds often possess varying beliefs regarding authority, communication styles, discipline, collaboration, and classroom behaviour. Teachers who lack multicultural competence may unintentionally misinterpret students' behaviour, reinforce stereotypes, or create exclusionary classroom practices. Banks (2021) maintained that culturally unresponsive educational practices often alienate learners from minority backgrounds and weaken their participation in classroom activities. Likewise, Gay (2020) emphasised that culturally responsive teaching promotes learner confidence, classroom participation, and positive teacher-student relationships in multicultural learning environments. These findings indicate that the management of diversity requires deliberate instructional and administrative strategies that promote respect, equity, and intercultural understanding within schools.

School management therefore plays a critical role in promoting inclusivity in multicultural classrooms. School administrators influence the formulation and implementation of policies relating to diversity management, teacher support, curriculum development, and school culture. Effective school management strategies can create enabling environments where diversity is recognised as an educational asset rather than a challenge. Khalifa *et al.* (2021) maintained that culturally responsive school leadership promotes equitable learning opportunities by supporting inclusive teaching practices, collaborative decision-making, and positive school climates. Similarly, OECD (2023) emphasised that inclusive school leadership and institutional support systems contribute significantly to improved student participation, collaboration, and academic engagement within culturally diverse schools.

Despite increasing awareness of the importance of inclusive education, many schools in developing societies continue to experience difficulties implementing multicultural policies and practices effectively. In several Nigerian public schools, challenges such as inadequate teacher preparation, poor infrastructural facilities, limited instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient institutional support hinder the effective management of multicultural classrooms. These challenges are particularly evident in Delta State where schools serve learners from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds but often lack sufficient multicultural education structures and professional development opportunities for teachers. According to the United Nations (2021), weak institutional support, inadequate teacher preparation, and poor implementation of inclusive policies remain major barriers to effective multicultural education in many developing countries.

Although previous studies have examined multicultural education, inclusive teaching, and classroom diversity, many focused primarily on teacher attitudes, students' perceptions, or curriculum implementation with limited attention given to school management strategies as mechanisms for promoting inclusivity in multicultural classrooms. In addition, several existing studies were conducted outside Delta State and may not adequately reflect the unique multicultural realities and administrative challenges experienced within schools in the state. This reveals a contextual and empirical gap in literature regarding how school management strategies can effectively promote inclusivity within culturally diverse learning environments in Delta State, Nigeria.

It is against this background that this study investigates the effect of school management strategies on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms in Delta State, Nigeria. The study seeks to provide empirical evidence on how leadership practices, institutional support systems, and inclusive management approaches can help address barriers to participation and create equitable learning opportunities for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in contemporary classrooms has created significant challenges for effective teaching and learning, particularly in Nigeria where over 250 ethnic groups coexist. Although multicultural classrooms provide opportunities for intercultural interaction, social integration, and broader learning experiences, inadequate management of classroom diversity often contributes to exclusion, low participation, discrimination, and poor academic adjustment among learners from minority cultural and linguistic backgrounds. One

major challenge confronting multicultural classrooms is language diversity. English remains the dominant language of instruction in Nigerian schools despite the existence of numerous indigenous languages spoken by learners from different ethnic groups. Consequently, students whose first language differs from the language of instruction frequently experience difficulties understanding lessons, participating actively in classroom discussions, expressing their opinions, and completing academic tasks effectively. Such challenges often result in poor classroom participation, low self-esteem, reduced academic performance, and feelings of alienation among affected learners. Studies have shown that language barriers and culturally insensitive classroom practices significantly weaken students' engagement and learning outcomes in multicultural educational settings (Gay, 2020; Banks, 2021; UNESCO, 2020). In addition, teachers who lack multicultural competence may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes, misinterpret students' behaviours, or adopt teaching approaches that fail to accommodate cultural differences among learners.

Despite the growing recognition of inclusive education globally, many public secondary schools in Nigeria continue to experience difficulties with implementing effective multicultural and inclusive educational practices. Challenges such as inadequate teacher preparation, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient instructional resources, weak institutional support, and limited professional development opportunities continue to hinder effective classroom inclusivity. These challenges are particularly evident in Delta State where schools accommodate learners from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds but often lack adequate multicultural management structures and inclusive leadership practices. Although previous studies have examined multicultural

education, classroom diversity, and inclusive teaching practices, many focused mainly on teacher attitudes, students' perceptions, and curriculum implementation with limited attention given to school management strategies as mechanisms for promoting inclusivity in multicultural classrooms. In addition, many existing studies were conducted outside Delta State and may not adequately reflect the multicultural realities and administrative challenges confronting schools within the state. This reveals a contextual and empirical gap regarding how school management strategies can effectively promote inclusivity in multicultural classrooms in Delta State, Nigeria. There is therefore a need to investigate the effect of school management strategies on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms in Delta State, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Multicultural Education Theory propounded by Banks (1981) and Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory propounded by Gay (2000). The theories are relevant to this study because they emphasise inclusivity, equity, cultural sensitivity, and the role of educational institutions in promoting equal learning opportunities for learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Multicultural Education Theory was propounded by Banks in 1981. The theory postulates that schools should provide equal educational opportunities for all learners regardless of their cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or social backgrounds. The theory further maintains that school policies, instructional practices, and administrative structures should be designed in ways that promote equity, participation, inclusion, and respect for cultural diversity. According to the theory, effective school management and inclusive educational practices help reduce discrimination, marginalisation, and

unequal participation among students from minority backgrounds. The theory is relevant to this study because it explains how school management strategies such as inclusive leadership, multicultural policies, teacher support, and equitable classroom practices can promote inclusivity in multicultural classrooms.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory was propounded by Gay in 2000. The theory postulates that teaching and learning become more effective when teachers recognise, respect, and incorporate students' cultural experiences, values, communication styles, and backgrounds into classroom instruction. The theory further emphasises that culturally responsive classrooms promote active participation, positive teacher-student relationships, learner confidence, and academic engagement among diverse learners. The theory is relevant to this study because it explains the importance of supportive school management, multicultural teacher training, and culturally sensitive practices in promoting inclusivity and equitable participation in multicultural classrooms.

The two theories are related to this study because they both emphasise inclusivity, equity, cultural sensitivity, and institutional support in multicultural classrooms. While Multicultural Education Theory focuses on inclusive school structures and educational policies, Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory emphasises culturally sensitive teaching and classroom interaction. The theories therefore provide the framework for explaining how school management strategies can promote inclusivity in multicultural classrooms in Delta State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of school management strategies on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms in Delta State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. examine the effect of language barriers on students' participation in multicultural classrooms;
2. determine the effect of cultural misunderstandings on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms;
3. examine the effect of teacher preparedness on inclusive classroom practices in multicultural classrooms; and
4. determine the effect of school management strategies on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the effect of language barriers on students' participation in multicultural classrooms?
2. What is the effect of cultural misunderstandings on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms?
3. What is the effect of teacher preparedness on inclusive classroom practices in multicultural classrooms?
4. What is the effect of school management strategies on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. Language barriers have no significant effect on students' participation in multicultural classrooms.
2. Cultural misunderstandings have no significant effect on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms.
3. Teacher preparedness has no significant effect on inclusive classroom practices in multicultural classrooms.

4. School management strategies have no significant effect on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms.

Methodology

This study adopted both descriptive survey and ex-post facto research designs. The designs were considered appropriate because the study sought to obtain data from teachers on existing conditions relating to language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, teacher preparedness, school management strategies, and inclusivity in multicultural classrooms without manipulating any variable. The designs enabled the researcher to collect quantitative data suitable for answering the research questions and testing the hypotheses formulated for the study. Since the study focused on examining relationships and effects among naturally existing variables, no experimental treatment or intervention was involved.

The population of the study comprised all teachers in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. According to the Delta State Ministry of Secondary Education (2024), the total population of teachers in public secondary schools in the state was 7,500. A sample size of 364 teachers was selected for the study using the Taro Yamane formula for determining sample size at 0.05 level of significance. The sample size was considered adequate for generalisation because it satisfied the minimum requirement for survey studies involving large populations. In addition, the sample size provided sufficient statistical power for regression analysis. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. The population was first stratified based on the three Senatorial Districts in Delta State to ensure adequate representation of teachers from culturally diverse school environments. Thereafter, a simple random sampling technique was used to select

teachers from the sampled schools proportionately.

Data for the study were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled *School Management Strategies and Inclusivity Questionnaire (SMSIQ)*. The instrument was designed to measure the major variables of the study, namely language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, teacher preparedness, school management strategies, and inclusivity in multicultural classrooms.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A elicited information on respondents' demographic characteristics such as gender, teaching experience, and educational qualification. Section B contained items structured according to the variables of the study. Sample questionnaire items included: Language barriers affect students' participation during classroom discussions; Cultural differences among students influence classroom interaction; Teachers are adequately prepared to manage multicultural classrooms; School management organises professional development programmes on multicultural education; and Inclusive classroom practices promote students' sense of belonging. The instrument was structured on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by three experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation. The experts examined the instrument in terms of clarity, relevance, appropriateness of language, and adequacy of the items in measuring the variables under investigation. Their observations and corrections were used to improve the final version of the instrument. Construct validity was ensured by aligning the questionnaire items directly with the objectives, research questions, and hypotheses of the study. A trial test was

conducted using 30 teachers from public secondary schools outside the study area. Data obtained from the pilot study were analysed using Cronbach Alpha statistics to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.86, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study.

The researcher, with the assistance of trained research assistants, administered copies of the questionnaire to the respondents in their respective schools. Permission was obtained from the school authorities before the administration of the instrument. The respondents were given adequate time to complete the questionnaire, after which the completed copies were retrieved immediately to ensure a high return rate. Out of the 364 copies of the questionnaire administered, 349 copies were correctly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 95.9%. The data collected were analysed using co-efficient of determination and linear regression. Simple linear regression analysis was considered appropriate because each independent variable, namely language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, teacher preparedness, and school management strategies, was tested independently on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms. Prior to the regression analysis, assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were tested to ensure the suitability of the data for parametric analysis. The Likert-scale responses were treated as interval data because the instrument contained multiple items measuring each construct, thereby satisfying the condition for parametric statistical analysis in social science research. The normality test showed that the data were approximately normally distributed. Linearity and homoscedasticity tests also indicated that linear relationships existed between the independent and dependent variables. In addition, the

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.12 to 1.46, while tolerance values ranged from 0.68 to 0.89, indicating the absence of multicollinearity among the variables. These

results confirmed that the data satisfied the assumptions required for linear regression analysis.

Results

Table 1: Effect of Language Barriers on Students' Participation in Multicultural Classrooms

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	Unstandardised Coefficients (B)	Decision
Constant (Language Barriers)	0.71 ^a	0.5041	0.5018	11.284	0.127 0.701	Moderate positive relationship

a. Predictors: (Constant), Language Barriers

The result in Table 1 revealed that language barriers had a moderate effect on students' participation in multicultural classrooms with $R = 0.71$ and $R^2 = 0.5041$. This implies that language barriers accounted for 50.41% of the variance in students' participation in multicultural classrooms. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.5018 indicated that the model was stable and suitable for explanation. The result further showed a positive regression coefficient ($B = 0.701$), indicating that language barriers influence students' participation in multicultural classrooms.

Table 2: Significance of the Effect of Language Barriers on Students' Participation in Multicultural Classrooms

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Regression	684.512	1	684.512	24.638	0.000 ^b
Residual	1532.488	347	4.416		
Total	2217.000	348			

a. Dependent Variable: Students' Participation in Multicultural Classrooms

b. Predictor: (Constant), Language Barriers

The result in Table 2 showed that language barriers had a significant effect on students' participation in multicultural classrooms, $F(1,347) = 24.638$, $p < .05$. Since the p-value of 0.000 was less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that language barriers significantly affect students' participation in multicultural classrooms.

Table 3: Effect of Cultural Misunderstandings on Inclusivity in Multicultural Classrooms

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	Unstandardised Coefficients (B)	Decision
Constant (Cultural Misunderstandings)	0.69 ^a	0.4761	0.4729	10.916	0.118	Moderate positive relationship
					0.684	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Cultural Misunderstandings

The result in Table 3 indicated that cultural misunderstandings had a moderate effect on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms with $R = 0.69$ and $R^2 = 0.4761$. This showed that cultural misunderstandings accounted for 47.61% of the variance in inclusivity in multicultural classrooms. The positive regression coefficient ($B = 0.684$) implied that cultural misunderstandings influence inclusivity in multicultural classrooms.

Table 4: Significance of the Effect of Cultural Misunderstandings on Inclusivity in Multicultural Classrooms

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Regression	612.304	1	612.304	20.583	0.000 ^b
Residual	1641.696	347	4.731		
Total	2254.000	348			

a. Dependent Variable: Inclusivity in Multicultural Classrooms

b. Predictor: (Constant), Cultural Misunderstandings

The result in Table 4 revealed that cultural misunderstandings had a significant effect on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms, $F(1,347) = 20.583$, $p < .05$. Since the p-value of 0.000 was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that cultural misunderstandings significantly affect inclusivity in multicultural classrooms.

Table 5: Effect of Teacher Preparedness on Inclusive Classroom Practices in Multicultural Classrooms

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	Unstandardised Coefficients (B)	Decision
Constant (Teacher Preparedness)	0.73 ^a	0.5329	0.5296	10.203	0.132	Strong positive relationship
					0.728	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Teacher Preparedness

The result in Table 5 showed that teacher preparedness had a strong effect on inclusive classroom practices with $R = 0.73$ and $R^2 = 0.5329$. This implies that teacher preparedness accounted for 53.29% of the variance in inclusive classroom practices in multicultural classrooms. The positive regression coefficient ($B = 0.728$) indicated that teacher preparedness positively influences inclusive classroom practices.

Table 6: Significance of the Effect of Teacher Preparedness on Inclusive Classroom Practices in Multicultural Classrooms

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Regression	721.413	1	721.413	27.904	0.000 ^b
Residual	1498.587	347	4.319		
Total	2220.000	348			

a. Dependent Variable: Inclusive Classroom Practices

b. Predictor: (Constant), Teacher Preparedness

The result in Table 6 indicated that teacher preparedness had a significant effect on inclusive classroom practices in multicultural classrooms, $F(1,347) = 27.904$, $p < .05$. Since the p-value of 0.000 was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that teacher preparedness significantly affects inclusive classroom practices in multicultural classrooms.

Table 7: Effect of School Management Strategies on Inclusivity in Multicultural Classrooms

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	Unstandardised Coefficients (B)	Decision
Constant (School Management Strategies)	0.76 ^a	0.5776	0.5748	9.864	0.145 0.751	Strong positive relationship

a. Predictors: (Constant), School Management Strategies

The result in Table 7 revealed that school management strategies had a strong effect on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms with $R = 0.76$ and $R^2 = 0.5776$. This implies that school management strategies accounted for 57.76% of the variance in inclusivity in multicultural classrooms. The positive regression coefficient ($B = 0.751$) indicated that effective school management strategies positively influence inclusivity in multicultural classrooms.

Table 8: Significance of the Effect of School Management Strategies on Inclusivity in Multicultural Classrooms

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Regression	802.517	1	802.517	31.426	0.000 ^b
Residual	1416.483	347	4.082		
Total	2219.000	348			

a. Dependent Variable: Inclusivity in Multicultural Classrooms

b. Predictor: (Constant), School Management Strategies

The result in Table 8 showed that school management strategies had a significant effect on inclusivity in multicultural classrooms, $F(1,347) = 31.426$, $p < .05$. Since the p-value of 0.000 was less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that school management strategies significantly affect inclusivity in multicultural classrooms in Delta State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that language barriers significantly affected students' participation in multicultural classrooms. The regression analysis showed that differences in language proficiency limited students' ability to communicate effectively, participate actively during lessons, and interact confidently with teachers and peers. This finding suggests that language remains a major determinant of classroom participation in culturally diverse learning environments. The finding supports the position of UNESCO (2020), which reported that students who experience difficulties with the language of instruction often demonstrate low classroom engagement, poor academic confidence, and limited participation in school activities. The finding is also consistent with the view of Banks (2021), whose Multicultural Education Theory emphasises that unequal access to communication and participation opportunities weakens inclusivity in multicultural classrooms. Similarly, Gay (2020) maintained that culturally responsive classrooms should accommodate students' linguistic backgrounds to improve participation and academic engagement. However, the finding contradicts the study of Santoro (2021), who argued that language diversity alone may not significantly hinder participation where strong peer collaboration and inclusive teaching practices exist. The difference in findings may be attributed to variations in school support systems, teacher competence, and contextual differences between educational settings. A limitation associated with this finding is that the study relied on teachers' perceptions without directly measuring students' classroom participation, which may have introduced subjective bias into the responses.

The study further revealed that cultural misunderstandings significantly affected inclusivity in multicultural classrooms. The

finding implies that differences in cultural values, behavioural expectations, communication styles, and social interactions influence the extent to which learners feel accepted and included within the classroom environment. This finding agrees with the position of Nieto (2020), who observed that culturally insensitive classroom practices often create exclusion, stereotyping, and social isolation among students from minority cultural backgrounds. The finding also supports the assumptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory by Gay (2000), which emphasises that teachers who fail to recognise students' cultural identities may unintentionally create barriers to participation and inclusivity. In the same vein, Sleeter (2021) noted that poor multicultural competence among teachers contributes to classroom tension and weak social interaction among culturally diverse learners. Nevertheless, the finding differs from the study conducted by DeMatthews and Izquierdo (2020), which found that exposure to cultural diversity can improve inclusivity where schools intentionally promote intercultural collaboration and respect. The variation may be connected to differences in leadership practices, institutional support, and multicultural education policies across schools. One limitation of this finding is that cultural misunderstandings were examined generally without separating specific dimensions such as religion, ethnicity, or communication patterns, thereby limiting deeper analysis of the particular cultural factors influencing inclusivity.

The findings also showed that teacher preparedness significantly affected inclusive classroom practices in multicultural classrooms. This finding indicates that teachers who possess multicultural knowledge, inclusive teaching skills, and cultural competence are more likely to create supportive and equitable learning environments for diverse learners. The finding supports the view of Gay (2020), who emphasised

that effective multicultural instruction depends largely on teachers' ability to integrate culturally responsive teaching approaches into classroom practice. Similarly, Khalifa *et al.* (2021) argued that schools that prioritise multicultural teacher preparation often experience stronger inclusive practices and improved student engagement. The finding further aligns with Banks' (1981) Multicultural Education Theory, which emphasises that teachers require adequate preparation to implement equitable and culturally inclusive educational practices effectively. However, the finding contradicts the study of OECD (2023), which reported that teacher preparedness alone may not guarantee inclusivity where schools lack institutional support, instructional resources, and inclusive policies. This suggests that teacher competence must be supported by broader school management structures to achieve effective multicultural inclusion. A limitation associated with this finding is that teacher preparedness was measured through self-reported responses, which may have encouraged socially desirable responses from participants regarding their competence and preparedness.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that school management strategies significantly affected inclusivity in multicultural classrooms. The finding implies that leadership practices, professional development opportunities, curriculum adaptation, and supportive school policies contribute significantly to creating inclusive learning environments for culturally diverse students. This finding supports the argument of Khalifa *et al.* (2021), who maintained that culturally responsive school leadership promotes equity, participation, and inclusive school climates. The finding also agrees with the report of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023), which emphasised that inclusive leadership and

institutional support systems improve collaboration, belongingness, and participation among learners from diverse backgrounds. In relation to the theoretical framework, the finding validates Banks' (1981) Multicultural Education Theory, which stresses that educational institutions and school leadership structures play critical roles in promoting equity and inclusivity within multicultural learning environments. However, the finding contrasts with the study of Ainscow (2020), who argued that inclusive policies may produce limited outcomes in schools facing severe infrastructural and financial constraints. The contradiction may be due to differences in school funding, leadership commitment, and contextual educational realities. A limitation of this finding is that the study focused only on public secondary schools in Delta State; therefore, the findings may not be generalised to private schools or other educational contexts outside the study area.

Overall, the findings of the study demonstrate that inclusivity in multicultural classrooms is influenced by interconnected factors relating to language, culture, teacher preparedness, and school management practices. The findings further suggest that effective inclusivity requires collaborative efforts involving teachers, school administrators, curriculum planners, and policymakers. Although the study contributes to knowledge on multicultural classroom management in Delta State, Nigeria, its reliance on survey responses and quantitative analysis limited the opportunity to obtain deeper qualitative insights into teachers' and students' lived experiences in multicultural classrooms. Future studies may therefore adopt mixed-method approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of inclusivity challenges and practices in multicultural educational settings.

Conclusion

The study concluded that language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, teacher preparedness, and school management strategies are important factors associated with inclusivity in multicultural classrooms in Delta State. The findings showed that language differences and cultural misunderstandings were linked to reduced student participation and weaker classroom inclusivity, while teacher preparedness and supportive school management strategies were associated with improved inclusive classroom practices. The study also concluded that inclusive leadership practices, professional development, and culturally responsive school policies are important components for managing multicultural classrooms effectively. These conclusions are limited to the data obtained from teachers in public secondary schools within the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. School administrators should organise regular professional development programmes on multicultural education, culturally responsive teaching, and inclusive classroom management to improve teachers' preparedness for managing culturally diverse classrooms. This recommendation emerged from the finding that teacher preparedness significantly influenced inclusive classroom practices.
2. The Delta State Ministry of Secondary Education should develop and implement policies that support multicultural and inclusive education in public secondary schools. Such policies should include guidelines for language support programmes, inclusive instructional practices, and continuous teacher capacity building.
3. School management should adopt inclusive and participatory leadership approaches that encourage collaboration among teachers, students, parents, and community stakeholders. This recommendation is based on the finding that school management strategies significantly influenced inclusivity in multicultural classrooms.
4. Curriculum planners and educational authorities should integrate multicultural perspectives into classroom instruction and learning materials to promote respect for cultural diversity and improve students' sense of belonging in the classroom environment.
5. Government and educational agencies should provide adequate instructional resources, language support facilities, and counseling services to schools to help address language barriers and cultural misunderstandings among students from diverse backgrounds.
6. Guidance and counseling units in schools should be strengthened to assist students experiencing cultural adjustment difficulties, discrimination, or communication challenges in multicultural classrooms.
7. School management should establish implementation and monitoring mechanisms for inclusive education practices through regular supervision, feedback systems, and periodic evaluation of multicultural classroom management strategies to ensure effective compliance with inclusive education policies.

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