

## AN EVALUATION OF TEACHER CAPACITY FOR AI-DRIVEN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN PLATEAU STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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### ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence is fast becoming a crucial technological tool that is used today in almost all areas of human endeavours, including education. This study therefore investigated secondary school teachers' capacity for Artificial Intelligence (AI) engagement in inclusive education in Plateau State, Nigeria. Utilizing a descriptive methodology, a sample of 392 teachers was obtained from a population of 18,732 through stratified random sampling. Data was collected via the Teachers' Readiness for AI Tools Questionnaire and Teachers' Technology Self-Efficacy. Independent t-test and analysis of variance were used to analyze the data. Findings suggest a significant difference in teachers' readiness for usage of AI tools based on educational levels ( $p=.000$ ), with PhD holders demonstrating higher awareness (mean = 35.02) than NCE holders (mean = 24.56). Similarly, teachers with 16+ years of experience exhibited considerably stronger AI readiness ( $p=.030$ ) than those with 1-5 years. Furthermore, a significant difference in teachers' readiness for usage of AI tools was detected across technology self-efficacy levels ( $F_{(2,391)}=146.168, p=.000$ ), with high self-efficacy associating with the highest readiness. The report proposes increasing advanced education, targeted professional development, and enhancing technology self-efficacy among teachers to improve their readiness for AI integration in inclusive education.

**Key Words:** Artificial Intelligence Usage; Inclusive Education; Readiness; Secondary School Teachers

## Introduction

The application of Artificial intelligence (AI) in education has engendered significant transformation as it enables targeted learning experiences, promotes effective system of administration, and enhances student involvement (Omolafe, Issa, Aderemi, Adefuye, & Adewole, 2023). As educational experiences are tailored to match individual needs, real-time feedbacks are delivered, and learning materials are adapted to suit different learning styles, artificial intelligence has demonstrated the capacity to improve education and teaching (Kim, 2023). With its capacity to offer fair access to high-quality education, artificial intelligence (AI) can especially considerably strengthen inclusive education: all learners, including those with disabilities can be accommodated. As noted by Adzinski, Tijani, Haihambo, and Enock, (2025), by adding AI tools, teachers can construct adaptable learning environments with individualized support, hence enabling students with various abilities to succeed academically.

The application of artificial intelligence in secondary education is still being investigated, especially in Plateau State, Nigeria; its integration into inclusive education has not yet received enough attention (Lata, 2024). The level of teacher acceptance of AI technology in Plateau State schools, especially for inclusive education, is still unknown, despite the growing body of research supporting its application in education worldwide. Readiness is a crucial factor since it dictates whether teachers would use artificial intelligence and their ability to incorporate these technologies into their teaching activities (Omolafe et al., 2023). The lack of preparation for AI usage by instructors could slow the development towards the application of AI in inclusive education.

Many factors may affect teachers' willingness to employ AI tools and implement them in the classroom. Their years of teaching experience, educational background, participation at in-service training, and technology self-efficacy are some of these factors. Manabete and Anyim (2024) discovered that teachers with higher levels of education are more aware of and receptive to implementing cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence (AI). Teachers with more years of experience may also have a wealth of pedagogical knowledge, which may affect how they view AI and whether or not they are willing to experiment with it (Lata, 2024). Additionally, in-service training gives educators the chance to learn new skills and keep up with technological advancements, which improves their understanding and self-assurance when utilizing AI tools (Adigun, Tijani, Haihambo & Enock, 2025). Lastly, a key factor in determining whether teachers are likely to incorporate AI technologies into their practice is technical self-efficacy, or their confidence in their ability to use technology effectively (Kumar & Sharma, 2024).

In light of these conditions, the study looks at how prepared secondary school teachers in Plateau State are for the use of AI in inclusive education. The study will assess how educational qualifications, years of experience, and technology self-efficacy regulate teachers' willingness for the usage of AI. By identifying the important characteristics that support AI adoption in inclusive education, the research intends to provide substantial insights into how AI may be more effectively incorporated into Nigerian secondary schools. By ensuring that AI technologies are utilized to their fullest potential in creating inclusive and accessible learning environments, this could ultimately result in improved educational outcomes for all students, including those with special educational needs.

## Statement of the Problem

The integration of AI in education has the potential to transform teaching and learning processes, particularly in inclusive classrooms where varied learning demands must be met. However, in Plateau State, there is limited empirical evidence addressing secondary school

teachers' readiness for the use of AI tools in inclusive education. This gap in understanding inhibits the effective adoption of AI technology that could promote inclusive educational practices.

Teachers' willingness to adopt AI is influenced by numerous aspects, including their educational qualifications, years of experience, participation in in-service training, and technology self-efficacy. Educational qualifications may indicate the level of teachers' comprehension of technological concepts, while years of experience could influence their willingness to adopting new technology.

Technology self-efficacy measures instructors' confidence in using technology, which can affect their desire to integrate AI into their teaching practices. Despite the importance of these variables in molding willingness of teachers about the employment of AI in education, major gap exists in the literature about the readiness of secondary school teachers about the use of AI in inclusive classroom in Plateau State. Without a complete understanding of these elements, it is challenging to build focused interventions that can effectively boost teachers' preparedness for use of AI tools among secondary school teachers in Plateau State. This study tries to fill this gap by studying the interplay between these variables and their impact on teachers' use of AI in inclusive education.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study is to assess readiness for AI usage in inclusive education among secondary school teachers in Plateau State. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Ascertain the influence of educational qualifications on teachers' readiness for AI usage in Plateau State.
2. Examine the influence of years of experience on teachers' readiness for AI usage in Plateau State.
3. Inquire into the influence of technology self-efficacy on readiness for AI usage in Plateau State.

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level:

1. There is no significant difference in readiness for use of AI tools between teachers with high and low educational qualifications.
2. There is no significant difference in readiness for use of AI tools between teachers with high and low years of experience.
3. There is no significant difference in readiness for use AI tools among Plateau State teachers across technology self-efficacy levels (low, moderate and high).

### **Literature Review**

#### **The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Inclusive Education**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a transformative force in education, capable of redefining pedagogical paradigms. It promises to greatly boost student involvement, facilitate highly customized learning experiences, and expedite administrative procedures (Kaur, Budhraj, Pahuja, Nayyar & Saluja, 2024). Fundamentally, AI technologies have the exceptional ability to change the educational landscape by dynamically tailoring course materials to each student's unique and changing needs. Within the context of inclusive education, which aims to accommodate all students, including those with physical, sensory, cognitive, or intellectual challenges, this potential is especially prominent. Here, AI can go beyond a one-size-fits-all approach and be a potent enabler for just and equal access to high-quality education. According to Ayeni, Ovbiye, Onayemi & Ojedele (2024) and Kaur et al. (2024), AI-driven adaptive learning platforms can improve educational outcomes for students with special needs by creating

personalized learning pathways that offer individualized support and scaffolding tailored to each student's unique needs and pace. However, in order to completely and responsibly exploit this potential, educators must first be aware of these technologies and, more importantly, be psychologically and professionally prepared to successfully incorporate them into their teaching methods (Duygulu, 2024). This preparedness is shaped by a combination of personal and professional factors; it is not automatic. With an emphasis on educational credentials, years of experience, in-service training, and technology self-efficacy as important variables, this section examines the body of research on the critical attributes that affect teachers' preparedness for the integration of AI in inclusive education.

### **Educational Qualifications and Readiness for Use of AI Tools**

Educational qualifications play a significant role in shaping teachers' core ability to absorb, critically analyze, and apply new technologies, including AI, into their teaching practices. According to Fitria (2023), during their academic training, instructors who pursue higher education are typically exposed to more sophisticated pedagogical theories, modern research procedures, and critical analysis. Their ability to comprehend the pedagogical reasoning behind educational technology and make effective use of them beyond simple procedural understanding might be greatly impacted by this exposure. Teachers with higher degrees are frequently more eager to engage with cutting-edge teaching tools like artificial intelligence (AI), according to Kaur et al. (2024). Their absorption in academic frameworks that increasingly highlight the crucial role of technology in contemporary, evidence-based education is responsible for this association. Higher education credentials, including master's or doctoral degrees, usually give teachers better research, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. These skills are crucial for examining new tools' effectiveness, modifying them for certain classroom settings, and evaluating their effects on a variety of learners (Kaur et al., 2024).

The relationship between a teacher's level of education and their preparedness to use AI tools has been confirmed by empirical research. For example, a study by Biswas and Murray (2024) revealed that teachers possessing postgraduate degrees indicated higher levels of confidence and intention to integrate AI into their educational methods compared to those with only undergraduate qualifications. This tendency could be explained by the fact that advanced academic training frequently entails interacting with current research, exposing educators to new debates about the possible advantages and moral implications of AI in education (Biswas & Murray, 2024). As a result, teachers' educational backgrounds have a big impact on their conceptual knowledge, open-mindedness, and practical readiness to embrace and use AI in inclusive learning environments. This is particularly crucial in places like Nigeria, where the use of AI is viewed as a vehicle for equitable development and sustainable progress, requiring a workforce that can effectively use it (Yakubu, 2024).

### **Years of Teaching Experience and Readiness for AI Integration**

There is a complicated and nuanced relationship between years of teaching experience and preparedness for technological progress, especially artificial intelligence. Research paints a more complex picture, despite the widespread belief that seasoned educators may be more reluctant to change because of ingrained practices. According to certain research, instructors' pedagogical confidence can be greatly increased by years of experience combined with a growth mindset. This confidence may even extend to incorporating new technologies into tried-and-true teaching methods (Krašna & Bratina, 2024; Lata, 2024). Experienced educators have a wealth of pedagogical content knowledge and classroom management abilities. This foundation can help people view AI as a tool to improve particular learning objectives and more effectively manage

varied classrooms rather than as a disruption (Olaleye & Salami, 2024). They are typically good at detecting student needs, a skill that can be greatly augmented by AI data.

### **Years of Experience and Readiness for Use of AI Tools**

Teachers with less experience, on the other hand, might not have the deep pedagogical confidence to experiment with complex new technologies, even though they might be more digitally native (Krašna & Bratina, 2024). This is especially true when it comes to the potential challenges of integrating sophisticated AI tools in the classroom. However, as Omolafe et al. (2023) claim, an educator's openness to innovation and ongoing learning is crucial, even though experience can lay the groundwork for confidence. Regardless of their years of experience, teachers may find it difficult to successfully integrate AI if they are hesitant to modify their teaching strategies or if they have concerns about new technology. This underlines the critical importance of building an institutional culture that prioritizes continual professional learning and adaptation among all educators. Furthermore, additional factors including individual motivation, the availability of technical and mentorship resources, and the supportive mechanisms within the school environment modulate the effect of experience on preparation, which is not deterministic (Ayeni et al., 2024). In resource-constrained environments, like rural schools, where experience may also be linked to a history of working without dependable technology, creating a different set of attitudes, the problem is especially severe (Manitshana & Sincuba, 2024).

### **Technology Self-Efficacy and Readiness for Use of AI Tools**

One of the most potent psychological determinants of technology adoption is technological self-efficacy, or a teacher's confidence in their own ability to use technology successfully. According to Jinadu (2024), this self-efficacy plays a crucial role in determining whether teachers would go from awareness of AI technologies to their actual adoption and integration into daily teaching activities. The readiness to test and apply new technologies, particularly sophisticated AI applications, is closely linked to high levels of technical self-efficacy (Fitria, 2023). Strong self-efficacy makes teachers more likely to proactively troubleshoot problems, creatively adapt AI technologies to their instructional objectives, and persevere through early implementation obstacles. Additionally, because they view technology as an extension of their teaching agency rather than an external imposition, they are more likely to adapt these tools to meet the diverse needs of all students, including those with disabilities.

This connection is supported by research. According to Fissore, Floris, Marchisio, and Sacchet (2024), teachers who had a high level of technology self-efficacy were significantly more willing to embrace AI as a useful tool for advancing inclusive education. According to their research, educators who were confident in their ability to use technology were significantly more likely to embrace AI-based strategies, like assistive technologies and adaptive learning platforms, and to pursue relevant professional development (Fitria, 2023). On the other hand, Sugiarto, Lumenta, and Pratas (2024) noted that teachers with poor technical self-efficacy frequently show reluctance and worry while implementing AI, mostly because they lack trust in their own abilities. This may cause people to believe that AI is extremely complicated or dangerous, which deters research and feeds the cycle of non-use. Therefore, developing teachers' technology self-efficacy requires carefully planned professional development programs that offer practical, success-oriented training together with mentorship and teamwork from peers. Increasing their readiness to actively interact with AI technologies for inclusion requires this fundamental faith.

### **Challenges in AI Integration**

The effective integration of AI in inclusive education confronts a number of important, interrelated obstacles despite its transformative promise. According to Uzoigwe (2023), the main

obstacles are insufficient digital infrastructure, extremely limited access to trustworthy AI technologies, and deeply ingrained aversion to change among certain instructors. The lack of reliable internet access, contemporary computers, and reasonably priced AI software poses a significant practical challenge in many Nigerian schools, especially in rural or underdeveloped locations (Manitshana & Sincuba, 2024; Yakubu, 2024). Even when technologies are accessible, teachers may have obstacles in accessing quality, continuous training programs due to low institutional financing or poorly structured professional development opportunities (Okon & Effiong, 2024; Uzoigwe, 2023).

Attitude resistance poses a significant challenge in addition to infrastructure limitations. This opposition can originate from a lack of knowledge of AI's supportive function, anxieties of work relevance, or ethical concerns about data protection and algorithmic bias (Lata, 2024). AI's pedagogical value may be questioned by some seasoned educators who are used to more conventional approaches, seeing it as a fad or a danger to their professional independence. A comprehensive, systemic approach is needed to overcome these complex issues. According to Manabete and Anyim (2024), Okon and Effiong (2024), and Uzoigwe (2023), this strategy must incorporate coherent policy reforms that prioritize digital equity, strategic investment in foundational technology infrastructure, and the implementation of ongoing, contextually relevant teacher training programs that directly link AI use to pedagogical goals and inclusive practice. In order to achieve equitable learning for all students, educational systems can foster an atmosphere that not only permits but actively encourages the ethical and successful deployment of AI in inclusive education by tackling these obstacles in their entirety.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a descriptive research design to assess the awareness of AI usage in inclusive education among secondary school teachers in Plateau State. The target population comprises all secondary school teachers in the state, with a sample selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different educational zones and school types. Available data shows that there are 17,302 secondary school teachers in Plateau State owned secondary schools. Using Taro Yemani's formula, a total sample of 392 secondary school teachers was selected to participate in the study. Two instruments were used to collect data for the study. They are Teachers' Awareness of AI Tools Questionnaire (TAAITQ) and Teachers' Technology Self-Efficacy Scale (TTSES). TAAITQ has two sections. Section A deals with personal data of the respondents and Section B contains 10 items on teachers' awareness of AI tools for education. TTSES has 10 items which tap into the technology self-efficacy of the teachers. Both instruments use 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4).

The instruments were administered to the teachers in their school after seeking the permission of concerned authorities. Ethical principles were strictly adhered to in carrying out the study. Participation was voluntary and withdrawal was allowed. Confidentiality was ensured in the data collection process. The data collected was safe and secured after use. Descriptive statistics was used to describe the personal data of the respondents while independent t-test and analysis of variance was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

**Results**

**Table 1**

Independent t-test showing difference in Awareness of AI Tools between Teachers with High and Low Educational Qualifications

	<b>Educational Qualification</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
AI Awareness	NCE	82	24.56	10.098	166	7.302	.000	Significant difference exists
	PhD	7	35.02	8.442				

Table 1 presents independent t-test of difference in AI awareness between teachers with high and low educational qualifications. It shows that teachers with PhD (mean = 35.02, SD = 8.442) demonstrated better AI awareness than their counterparts with NCE (mean = 24.56, SD = 10.098) with significant t-test value ( $t = 7.302$ ,  $df = 166$ ;  $p = .000 < .05$ ). Consequently, Hypothesis 1 is rejected.

**Table 2**

Independent t-test showing Difference in Awareness of AI Tools between Teachers with High and Low Years of Experience

<b>Group Statistics</b>								
	<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
AI Awareness	1-5	108	36.07	8.259	150	2.185	.030	Significant difference exists
	16 & above	44	38.77	6.288				

Table 2 presents independent t-test of difference in AI awareness between teachers with high and low years of experience. It shows that teachers with 16 years (and above) years of experience (mean = 38.77, SD = 6.288) demonstrated better AI awareness than their colleagues with 1-5 years of experience (mean = 36.07, SD = 8.259) with significant t-test value ( $t = 2.185$ ,  $df = 150$ ;  $p = .030 < .05$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

**Table 3**

ANOVA showing Difference in Awareness of AI Tools between Teachers across Technology Self-Efficacy Levels (Low, Moderate and High)

**ANOVA**

<b>AI Awareness</b>					
	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Between Groups	16308.924	2	8154.462	146.168	.000
Within Groups	21813.269	391	55.788		
Total	38122.193	393			

Table 3 shows that significant difference exists in AI awareness among the teachers across different levels of technology self-efficacy ( $F_{(2,391)} = 146.168$ ;  $p = .000 < .05$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is rejected.

**Table 4**

LCD Post-Hoc Analysis of Comparisons among the Three Levels of Technology Self-Efficacy (Low, Moderate and High)

**Multiple Comparisons**

**Dependent Variable: AI Awareness**

**LSD**

(I) ICT Self-Efficacy	(J) ICT Self-Efficacy	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
High	Moderate	7.128*	.890	.000	5.38	8.88
	Low	15.880*	.932	.000	14.05	17.71
Moderate	High	-7.128*	.890	.000	-8.88	-5.38
	Low	8.752*	1.008	.000	6.77	10.73
Low	High	-15.880*	.932	.000	-17.71	-14.05
	Moderate	-8.752*	1.008	.000	-10.73	-6.77

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

To ascertain the level of technology self-efficacy that best determine AI awareness of teachers among the three (high, moderate and low), LCD Post-Hoc analysis was carried out. As shown in Table 4, teachers with high level of technology self-efficacy with mean difference of 7.128 over low technology self-efficacy and 15.880 over low technology self-efficacy is the one who best determine AI awareness of the teachers.

**Discussion of Findings**

The study found that teachers with higher academic qualification (PhD) demonstrated better familiarity with AI awareness than those with low academic qualifications (NCE). This finding supports Fitria (2023) who reported that teachers with higher levels of education have adequate exposure to advanced pedagogical concepts and research during their academic training and that this can determine their ability to absorb and utilize educational technologies effectively. Similarly, Kaur et al. (2024) also found that teachers with superior educational degrees are more ready to interact with innovative instructional technology such as AI. Kaur et al. (2024) particularly pointed out that higher educational qualifications, such as master's or doctoral degrees, usually equip instructors with the critical thinking and research skills required to investigate and adopt new technologies in the classroom. Lending credence to this finding is Biswas and Murray (2024) who observed that teachers with postgraduate degrees were more inclined to integrate AI into their educational practices compared to those with lower levels of education. Therefore, the educational background of teachers is a significant component in affecting their preparedness to use AI in inclusive education settings (Biswas et al., 2024).

Teachers with longer teaching experience (16 years and above) showed higher AI awareness than those with fewer years of experience (1-5 years), suggesting that professional exposure contributes to increased awareness of AI tools. This findings is corroborated by Olaleye et al. (2024) that years of experience predicts teachers' confidence in integrating new technology, including AI, into their teaching techniques. Krašna et al. (2024) equally reported that teachers with substantial experience usually possess a multitude of pedagogical expertise and classroom management talents, which might boost their adoption of AI tools into their instruction. In contrast, teachers with less competence may lack the confidence to experiment with new technologies, especially when faced with the intricacy of AI tools. In addition to experience, Omolafe et al. (2023) maintained that it is important for teachers to be open to innovation, noting

that teachers that are unwilling to alter their teaching methods or are apprehensive about new technology may struggle to incorporate AI into their career, regardless of their years of training. Adigun et al. (2025) however found that readiness of teachers for the adoption of AI tools may be influenced by other factors such as personal motivation, the availability of resources, and the support mechanisms within the educational institution.

A significant variation in AI awareness exists among teachers with different levels of technology self-efficacy. Those with high technology self-efficacy had the highest awareness, followed by those with moderate levels, while those with low self-efficacy had the least. This finding aligns with Jinadu (2024) who reported that technology self-efficacy determines whether teachers will adopt and integrate AI tools into their teaching practices. Fitria (2023) also found that high levels of technology self-efficacy are related with higher preparedness to study and apply new technologies, including AI. Teachers with excellent technical self-efficacy are more ready and prepared to experiment with AI apps, incorporate them into their classes, and customize them to match the requirements of all students, including those with disabilities. Moreover, Fissore et al. (2024) also showed that teachers with high technology self-efficacy are more ready to accept AI as a tool to promote inclusive education. Their study found that teachers who believed in their capacity to use technology were substantially more likely to employ AI-based teaching methods, such as adaptive learning platforms and assistive technologies, in their classrooms. These teachers were also more likely to seek out professional development opportunities associated to AI and to experiment with innovative technologies to support diverse learners (Fitria, 2023).

Sugiarso, Lumenta and Pratasis (2024) observed that teachers with poor technical self-efficacy may be unwilling to deploy AI due to a lack of trust in their technological abilities. These teachers may regard AI as hard or frightening, which could discourage them from exploring its potential applications in inclusive education. As Sugiarso et al. (2024) put it, promoting technology self-efficacy among teachers is vital for boosting their trust and readiness to engage AI tools.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations based on the findings include:

1. Stakeholders in the education sector should encourage and support teachers to pursue higher academic qualifications through scholarships, sponsorships, or study leaves, as higher qualifications are linked to greater awareness of AI tools.
2. Regular training and workshops should be organized to improve AI awareness, particularly for teachers with lower educational qualifications and fewer years of experience, ensuring they are not left behind in technological advancements.
3. Initiatives aimed at improving teachers' confidence in using digital tools, such as hands-on ICT training, mentoring, and access to technological resources should be prioritized to boost AI tool adoption and usage.
4. Institutions that train teachers should embed AI literacy and digital competency into their curriculum to prepare future educators with the skills needed to thrive in tech-driven classrooms.
5. There is need to establish platforms where experienced and tech-savvy teachers can mentor and support less experienced or less confident colleagues in adopting and utilizing AI tools effectively.

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