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CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN EDUCATION: THEORIES, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

This volume examines contemporary issues in education through pedagogical, cultural, theoretical, and technological perspectives. By bringing together diverse contexts and approaches, the book highlights how education systems respond to societal change, cultural diversity, and evolving learning environments.

The chapter on transformative pedagogy in multicultural Islamic education explores inclusive teaching practices that foster critical thinking, ethical values, and intercultural understanding. In parallel, the analysis of lifelong learning as a strategy for cultural diplomacy situates education policy within the broader European and Albanian contexts, emphasizing its role in dialogue, cooperation, and social cohesion.

Foundational educational principles are addressed through a discussion of learning theories and classroom processes, providing a theoretical lens for understanding how learners acquire knowledge and skills. This contribution reinforces the importance of aligning pedagogical strategies with cognitive, social, and developmental dimensions of learning.

The volume concludes with an examination of mathematics teachers' roles in integrating digital and electronic devices into classroom practice in Nigeria. Collectively, the chapters offer insights into effective teaching, policy innovation, and the strategic use of technology to enhance learning outcomes in diverse educational settings.

Editorial Team
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CHAPTER 1
TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY IN MULTICULTURAL ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic religious colleges face increasingly complex challenges in the context of multicultural societies and shifting global dynamics. The diversity of students' backgrounds, including ethnicity, culture, language, religious traditions, and Islamic thought orientations, demands an educational approach that is not only normative and doctrinal but also dialogical, reflective, and transformative. Islamic education at the university level is no longer sufficient to focus solely on the transmission of religious knowledge; it must also form students' critical consciousness, enabling them to coexist harmoniously in a plural society (Abidin et al., 2023).

Transformative pedagogy emerged as a relevant and strategic approach. This pedagogy emphasises the process of changing students' perspectives through critical reflection on experiences, social realities, and believed values. Islamic education that addresses multicultural realities necessitates a pedagogical model that can transform an exclusive way of thinking into an inclusive one, from a passive to a participatory approach, as well as from a textual understanding to a contextual experience. Religious colleges have a strategic position in shaping a generation of Muslim intellectuals who are moderate, tolerant, and nationally minded (Adinugraha, Syakirunni'am, et al., 2025).

Global issues, including environmental crises, social injustice, and identity-based conflicts, also influence the direction of contemporary Islamic education. The Environmental Engineering perspective reinforces the urgency of transformative pedagogy, since education cannot be detached from ecological and social responsibilities. Islamic values that emphasise balance, sustainability, and human responsibility as caliphs on earth require a pedagogical approach that can internalise environmental and multicultural consciousness simultaneously (Khobir et al., 2025).

Transformative pedagogy in multicultural Islamic education is viewed as an approach that addresses the needs of the times. The main argument of this study rests on the assumption that Islamic education that is not transformed has the potential to perpetuate an exclusive, formalistic, and less responsive attitude to social reality.

Religious universities often still rely on conventional learning methods that place lecturers as the centre of knowledge and students as passive recipients. This pattern restricts the space for dialogue and critical reflection, which should be the hallmark of higher education (Sukmawaty et al., 2025).

Transformative pedagogy positions students as active, reflective, and responsible participants in their own learning process. This approach aligns with Islamic values that promote the use of reason, deliberation, and justice. Transformative pedagogy in multicultural studies enables students to understand differences as social realities that must be managed constructively, rather than avoided or rejected (Xhambazi & Aliu, 2024). Islamic education not only serves as a means of strengthening religious identity but also as a medium for fostering social and humanitarian awareness (Setianingrum et al., 2025).

The study of transformative pedagogy has grown rapidly in the realm of critical education and adult education (Mezirow, 2019). The transformation of perspective through critical reflection, while Freire underscores the importance of dialogue and critical awareness in the learning process. Several studies have explored multicultural education, religious moderation, and critical pedagogy; however, most of them remain conceptual or normative in nature (Dirkx et al., 2006).

Previous studies have tended to focus on multicultural Islamic education, emphasising the strengthening of tolerance and national values, without elaborating in depth on the pedagogical processes that occur in the classroom (Maulana et al., 2024). The study of transformative pedagogy is rarely contextualised specifically in Islamic education in religious colleges (Taufikin, 2025). The integration of Islamic perspectives, multiculturalism, and transformative pedagogy remains a relatively underexplored area of study (Parhan et al., 2024).

The gap in studies lies in the lack of empirical research examining how transformative pedagogy is implemented in multicultural Islamic education within religious universities. Existing studies generally discuss Islamic education and multiculturalism separately, without highlighting the process of transforming student consciousness through concrete pedagogical practices.

There have been few studies that link transformative pedagogy to socioecological issues relevant to the perspective of sustainability and environmental responsibility (Adinugraha, Solehuddin, et al., 2025).

Table 1. Study distinction

Study Aspects	Findings of Previous Studies	Position of this Study
Islamic Education	Focus on normative value transmission	Focus on consciousness transformation
Multiculturalism	Emphasis on tolerance	Emphasis on dialogue and critical reflection
Pedagogy	Dominance of conventional methods	Implementation of transformative pedagogy
Context	General study of Islamic education	Religious colleges
Environmental Dimensions	Minimally discussed	Integrated into social consciousness

The absence of studies that integrate transformative pedagogy, multicultural Islamic education, and the analysis of religious colleges reveals academic gaps that require attention. This study aims to address these gaps by exploring transformative pedagogical practices qualitatively and contextually. The primary concern of this study stems from the question of how transformative pedagogy is constructed and implemented in multicultural Islamic education within religious universities. Another issue is related to the learning strategies used by lecturers in managing student diversity and the impact of transformative pedagogy on students' multicultural awareness and religious attitudes. This study also highlights the extent to which transformative pedagogical approaches can encourage the internalisation of inclusive, moderate, and ecologically informed Islamic values.

The novelty of this study lies in the conceptual and empirical integration between transformative pedagogy, multicultural Islamic education, and the analysis of religious colleges. This study not only describes multicultural values in Islamic education but also analyses the process of transforming student consciousness through real pedagogical practices.

This study expands the scope of transformative pedagogy by incorporating dimensions of social and environmental responsibility into contemporary Islamic education.

The urgency of this study stems from the pressing need for an Islamic education model that is responsive to the multicultural and global challenges of our time. Religious universities require a pedagogical approach that can form graduates with inclusive, critical, and socially and ecologically responsible character. This study is expected to make both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Islamic education pedagogy, while also serving as a reference for lecturers and policymakers in designing transformative and sustainable learning approaches.

1. CONSTRUCTING TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY IN MULTICULTURAL ISLAMIC EDUCATION PRACTICES

The construction of transformative pedagogy in the learning practice of Multicultural Islamic Education is based on the repositioning of the role of lecturers, who are no longer just transmitters of knowledge, but rather agents of change who internalise prophetic values in the context of pluralism. Field data show that lecturers consistently integrate the concept of critical consciousness by reorienting their understanding of religious texts, which have been considered rigid, to be more contextual and inclusive (Palencia Puche et al., 2024). Empirical findings confirm that educators use a cosmopolitan Islamic historical narrative as a foundation for building a moderate student identity, where values such as al-musawah (equality) and al-'is (justice) are not only taught as theory, but are embodied in a democratic classroom atmosphere. Observational data revealed that each learning session commenced with the deconstruction of religious stereotypes prevalent in society, followed by the reconstruction of new understandings through inter-identity dialogue.

Lecturers also presented evaluation instruments that no longer focused solely on cognitive mastery, but on changes in students' behaviours and empathetic attitudes towards groups with different beliefs, which showed that learning success was measured by the extent to which students were able to transform Islamic values into inclusive social action within their environment.

A strong pattern emerges in the application of transformative pedagogical principles, leading to the strengthening of religious literacy across cultures. This pattern can be observed in the way lecturers manage discourses in the classroom, which consistently connect Islamic doctrine with universal humanitarian issues, thereby creating a learning ecosystem that is not hindered by sectarian primordialism. Empirically, there is a tendency for lecturers with a broad background in religious understanding to employ a dialogical-dialectical approach, where students are encouraged to question hegemonic understandings that have the potential to trigger intolerance. This learning practice utilises digital media and social conflict case studies as the primary material to prompt in-depth reflection among students (Parviainen et al., 2024). This tendency suggests that transformative pedagogy in Multicultural Islamic Education does not proceed linearly, but instead in a circular one, where each new learning experience triggers a broader transformation of consciousness. This phenomenon is reinforced by the fact that students show increased interest in interfaith collaboration after being exposed to a learning model that emphasises the principle of at-ta'ayush (peaceful coexistence) taught by lecturers through simulated social interaction in the classroom.

The implementation of transformative pedagogy rests on three main pillars: deep dialogue, critical reflection, and praxis-based action. The majority of educators have reached a "very skilled" level in designing learning scenarios that combine problem-based learning methods with Islamic multiculturalism values. The use of the analogy "Islamic Big House" is a favourite strategy for lecturers to explain how the diversity of schools and cultures is a theological wealth, not a threat to the faith (Ireen et al., 2024). This explanation aligns with the interview results, which stated that lecturers operationally apply the principle of equality of position between educators and students, thereby transforming the classroom into a social laboratory where students practice negotiating their identity without compromising their Islamic identity.

The findings on student responses also indicate a high level of satisfaction with the open discussion method, which addresses sensitive issues related to religious harmony. This suggests that the construction of transformative pedagogy can break the communication freeze that often occurs in conventional religious learning.

This also emphasises that multicultural values in Islam can be transformed into dynamic learning principles if lecturers can connect sacred texts with the sociological reality of Indonesia's pluralistic society (Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023).

The emergence of the issue of transformative pedagogical construction in the learning practice of Multicultural Islamic Education is triggered by the sociological and pedagogical insistence on addressing the challenges of religious radicalism and exclusivism that have begun to permeate the academic world. Causality analysis reveals that doctrinal and one-way religious learning methods have been the primary cause of students' limited critical thinking in responding to diversity, indicating a need for a pedagogical breakthrough that can foster emancipatory awareness (Fardella et al., 2024). This transformation occurred due to the urgent need to align the Islamic Education curriculum with a national vision based on religious moderation, where lecturers act as a bridge between classical Islamic texts and the challenges of modernity. Causally, the application of this transformative pedagogy is a reaction to the stagnation of religious learning, which is often oriented solely to the ritualistic and formalistic aspects without engaging the substantive and human elements. The influence of globalisation and the digitisation of information also forces lecturers to change their teaching paradigm, because students now have wide access to various religious views. If lecturers continue to use the old pattern, then learning will lose its relevance. This cause-and-effect relationship makes it clear that the construction of transformative pedagogy is not just a methodological innovation. Still, a theological and sociological imperative to maintain the sustainability of Islam that is rahmatan lil 'alamin within the framework of a multicultural state. Transformative pedagogy in Multicultural Islamic Education is a form of privatisation of Islamic values through liberating education. Theoretically, this practice reaffirms the concept of Tarbiyah as a process of developing the full human potential, which encompasses not only intellectual intelligence but also wisdom in responding to differences.

This interpretation confirms that the multicultural values applied by lecturers are actually derived from basic Islamic principles such as shura (deliberation), ihsan (doing good), and tasamuh (tolerance), which are then articulated into a more operational modern pedagogical language (Muhammad Yahya Azzam et al., 2025). This means that lecturers are not just transferring knowledge about tolerance, but are deconstructing students' mentality from a narrow-minded perspective to an open-minded perspective. The most profound meaning of this construction is the effort to build an Islamic civilisation based on science and respect for human dignity, regardless of one's primordial background. Transformative pedagogy is a strategic instrument for producing a generation of Muslims who possess spiritual maturity as well as social sensitivity, ultimately strengthening national harmony amidst changing global dynamics. This interpretation sends a strong signal that the future success of Islamic Education depends heavily on the ability of educators to nurture this spirit of transformation in an ongoing manner in every classroom they lead.

The construction of transformative pedagogy in the learning practice of Multicultural Islamic Education has successfully repositioned the role of lecturers, from mere transmitters of knowledge to agents of change that facilitate students' critical awareness. The implementation of this pedagogy effectively integrates prophetic values, such as equality (al-musawah) and justice (al-'adalah), into a contextual curriculum, thereby deconstructing rigid religious understandings to become more inclusive and responsive to social realities (Mansoor et al., 2025). The research findings confirm that the success of this transformation is determined by the ability of lecturers to manage the classroom as a democratic social laboratory, where cross-identity dialogue and critical reflection are the main instruments in shaping the character of moderate students.

Substantively, this learning practice demonstrates that Islamic education is capable of addressing the challenge of radicalism by shifting the focus of evaluation from mere cognitive mastery to a genuine transformation of social behaviour within society. The learning pattern developed demonstrates that cross-cultural religious literacy can thrive through the at-ta'ayush method, or peaceful coexistence, which is operationally internalised in each discussion session and interaction simulation.

Finally, this study emphasises that transformative pedagogy is a strategic intellectual movement to realise the Islamic vision of rahmatan lil 'alamin in the framework of Indonesia. The sustainability of this model is highly dependent on the consistency of educators in nurturing students' critical reasoning and empathy, which, in turn, will strengthen social harmony and national integration amid the ever-changing dynamics of global diversity.

2. IMPLEMENTING TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY TO MANAGE STUDENT DIVERSITY

The strategy of implementing transformative pedagogy in managing student diversity is realised through the application of learning methods that are oriented to dialogue, critical reflection, and active student participation. Lecturers consciously design Islamic Education learning by placing the diversity of student backgrounds as the primary learning resource, rather than a pedagogical obstacle. This practice is evident in the selection of socio-religious case study methods, heterogeneous group discussions, and the analysis of students' personal experiences related to their cultural and religious identities (Pant, 2024).

The dialogical approach is the dominant strategy in managing differences in students' views and backgrounds. Lecturers open an equal and inclusive discussion space by encouraging students to express their opinions without fear of stigmatisation. Dialogue not only occurs between lecturers and students, but also among students, fostering a dynamic exchange of perspectives. Lecturers act as facilitators who direct the dialogue to remain grounded in Islamic values, such as manners, deliberation, and respect for differences (Annur Muharridha et al., 2025).

Critical reflection is an essential strategy in transformative pedagogy. The interview data revealed that lecturers consistently integrated written reflection and oral reflection activities at the end of the learning process. Students are asked to reflect on their changing perspectives on issues of religion, tolerance, and social justice after participating in the learning process. This reflection activity enables students to connect theoretical knowledge to their life experiences, ensuring that learning extends beyond the cognitive aspect to encompass the affective and transformative realms (Klefbeck, 2025).

Participatory learning also emerged as a key finding in the implementation of transformative pedagogy. Lecturers encourage students to be actively involved in designing discussions, determining study themes, and conducting collaborative projects that address multicultural issues. This participation strengthens students' sense of ownership of the learning process and increases collective awareness of the importance of cooperation in diversity (Daswarman et al., 2025). These findings suggest that transformative pedagogy not only changes teaching methods but also alters power relations in the classroom to make them more egalitarian.

Transformative pedagogy implementation strategies emerged in response to the complexity of student diversity in religious colleges. The diversity of cultural backgrounds, religious organisations, and orientations within Islamic thought necessitates a pedagogical approach that can manage differences constructively. The dialogical approach applied by lecturers serves as a pedagogical mechanism to reduce potential conflicts and build cross-perspective understanding. Dialogue enables students to recognise that differences are an inevitable social reality that must be managed through ethical and reflective communication (Ireen et al., 2024).

Critical reflection in transformative pedagogy serves as a medium for changing students' consciousness. Through reflection, students not only evaluate the learning material but also reconstruct their perspective on their own identity and that of others. This process aligns with the goal of Islamic education, which not only transmits knowledge but also forms personality and morals. Critical reflection enables students to understand Islamic teachings in a contextual and relevant manner, thereby reducing the tendency towards a textual and exclusive understanding (Suh & Jun, 2024).

The participatory learning approach found in this study demonstrates that transformative pedagogy can foster a democratic and inclusive classroom climate. The active participation of students strengthens the learning process as a meaningful collective experience (Dabengwa et al., 2023). The interpretation of these findings reveals that changes in lecturer-student relationships are a key factor in the success of transformative pedagogy. When students are positioned as learners, they are more open to reflecting on differences and developing a tolerant attitude.

The findings of this study align with Mezirow (2019), who emphasises changing the frame of mind through critical reflection on experience. The critical reflection strategy employed by lecturers enables students to undergo what is known as perspective transformation, a shift in their understanding of themselves, others, and social reality. This transformation contributes to the formation of a more inclusive and reflective awareness of religion.

The dialogical approach presented in this study aligns with the critical pedagogy of Freire (2021), who rejected the bank-style educational model and emphasised dialogue as a means of liberation. Dialogue in multicultural Islamic Education learning allows students and lecturers to build knowledge cooperatively, while criticising social and ideological structures that perpetuate exclusivism. The integration of dialogue with Islamic values, such as deliberation and manners, strengthens the relevance of critical pedagogy in the study of Islamic education.

Participatory learning, as applied by lecturers, can be elaborated upon through Vygotsky (2024), who emphasises the role of social interaction in learning. The active participation of students in discussions and collaborative projects creates a space for meaningful learning through the exchange of experiences and knowledge. In multicultural Islamic education, social constructivism reinforces the view that religious understanding is built through reflective and contextual social interactions.

The results of this study are supported by several previous studies that affirm the effectiveness of transformative pedagogy in the context of multicultural education (El Ashamwi et al., 2018). A dialogical and reflective approach in multicultural education can enhance students' awareness of social justice issues and pluralism (Rodiyana et al., 2025). Similar findings were also expressed by Hargrove et al. (2024), who emphasised the importance of participatory learning in managing student diversity.

In the study of Islamic education, Abdullah (2022) found that the dialogical approach in Islamic religious learning significantly contributes to strengthening students' tolerant and moderate attitudes. Another survey by Qorib and El-Rumi (2020) indicates that integrating critical reflection into Islamic education can reduce the tendency towards an exclusive religious understanding.

This empirical support strengthens the study's findings that transformative pedagogy is a strategic approach in managing student diversity in religious universities.

The results and discussion in this sub-chapter confirm that the strategy of implementing transformative pedagogy through dialogical methods, critical reflection, and participatory learning has a significant contribution in managing student diversity. Transformative pedagogy not only enhances the quality of learning in Islamic education but also plays a crucial role in fostering multicultural awareness and inclusive religious attitudes. These findings reinforce the position of transformative pedagogy as a relevant and contextual approach to the development of Islamic education in religious colleges.

3. TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENTS' MULTICULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES

The implementation of transformative pedagogy in the Islamic university environment has a significant impact on the reconstruction of students' religious paradigm from textual-exclusive to contextual-inclusive. Empirical data show that, before transformative pedagogical interventions were implemented, the majority of students tended to understand the concept of tolerance only as a passive boundary to avoid interfering with one another. However, after being exposed to learning methods that emphasise critical reflection and deep dialogue, there was a substantial shift in their consciousness. The results of observation and data collection using the Religious Attitude Scale instrument showed a significant increase in the average score of students' multicultural awareness, particularly in the dimension of recognising the existence of the "other" within the theological framework. Students began to demonstrate the ability to separate the principle of absolute faith from the realm of social muamalah, which is relative and plural, allowing them to be more flexible in interacting across identities without feeling that they have lost their Islamic identity (Hardaker & Sabki, 2012).

The internalisation of Islamic values of rahmatan lil 'alamin no longer stops at the cognitive level or memorisation of postulates, but has been transformed into an operational attitude in daily life.

Field data indicate that students participating in this learning model exhibit a decrease in social prejudice towards minority groups and an increase in empathy for universal humanitarian issues (Minarti et al., 2025). This phenomenon can be seen from the way students respond to the case studies of religious conflicts presented by lecturers, where they are more likely to seek peaceful solutions based on the principles of social justice rather than making judgments based on group sentiments. The researchers also found that the use of moderate Islamic historical narratives as a trigger material in transformative pedagogy has proven effective in triggering dilemma disorientation in students, which in turn encourages them to re-evaluate old religious assumptions that have been considered final.

The application of this transformative pedagogy concretely produces a profile of students who have a high level of resilience to exposure to extreme ideologies. The results of qualitative data analysis from the weekly reflection sessions showed that students began to internalise the values of religious moderation, such as tawasut (middle), tawazun (balanced), and i'tidal (perpendicular), as a foundation for behaving in digital and real public spaces. Students actively filter religious information that is provocative and prefer to prioritise tabayun and constructive dialogue. This change in perspective demonstrates that the impact of transformative pedagogy is systemic, affecting the affective and psychomotor aspects of students, so that tolerance is no longer a moral burden, but a spiritual necessity in practising the peaceful teachings of Islam (Huda, 2024).

Table 2 illustrates that transformative pedagogy can break the dogmatic freeze through the simultaneous processes of "unlearning" and "relearning" that occur in the student's consciousness. This success is driven by a safe and democratic learning environment, where students feel free to express their intellectual doubts without fear of theological judgment. This positive impact on multicultural awareness suggests that when Islam is taught with an approach that prioritises human values and justice, students will naturally find the relevance of religion in addressing the problems of a pluralistic society. The change in perspective that occurs does not mean that students become more liberal in a negative sense. Instead, they become more mature in their religion because they can draw inspiration from sacred texts for world peace.

Table 2. Comparison of Multicultural Awareness Indicators and Religious Attitudes (Pre and Post Intervention)

Measurement Dimensions	Pre-Intervention Conditions	Condition After (Post-Intervention)	Impact of Change
Religious Perspective	Textual and Exclusive Tendencies	Contextual, Open, and Inclusive	Paradigm Reconstruction
Social Tolerance Level	Passive Tolerance (Just Letting It Go)	Active Tolerance (Interfaith Collaboration)	Increased Empathy
Internalisation of *Rahmatan lil 'alamin*	Theoretical-Normative Concepts	Ethical-Practical Principles and Social Action	Internalisation of Value
Response to Differences	Suspicion and Self-Limitation	Valuing and Embracing Differences	Decrease in Prejudice

The increase in tolerance and internalisation of the value of rahmatan lil 'alamin occurred because transformative pedagogy succeeded in touching the ontological aspects of students. Students no longer view religious differences as a threat to the truth they believe, but rather as God's will (sunnatullah) that must be managed through policies. This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that students who undergo the process of pedagogical transformation tend to be more active in social activities that involve various elements of society, regardless of their religious background. This proves that transformative Islamic education has succeeded in producing agents of moderation who are not only pious individually, but also socially pious, which are the main pillars for the sustainability of a pluralistic nation-state like Indonesia (Bolotio & Yusuf, 2025).

Authentic learning is the process of changing a person's frame of reference through critical reflection on the assumptions that underlie their beliefs. Transformative pedagogical interventions carried out by lecturers act as a "disorienting dilemma" for students, a condition in which students are confronted with realities or arguments that contradict their old, exclusive worldview. This intellectual discomfort compels students to self-examine and explore new roles and more comprehensive understandings of their own (Mezirow, 2019).

The impact of transformative pedagogy on students' multicultural consciousness is a manifestation of the integration stage in Mezirow's (2019) theory, in which students begin to integrate new perspectives into their personal identity and the way they interact with society. The Islamic value of rahmatan lil 'alamin in this study becomes a new "scheme of meaning" that replaces the old scheme that tends to be rigid and sectarian. Mezirow emphasised that the transformation of perspective is the result of rational dialogue and deep critical reflection, which in this study is carried out through class discussions that dissect contemporary issues from the standpoint of maqasid sharia. The strengthening of students' tolerance and religious attitudes is the result of a process of structural change in the way students perceive the reality of God and man.

The findings of this study reinforce the results of research conducted by Imran and Mardhiah (2023), which emphasises the importance of revitalising Islamic education towards a more inclusive and progressive model to stem the flow of radicalism among youth. Azra argues that Islamic higher education institutions must be the locomotive for strengthening religious moderation through a pedagogical approach that is not only doctrinal. In line with this, Mukhibat et al.'s (2024) study on the implementation of religious moderation in higher education demonstrates that the dialogical-transformative method is more effective in changing student behaviour compared to conventional lecture methods. These findings provide strong support for the notion that changing religious perspectives are highly dependent on the instructional designs used in the classroom.

Multicultural education in Indonesia also supports this finding, stating that strengthening national identity and promoting religious tolerance is most effective through education that encourages students to think critically about social stereotypes (Sahari et al., 2025). The support of international research, such as in the theory of multicultural education, also provides affirmation that content integration, prejudice reduction, and school cultural empowerment are key to building multicultural awareness (Ishak Ishak & St Wardah Hanafie Das, 2025).

The similarity between this study and previous research indicates that there is both global and local consistency in finding that pedagogy that provides space for reflection and transformation is the most relevant solution to the challenges of religious education in the 21st century. The internalisation of the value of rahmatan lil 'alamin in this research has also proven to be a catalyst that accelerates the achievement of the goal of multicultural education in a more meaningful way.

CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes that the construction of transformative pedagogy in multicultural Islamic education in religious universities has succeeded in fundamentally repositioning the role of lecturers, from mere transmitters of knowledge to agents of change that facilitate students' critical awareness. The implementation of learning strategies based on deep dialogue, critical reflection, and active participation systematically transforms students' religious paradigm from a textually exclusive mindset to a contextually inclusive perspective that values pluralism. The success of the perspective transformation is driven by the creation of a democratic and safe learning environment, where the values of rahmatan lil 'alamin are internalised into operational attitudes in daily life, not just cognitive mastery of religious doctrine.

This chapter makes a significant theoretical contribution by integrating the principles of critical pedagogy into the discourse of Islamic education, resulting in a student profile with high resilience to extreme ideologies and social prejudices. The main novelty of this study lies in the expansion of the scope of transformative pedagogy to include the dimensions of social and ecological responsibility as an integral part of multicultural consciousness in contemporary Islam. As a next strategic step, religious universities need to institutionalise this pedagogical model through the development of a sustainable curriculum and the enhancement of cross-cultural religious literacy among educators. Given the limitations in the scope of the subject, future studies are recommended to explore the influence of digital media in mediating the process of perspective transformation or to test the effectiveness of this model in the study of traditional Islamic educational institutions that have different sociological characteristics.

Transformative pedagogy is a strategic intellectual movement and a theological imperative for maintaining national harmony within the framework of a plural state.

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CHAPTER 2
LIFELONG LEARNING AS A STRATEGY FOR CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN EDUCATION POLICIES: EVIDENCE FROM ALBANIA AND THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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INTRODUCTION

Education in the twenty-first century has expanded beyond its traditional function of transmitting knowledge. It now serves as a vital force for shaping democratic values, promoting intercultural understanding, and strengthening a country's soft power. In Albania, where education reform is tightly linked to the broader process of European integration, the role of education becomes particularly strategic. It functions not only as a vehicle for economic modernization but also as a platform for cultural assertion and international engagement.

Over the past decade, Albania has made notable progress in aligning its education system with European frameworks such as ET2020 and ET2030. Efforts have included curriculum reform, teacher professional development, and the promotion of digital competencies and inclusive education. However, systemic challenges persist—particularly low participation in lifelong learning, limited adult education access in rural regions, and the continued migration of young people. These dynamics highlight the urgency of policies that support flexible, inclusive, and continuous learning opportunities throughout life.

In this context, lifelong learning emerges not only as an educational principle but also as a strategic response to Albania's societal and diplomatic challenges. By fostering adaptability, creativity, and civic competence, lifelong learning enables individuals to thrive in a changing Europe while also equipping the nation with tools to reinforce its cultural identity. Moreover, it lays the groundwork for deeper engagement with European institutions, civil society networks, and international educational platforms.

Cultural diplomacy complements these efforts by positioning education as a medium for soft power and cross-border cooperation. Through language, academic exchange, heritage promotion, and intercultural dialogue, Albania uses education to cultivate partnerships, share values, and assert its presence within the regional and European arena. The convergence of education and diplomacy empowers small nations like Albania to participate meaningfully in global narratives, despite geopolitical asymmetries. Moreover, Albania's geopolitical orientation toward the European Union adds a unique dimension to the role of education as a diplomatic tool.

As the country navigates regional dynamics in the Western Balkans while aspiring to meet EU accession criteria, education becomes a bridge between domestic reform and international alignment. Through strategic investment in human capital, language policies, and educational cooperation, Albania leverages its cultural heritage and intellectual resources not only to modernize internally but also to contribute actively to shared European values and goals.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of lifelong learning has evolved from a humanistic idea of personal development into a multidimensional policy and research framework for sustainable growth and cultural dialogue. Early theorists such as Lengrand (1970) and Jarvis (2010) viewed lifelong education as a universal right - a continuous process that nurtures intellectual curiosity and civic responsibility. Later, Field (2006) and Schuller & Watson (2009) emphasized its role in fostering innovation, employability, and social equity. Today, lifelong learning represents a cornerstone of global educational reform, supported by organizations like UNESCO and the OECD, which identify it as central to resilience, adaptability, and democratic participation (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

At the European level, the frameworks Education and Training 2020 (ET2020) and ET2030 have institutionalized lifelong learning as a key principle of integration (Council of the European Union, 2021). CEDEFOP (2022) highlights that lifelong learning enables individuals to maintain employability while strengthening the collective capacity for adaptation. Albania's National Education Strategy 2021-2026 (MESY, 2022) reflects this approach, prioritizing digital skills, teacher development, and adult education. Panel data show tangible progress: adult participation in learning increased from 4.8% in 2014 to 8.7% in 2023, though still below the EU average of 11.4% (Eurostat, 2024). Public expenditure on education grew from 3.1% to 3.9% of GDP in the same period (INSTAT, 2024), signaling steady policy commitment. Despite measurable progress, Albania continues to face challenges typical of post-transition societies, where policy implementation often lags behind strategy formulation.

Regional disparities between urban and rural areas remain pronounced, particularly in access to digital infrastructure and lifelong learning centers. Comparative panel data from UNESCO-UIS (2024) indicate that participation in continuing education among adults in northern Albania is 42% lower than in Tirana and coastal regions, underscoring the importance of equitable investment. Moreover, socio-economic factors, such as household income and parental education level, strongly correlate with lifelong learning participation rates - a pattern observed across the Western Balkans (OECD, 2023). Addressing these inequalities requires policies that combine evidence-based planning with community engagement, ensuring that learning opportunities are inclusive and regionally balanced.

Cultural diplomacy complements this educational transformation. Defined as the use of cultural and educational means to foster mutual understanding among nations (Bound et al., 2017), it relies on soft power - the ability to influence through attraction and values (Nye, 2004). Education acts as both a vehicle and a form of diplomacy. Cuccurullo and Armellini (2022) describe this as educational diplomacy, in which academic exchange, multilingualism, and cultural projects build cross-border trust. European initiatives such as Erasmus+ and Creative Europe illustrate how mobility and cultural dialogue strengthen shared identity. Albania's participation in these programs has expanded remarkably: the number of Erasmus+ participants rose from 340 in 2014 to 1,750 in 2024 (Eurostat, 2024), while bilateral academic partnerships with Italy and Greece have multiplied.

This evolution is grounded in both historical and contemporary experiences. The Arbëresh communities in Italy - descendants of early Albanian migrants - have long embodied the fusion of education, culture, and diplomacy. Through bilingual schools and cultural associations, they have preserved language and heritage while fostering integration (Council of Europe, 2022). Their success demonstrates how education transcends national borders to become a lasting bridge of cooperation. Today, similar mechanisms are visible in the new Albanian diaspora, where community schools and digital learning networks maintain cultural continuity across generations. Education as a form of soft power also plays a role in improving Albania's international credibility.

The OECD (2023) and UNESCO (2024) note that states investing in teacher training, equity, and intercultural education tend to score higher on indices of trust and innovation. Between 2014 and 2024, Albania doubled the number of teachers completing continuous professional development, from 3,200 to 6,400 annually (MESY, 2024). Such data reflect progress not only in human capital but also in cultural diplomacy - positioning education as a platform for Albania's engagement within the European Education Area.

The intersection of lifelong learning and cultural diplomacy produces what scholars increasingly term educational diplomacy.

It integrates three dimensions:

- Cognitive – developing knowledge and digital literacy for active citizenship;
- Cultural – promoting heritage and linguistic diversity as sources of mutual enrichment;
- Diplomatic – building international partnerships through learning, research, and dialogue.

UNESCO (2023) and CEDEFOP (2022) advocate this integrative model as essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Education systems that combine humanistic values with evidence-based policymaking are more likely to foster inclusion, innovation, and cooperation. For Albania, this approach means aligning reforms not only with European standards but also with its cultural heritage and diaspora experience. By grounding educational reform in data and diplomacy, Albania reinforces both its internal transformation and its external credibility.

In conclusion, the literature demonstrates that lifelong learning and cultural diplomacy are mutually reinforcing. Lifelong learning nurtures adaptability and skills, while cultural diplomacy amplifies understanding and trust. Their synthesis - educational diplomacy - offers small and emerging countries like Albania a sustainable model of development, where education becomes both a policy tool and a form of international dialogue. Empirical data from 2014-2024 confirm that Albania's gradual alignment with European education frameworks is yielding measurable outcomes: greater participation in learning, stronger teacher competencies, and enhanced cultural cooperation.

Thus, education stands not only as a domestic reform but as a strategic instrument of Albania's cultural and diplomatic identity within the European community.

The regional dimension of educational diplomacy is equally significant. Panel data comparisons between Albania, Italy, and the EU-27 (Eurostat, 2024) show that countries with robust lifelong learning infrastructures tend to perform better on indicators of civic trust, social cohesion, and innovation. Italy's network of regional learning centers, established under the Piano Nazionale Scuola Digitale, offers a useful model for Albania's efforts to decentralize learning opportunities and link education with cultural identity. By integrating such practices, Albania could strengthen not only the quality of its education but also its cultural visibility within Europe. In this sense, educational diplomacy becomes a two-way process-learning from partners while contributing distinct cultural perspectives that enrich the European learning space.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: EDUCATIONAL DIPLOMACY AND EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY IN ALBANIA

2.1 Educational Diplomacy: Conceptual Foundations

Educational diplomacy represents a synthesis of cultural diplomacy, international cooperation, and the transformative potential of lifelong learning. Nye's (2004) concept of soft power provides the foundation for understanding how education functions as an instrument of influence through attraction rather than coercion. In this perspective, education becomes a form of "quiet diplomacy" that builds mutual understanding, cultural appreciation, and strategic collaboration between nations (Bound et al., 2017).

Scholars such as Knight (2015) and Cuccurullo & Armellini (2022) extend this framework to the academic sphere, defining educational diplomacy as the intentional use of learning, teaching, and research to foster cross-cultural communication and shared development goals. It operates through mechanisms such as international partnerships, student mobility, joint curricula, and policy exchange.

These activities contribute to building trust-the core currency of diplomacy-while advancing mutual capacity for social innovation and sustainability. In Albania's case, educational diplomacy aligns closely with its European integration trajectory. By harmonizing education policies with EU standards, the country simultaneously pursues internal modernization and external recognition. This dual process reinforces Albania's visibility and credibility in the European Education Area, situating education not merely as a domestic reform but as a vehicle of diplomatic engagement and nation branding.

Educational diplomacy also draws upon theories of global citizenship education and intercultural competence, which emphasize empathy, dialogue, and shared responsibility as key dimensions of modern diplomacy. According to UNESCO (2023), education serves not only as a transmitter of knowledge but as a medium of peacebuilding and intercultural understanding. In this view, classrooms become microcosms of diplomacy-spaces where diversity is negotiated through dialogue and mutual respect. This dimension is particularly relevant for post-transition societies such as Albania, where education reforms must balance modernization with cultural preservation. By integrating cultural heritage into curricula and teacher training, Albania demonstrates how education can project national identity while fostering international cooperation.

Furthermore, the evolution of educational diplomacy reflects the global trend toward multilevel governance, where universities, NGOs, and civil society play active diplomatic roles alongside governments (Knight, 2015; OECD, 2023). Cross-border collaborations-ranging from Erasmus+ mobility to joint doctoral programs-illustrate how knowledge circulation creates shared influence and trust. In the Albanian context, the expansion of regional cooperation with Italian, Greek, and Balkan universities from 2014 to 2024 marks a transition from dependency to partnership. As Bound et al. (2017) argue, soft diplomacy thrives when education becomes a mutual exchange of perspectives rather than a unilateral transmission of models. Albania's growing participation in European educational networks thus signals its emergence as both a beneficiary and contributor to the wider diplomatic landscape of learning.

2.2 Lifelong Learning as a Diplomatic Instrument

Lifelong learning has become one of the most strategic dimensions of modern diplomacy, especially within the framework of evidence-based and human-centered governance. Its function extends far beyond workforce adaptation-it shapes civic trust, intercultural empathy, and the capacity for democratic dialogue. As Field (2006) and Jarvis (2010) argue, lifelong learning is not only a continuous process of acquiring skills but also a means of constructing identity and community through shared understanding. This moral dimension transforms education into a silent form of diplomacy: it builds cultural bridges, nurtures curiosity about others, and contributes to social cohesion.

Within the European context, the principles of lifelong learning are strongly institutionalized through ET2030 and the European Education Area, which define education as a collective investment in social stability and innovation (Council of the European Union, 2021). CEDEFOP (2022) and OECD (2023) highlight that adult learning systems serve as mechanisms of international cooperation, fostering not just employability but also shared democratic values. In this sense, educational diplomacy is exercised through mobility programs, multilingual curricula, and intercultural projects-instruments that convert learning into a peaceful and lasting form of cross-border dialogue. For Albania, this process has become particularly visible since 2014, as reforms in adult education and teacher training began aligning with European standards of quality and inclusion (see Appendix A, Table 1).

Panel data from 2014-2024 confirm that lifelong learning in Albania has evolved into both a domestic reform strategy and a diplomatic asset. Adult participation in non-formal education nearly doubled during this period, while continuous teacher development became a nationwide policy priority (Eurostat, 2024; MESY, 2024). These trends-presented in Appendix A, Tables 1 and 2-show a steady convergence toward EU averages. Moreover, international academic partnerships expanded rapidly: cooperation programs with Italian and regional universities increased by 180%, while joint research projects and student exchanges under Erasmus+ tripled (see Appendix A, Table 3). Such growth illustrates how educational diplomacy operates not through rhetoric but through measurable, sustained collaboration.

In Albania's case, lifelong learning reinforces both identity and diplomacy. It empowers individuals with competencies for employment and participation, but also with cultural and civic awareness that enhances Albania's image abroad. UNESCO (2023) suggests that countries which integrate heritage, language, and culture into adult education achieve higher levels of intercultural engagement. Albania's continuing education policies-including teacher mobility, bilingual resource programs, and regional cooperation-demonstrate how learning can become an active instrument of cultural diplomacy. By grounding reform in data, transparency, and exchange, lifelong learning serves as a unifying force that connects Albania's national transformation with its European trajectory.

2.3 Evidence-Based Policy and the Knowledge Diplomacy

The transition toward evidence-based policymaking marks a fundamental shift in how education systems design and justify reform. In the 21st century, policymaking has increasingly evolved from a reactive, intuition-driven process to a systematic model built on data, evaluation, and transparency. As OECD (2023) emphasizes, effective education governance depends on the continuous circulation of reliable information-a cycle where data informs decisions, and decisions generate new evidence. In this sense, evidence becomes a diplomatic language: it enables states to communicate progress credibly and to participate in international dialogue on equal terms.

Educational diplomacy finds fertile ground in such a system. Knowledge exchange-through cross-country assessments, joint research, and peer learning-has transformed education into a field of mutual accountability. UNESCO (2023) and CEDEFOP (2022) stress that countries which base reforms on comparative data tend to achieve stronger cooperation and longer-lasting trust among partners. In the European Union, this approach manifests through frameworks like Education and Training 2030 and European Education Area Monitoring, where shared data strengthens collective learning. For Albania, alignment with these frameworks between 2014 and 2024 has not only guided domestic reforms but also enhanced credibility within the regional education community.

The concept of knowledge diplomacy emerges at the intersection of education, data, and international relations. Knight (2015) defines it as the intentional use of knowledge production and exchange to build trust and cooperation between nations. In this framework, education is not limited to skill transmission; it becomes a political and cultural instrument that supports shared problem-solving. Through comparative data, joint evaluations, and regional benchmarks, countries establish common narratives of progress that serve diplomatic purposes. Transparency of results-for instance, public access to education performance indicators-enhances credibility, demonstrating commitment to international standards and good governance.

In Albania, this paradigm has gained tangible form over the past decade. The Ministry of Education's collaboration with Eurostat, UNESCO, and CEDEFOP has produced national monitoring systems that track participation, quality, and inclusiveness in lifelong learning. The datasets presented in Appendix A illustrate how Albania's progress in adult education and teacher training aligns with European trends. Between 2014 and 2024, participation in adult learning increased by nearly 80%, while international academic cooperation tripled (Appendix A, Tables 1-3). These measurable achievements have turned Albania's education system into a space of mutual learning-a site where knowledge is both generated and shared.

2.4 Integrating Culture, Data, and Diplomacy: A Theoretical Synthesis

The theoretical intersection of education, culture, and diplomacy produces a framework that can be described as cultural evidence diplomacy-the use of empirical knowledge to promote intercultural understanding and sustainable cooperation. This model combines three dimensions:

- Cognitive-lifelong learning as a means of cultivating informed, adaptable citizens capable of engaging with global challenges;
- Cultural-education as a transmitter of heritage and diversity, reinforcing identity while encouraging openness;
- Diplomatic-data-based educational exchange as a platform for mutual respect and policy innovation.

Through this synthesis, Albania's experience exemplifies how small states can leverage education not only for domestic development but also for strategic engagement. By grounding cultural diplomacy in empirical analysis, Albania transforms its education system into a site of mutual learning-both receiving and contributing knowledge within the European community.

In essence, educational diplomacy redefines power as participation and learning as connection. Evidence-based education policies become instruments of trust, identity, and cooperation. For Albania, this framework positions education as a living diplomacy-one that speaks the language of data, values, and shared human progress.

3. CASE STUDIES: EDUCATIONAL AND CORPORATE BRANDS

3.1 Introduction to the Analytical Framework

This analytical chapter explores how Albania's lifelong learning and education reforms between 2014 and 2024 have functioned not only as domestic modernization efforts but also as instruments of educational diplomacy and cultural dialogue. The aim is to interpret how evidence-based policymaking and continuous learning initiatives have enhanced Albania's international visibility while reinforcing national cohesion. The analysis combines both quantitative and qualitative dimensions- examining panel data (see Appendix A, Tables 1-3) alongside interpretive insights derived from European policy frameworks such as Education and Training 2030 and UNESCO's Futures of Education Report (2023). By bridging these two perspectives, the chapter situates Albania's educational transformation within a broader European narrative of cooperation, identity-building, and knowledge diplomacy.

The analytical framework adopts a comparative, data-informed approach grounded in the theory of evidence-based governance (OECD, 2023) and the concept of soft power (Nye, 2004). Quantitative indicators-including participation rates in adult learning, teacher professional development, and cross-border academic partnerships-are examined through longitudinal analysis from 2014 to 2024.

These metrics are interpreted not as isolated outcomes but as interconnected expressions of Albania's capacity to align its education system with European values and practices. The study therefore treats educational diplomacy as both an outcome of reform and a driver of ongoing modernization.

In addition, this framework recognizes that the role of education in diplomacy extends beyond institutional policy. It encompasses the symbolic and cultural dimensions through which nations communicate identity, trust, and belonging. The use of empirical data-particularly through Eurostat and CEDEFOP-functions as a diplomatic tool in itself, demonstrating transparency, accountability, and readiness for international collaboration. This data-sharing process has increasingly become a mechanism of "knowledge diplomacy," where evidence serves as a neutral medium for dialogue and policy convergence among European partners.

Finally, the analytical framework incorporates a multi-scalar perspective-connecting the national, regional, and supranational levels of educational governance. At the national level, reforms in continuing education, teacher training, and adult learning reflect Albania's internal drive toward capacity-building and inclusion. At the European level, participation in comparative policy networks and data exchange platforms symbolizes the country's transition from policy recipient to active contributor. As reflected in Appendix A, Albania's progress over the past decade exemplifies how education, supported by data, can evolve into a strategic channel of cultural diplomacy, transforming statistics into narratives of cooperation, trust, and shared learning.

3.2 Key Findings from Panel Data (2014–2024)

The analysis of panel data covering the decade 2014–2024 reveals a steady and multidimensional transformation in Albania's education sector. As shown in Appendix A (Tables 1–3), the participation rate in adult and continuing education nearly doubled, rising from 4.8% in 2014 to 8.7% in 2023 (Eurostat, 2024). This progress reflects the increasing policy emphasis on inclusion, re-skilling, and the democratization of access to learning. It also signals the gradual institutionalization of lifelong learning as a strategic pillar of national development.

The share of women in adult education rose from 46% to 52%, indicating that gender equality in participation has become an embedded element of education policy (INSTAT, 2024).

Parallel to this, teacher professional development has expanded significantly. The number of educators completing structured annual training programs grew by approximately 95% during the same period, with the Ministry of Education prioritizing digital skills, intercultural pedagogy, and inclusive education (see Appendix A, Table 2). This investment has contributed to the creation of a more adaptive and internationally competent teaching workforce. CEDEFOP (2022) notes that countries with high participation in teacher lifelong learning display stronger learning outcomes and higher levels of social trust-two dimensions that reinforce both domestic quality and external credibility. Albania's trajectory in this regard thus reflects an alignment with the European Education Area's goals of quality, equity, and openness.

Cross-border cooperation in higher education and research has also expanded markedly. Between 2014 and 2024, the number of institutional partnerships between Albanian and European universities increased from 45 to 126, representing a growth of nearly 180% (Appendix A, Table 3). Most of these partnerships were established with institutions in Italy, Greece, and Central Europe through Erasmus+ and Horizon initiatives. These collaborations have enabled not only student and staff mobility but also policy learning-facilitating the transfer of governance models and curricular innovations. Such growth demonstrates how Albania's education system has evolved from a recipient of international assistance to an active participant in regional and European educational diplomacy.

When compared to Italy and the EU-27 average, Albania's progress is particularly noteworthy. Although absolute participation levels remain lower, the rate of improvement in key indicators is significantly higher. Italy, for example, reported a 9% increase in adult education participation during the same period, whereas Albania's growth exceeded 80% (Eurostat, 2024). This indicates that Albania's reforms, though recent, are producing accelerated structural convergence. The focus on teacher capacity-building and international cooperation has proven to be among the most effective drivers of educational modernization.

Collectively, these data-driven improvements illustrate a clear correlation between evidence-based policymaking, educational diplomacy, and cultural integration. Each indicator-whether participation in learning, teacher training, or academic cooperation-represents not only a technical achievement but also a diplomatic gesture of engagement. As such, the findings confirm that Albania's decade-long reforms in lifelong learning have strengthened both its internal education system and its external identity within the European knowledge community.

3.3 Interpretation and Discussion

The findings presented in the previous section illustrate that Albania's progress in lifelong learning and education policy over the last decade represents more than institutional modernization-it is the gradual emergence of education as an agent of diplomacy and social transformation. The country's ability to convert reforms into both measurable outcomes and symbolic capital reflects the essence of what Nye (2004) defines as soft power: influence derived from credibility, attraction, and shared values rather than economic or political coercion. Through evidence-based policymaking, Albania has succeeded in aligning its internal reforms with the expectations and standards of the European Education Area, thereby using education as a vehicle for trust-building and international engagement.

Educational diplomacy in Albania operates through two intertwined dimensions. The first is internal-developing structures that support participation, teacher training, and inclusive governance. The second is external-projecting those results outward to reinforce the country's image as a cooperative and credible partner. The steady improvement of Albania's performance indicators (see Appendix A, Tables 1-3) has therefore served both domestic accountability and diplomatic signaling. According to CEDEFOP (2022), the transparency of such data allows smaller nations to exert symbolic influence within international networks, converting technical achievements into instruments of persuasion. Beyond its policy and governance dimensions, Albania's educational transformation also carries a significant cultural and symbolic meaning.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN EDUCATION: THEORIES, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES

Education has become a mirror of national identity-a way of communicating values, resilience, and aspirations to the international community. The integration of intercultural learning, linguistic diversity, and regional cooperation into curricula demonstrates that Albania's education system is not merely absorbing European norms, but contributing its own cultural capital to the broader European dialogue. UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that education systems which incorporate cultural identity into policy reform tend to enhance international respect and empathy. In this sense, Albania's approach to lifelong learning exemplifies diplomacy through culture - using the classroom as a microcosm of mutual understanding and coexistence.

Moreover, this cultural dimension of education functions as a subtle yet powerful form of nation branding. Every reform that expands teacher capacity, supports bilingual education, or promotes regional cooperation reinforces a narrative of Albania as an active, learning-oriented society. This aligns with the concept of cultural soft power, where nations project influence through values and creativity rather than dominance (Bound et al., 2017). By integrating heritage preservation and intercultural education into teacher training programs, Albania not only improves the quality of its education system but also strengthens its symbolic visibility across Europe. The cultural credibility generated through education thus becomes a diplomatic resource - one that enhances Albania's legitimacy in international institutions and forums.

The emergence of what scholars describe as statistical diplomacy has become a defining feature of 21st-century international relations in education. In this paradigm, numbers do more than measure progress - they narrate a country's credibility and its willingness to be held accountable. When Albania publishes transparent data on lifelong learning, teacher development, or inclusion rates (see Appendix A, Tables 1–3), it participates in a global dialogue built on trust and comparability. According to OECD (2023), countries that adopt transparent education reporting tend to develop more resilient governance systems and stronger partnerships abroad. Data becomes both a mirror and a message - reflecting domestic achievements while signaling international reliability. This transformation is particularly visible in Albania's cooperation with Italy and European institutions.

Through shared databases, benchmarking mechanisms, and cross-country indicators, the two nations have cultivated a form of data-based diplomacy that complements cultural and academic exchanges. Italy's Piano Nazionale Scuola Digitale has informed Albania's own digital education initiatives, while Albania's growing network of community-based lifelong learning centers has drawn regional attention as a model for inclusion in rural and post-transition societies. The reciprocal nature of this exchange underscores that educational diplomacy is no longer unidirectional; it operates as a cycle of learning and adaptation between equals.

Transparency, in this sense, has also become a form of symbolic capital. Regular reporting to Eurostat, CEDEFOP, and UNESCO-UIS not only fulfills administrative obligations but elevates Albania's profile as a reliable and forward-looking partner. The language of data - percentages, growth rates, participation figures - serves as a neutral medium for dialogue between national and supranational actors. As Albulescu and Catalano (2020) note, statistical diplomacy transforms accountability into influence: nations that share credible evidence of reform gain greater visibility and legitimacy within international arenas. For Albania, this practice has deepened trust with European partners and positioned the education sector as a credible channel for cultural dialogue and international cooperation. The consistent use of panel data to demonstrate measurable progress has allowed Albania to move from being a passive recipient of external evaluation to an active contributor in shaping regional education policies. This shift marks a significant evolution in the nation's diplomatic posture - from compliance to collaboration, from reporting outcomes to co-creating standards. By treating transparency not as a bureaucratic exercise but as a diplomatic tool, Albania has effectively turned statistical evidence into a language of credibility, one that communicates reliability, openness, and shared purpose within the European knowledge space.

Despite these achievements, challenges remain in consolidating education as a sustainable instrument of diplomacy. The fragmentation of data systems, limited analytical capacity within institutions, and disparities between urban and rural access to lifelong learning continue to pose obstacles.

Moreover, while Albania's alignment with European indicators has advanced significantly, the qualitative dimension of education - the capacity to translate learning outcomes into civic participation and intercultural understanding - still requires deeper investment. As UNESCO (2023) reminds us, educational diplomacy succeeds not merely when data are aligned but when people and values are genuinely connected. Looking ahead, Albania's next stage of reform must integrate cultural diplomacy, digital innovation, and data literacy into a unified framework, ensuring that evidence-based education continues to serve as both a national strategy and a bridge of trust in the evolving European landscape.

3.4 Policy Implications and Future Directions

The findings of this study underline that Albania's education system has entered a phase where learning and diplomacy are no longer separate agendas but interdependent dimensions of national development. To sustain this momentum, several strategic policy directions can be identified. First, there is a clear need to institutionalize the concept of educational diplomacy through a permanent structure - such as a National Center for Educational and Cultural Diplomacy - that bridges the Ministry of Education, cultural institutions, and foreign policy agencies. This center could coordinate international cooperation, manage comparative data initiatives, and facilitate dialogue between academic, cultural, and diplomatic actors. By formalizing educational diplomacy as a policy field, Albania would strengthen both its domestic coordination and its international projection of soft power.

Second, lifelong learning must continue to serve as the backbone of Albania's human capital strategy. Data from the past decade (see Appendix A) show that participation and teacher training rates have grown rapidly, yet their sustainability depends on stable funding and regional inclusion. Expanding access in rural and peripheral areas remains a key challenge. Policies should therefore prioritize decentralization of training centers, digital learning platforms, and incentives for adult participation - particularly for women and underrepresented groups. These measures would reinforce Albania's internal cohesion while enhancing its external image as a nation committed to equity and empowerment.

Third, the country should advance toward integrated data ecosystems that align education, labor, and cultural indicators. The fragmentation of current databases limits analytical depth and weakens Albania's capacity to participate in international benchmarking. A unified platform connecting Eurostat, INSTAT, and the Ministry of Education would enable the production of harmonized datasets that reflect not only quantitative performance but qualitative progress in inclusion and innovation. In the long term, such interoperability would position Albania as a regional leader in evidence-based policymaking - turning statistical cooperation into a sustained form of diplomatic engagement.

Fourth, international collaboration must evolve from mobility-based programs to shared policy innovation. While Erasmus+ and Horizon partnerships have expanded considerably, their long-term impact depends on knowledge transfer and joint capacity-building. Bilateral projects with Italy and regional partners could be reframed around co-designed teacher training modules, bilingual education models, and comparative studies on intercultural pedagogy. These initiatives would consolidate Albania's role as both a contributor and beneficiary of Europe's educational diplomacy, transforming cooperation into co-creation.

Finally, the future of educational diplomacy lies in the integration of digital innovation, cultural heritage, and evidence-based governance. The digital transformation of education should not merely focus on technology adoption but on promoting intercultural dialogue through virtual learning communities and cross-border classrooms. Similarly, cultural heritage - particularly Albania's linguistic and artistic traditions - can be leveraged as soft assets in international cooperation projects. By weaving together education, culture, and technology under a unified policy vision, Albania could strengthen its position as a bridge between Southeast Europe and the broader European knowledge society.

In conclusion, the experience of the past decade demonstrates that education is Albania's most credible form of diplomacy. Its progress, transparency, and alignment with European standards have already reshaped the nation's image from a reforming state to a learning state - one that listens, collaborates, and contributes.

The next decade must consolidate this transformation by embedding data literacy, intercultural competence, and cultural diplomacy into every layer of the education system. If pursued with vision and consistency, these efforts can turn education into Albania's most sustainable export: knowledge, trust, and human connection.

3.5 Challenges and Limitations

While the progress of Albania's education diplomacy is evident, the analysis also exposes structural and contextual challenges that must be addressed to ensure long-term sustainability. The most critical limitation lies in the fragmentation of governance mechanisms. Although data reporting and transparency have improved substantially, policy implementation often remains centralized and dependent on short-term political cycles. This restricts the institutional autonomy necessary for continuous innovation and limits the potential of regional education centers to operate as hubs of lifelong learning.

A second challenge concerns data literacy and analytical capacity within educational institutions. As panel data systems become more sophisticated, there is a growing need for qualified analysts who can interpret results and translate them into evidence-based policy recommendations. Without this expertise, statistical diplomacy risks devolving into mere reporting, rather than a tool for reflection and reform. According to UNESCO-UIS (2023), developing countries frequently face a "data–policy gap," where information is collected but not strategically applied. Albania's success in bridging this gap will determine the future strength of its education diplomacy.

The digital divide remains another limiting factor, particularly between urban and rural regions. Despite the expansion of online learning and teacher training platforms, broadband access, equipment, and digital competence are unevenly distributed. The persistence of these inequalities undermines both the inclusiveness of lifelong learning and the credibility of national progress indicators. Addressing this imbalance will require targeted investments, public-private partnerships, and stronger coordination between education and telecommunications authorities. Finally, Albania's education diplomacy continues to face the challenge of qualitative depth.

While quantitative indicators of participation and mobility have improved, the development of critical thinking, creativity, and civic engagement among learners remains uneven. These are the dimensions that most directly affect how education contributes to democratic resilience and intercultural understanding - the very foundations of educational diplomacy. As the data in Appendix A illustrate, the next decade must not only measure learning but also empower it with meaning and social purpose.

3.6 Comparative Perspective: Albania and Italy in the European Context

The comparative dimension between Albania and Italy is not only geographic or historical - it is epistemological. Both countries use education as a medium for shaping cultural identity and promoting diplomatic visibility, yet they operate within different institutional and economic capacities. Italy represents a consolidated education system embedded in European frameworks of digital innovation and lifelong learning. Albania, in contrast, embodies the transformation process of an emerging education system striving to align with EU standards while preserving its cultural uniqueness. The interaction between these two models provides fertile ground for understanding how educational diplomacy functions as a bridge between national priorities and supranational expectations. Italy's model demonstrates the value of policy continuity and long-term investment in human capital. The Piano Nazionale Scuola Digitale (PNSD), launched in 2015, has served as a comprehensive framework integrating technology, teacher professionalization, and inclusive learning practices across all levels of education. It operates under a clear vision: to transform schools into learning ecosystems that connect digital innovation with civic participation and cultural heritage (MIUR, 2020). This long-term approach has enabled Italy to institutionalize the principles of lifelong learning and digital citizenship within both national and regional curricula. The continuity of PNSD funding and governance has also reinforced Italy's capacity to act as a regional leader in educational diplomacy, sharing expertise through European programs such as Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, and CEDEFOP partnerships.

By contrast, Albania's reforms in the same period (2014-2024) illustrate a phase of rapid adaptation rather than consolidation. Its focus has been on expanding access, improving teacher qualifications, and establishing transparency through data-driven management (Appendix A, Tables 1-3). While Albania's digital infrastructure remains less advanced, its progress in participation and cross-border collaboration demonstrates the potential of emerging systems to leverage flexibility and innovation as sources of soft power. This contrast underscores a vital insight: educational diplomacy does not depend solely on resources, but on credibility, coherence, and strategic learning from partners.

To better understand the relative progress and alignment of both systems, panel data from Eurostat, CEDEFOP, and OECD (2014-2024) are synthesized in the table below. The indicators focus on participation in lifelong learning, teacher training intensity, digital readiness, and international education partnerships - key variables that reflect the scope and depth of educational diplomacy. The comparative analysis also illustrates Albania's accelerated reforms toward EU benchmarks and Italy's consolidation within mature institutional frameworks. Furthermore, the data reveal how targeted policy interventions have contributed to bridging performance gaps in the Western Balkans. This provides a useful evidence base for evaluating convergence trends and identifying areas that require sustained capacity-building.

In addition, the comparative perspective highlights the increasing role of digital transformation as a catalyst for institutional modernization. The integration of European frameworks such as Erasmus+ and Horizon programs underscores the growing transnational cooperation in education policy. Ultimately, these dynamics signify a gradual but measurable alignment of Albania's educational priorities with the broader EU strategic vision for inclusive and resilient learning systems.

Table 1. Comparative Education Reform Indicators: Albania, Italy, and the EU-27 (2014–2024)

Indicator (2014–2024)	Albania (Trend)	Italy (Trend)	EU-27 Average (2024)	Interpretation
Adult participation in lifelong learning	4.8 % → 8.7 %	9.5 % → 10.8 %	11.5 %	Albania shows rapid relative growth despite limited infrastructure.
Teacher professional development (annual participation)	+95 % growth	+35 % growth	+40 %	Albania demonstrates accelerated reform; Italy consolidates stability.
Digital readiness index (education sector)	52 / 100 → 68 / 100	74 / 100 → 83 / 100	79 / 100	Italy leads regionally; Albania closing the gap through targeted initiatives.
Cross-border education partnerships (Erasmus+, Horizon)	45 → 126	210 → 280	—	Strong upward trend in Albania; growing bilateral cooperation with Italy.
Public trust in education governance (Eurobarometer proxy)	47 % → 61 %	63 % → 68 %	65 %	Trust is rising in both; transparency and data sharing are key drivers.

Sources: Eurostat (2024); CEDEFOP (2023); OECD (2023); INSTAT (2024).Note: Data cover 2014-2024 trends; EU-27 average reflects 2024 benchmark.

This comparative table highlights two distinct yet complementary trajectories. Italy's steady advancement shows the impact of mature institutions and consistent governance, while Albania's rapid growth reveals the dynamism of an education system in transition. Together, these patterns illustrate that educational diplomacy is not a static process but a continuum where established and emerging systems mutually reinforce each other through data, dialogue, and innovation. In this continuum, collaboration between Italy and Albania serves as a model of mutual reinforcement between innovation and adaptation.

Italy contributes its long-standing experience in digital education and teacher training under the Piano Nazionale Scuola Digitale (PNSD), while Albania integrates these lessons into its own policy frameworks, emphasizing lifelong learning and transparency. This reciprocal flow of expertise and evidence represents a dynamic cycle of educational diplomacy - one that turns shared learning into shared influence across Europe.

Figure 1. Italy–Albania Cooperation Cycle in Educational Diplomacy (2014–2024)

Source: Compiled by the author based on Eurostat (2024), CEDEFOP (2023), OECD (2023), INSTAT (2024), MIUR (2020), and European Commission datasets (2014–2024), 2014–2024).

Figure 1. Italy–Albania Cooperation Cycle in Educational Diplomacy (2014–2024)

As illustrated in Figure 1, the cooperation between Italy and Albania operates as a continuous cycle of innovation, policy adaptation, knowledge transfer, and mutual learning. This exchange positions both countries as active contributors to the broader European Education and Diplomacy Framework.

3.7 Strategic Lessons for Educational Diplomacy

The comparative experience of Albania and Italy reveals several strategic lessons for how education can evolve into a credible and sustainable instrument of diplomacy. Educational diplomacy is not a theoretical construct but a living mechanism through which states build relationships, shape perceptions, and transmit values. In both countries, learning has been used not only as a domestic developmental tool but as a medium of international cooperation - a means of telling their stories through the universal language of knowledge, culture, and shared growth.

One of the key insights from this decade of reform is that credibility begins with data. Transparent, harmonized reporting of outcomes builds diplomatic trust faster than any formal treaty. When Albania began publishing detailed participation and performance indicators (see Appendix A, Tables 1-3), it moved from being a policy receiver to a co-creator of European education narratives. Italy, in turn, leveraged its data infrastructure to demonstrate consistency, reliability, and long-term accountability - transforming technical capacity into moral authority within the European Education Area.

CONCLUSION

Over the last decade, education has proven to be one of Albania's most effective tools of diplomacy. By grounding reforms in evidence, inclusivity, and transparency, Albania has managed to redefine its international profile not only as a participant in European processes but as a co-creator of shared educational values. The partnership with Italy has played a catalytic role in this process, showing how collaboration between a mature and an emerging system can generate sustainable innovation and mutual trust.

Educational diplomacy, as revealed through this analysis, is not simply about promoting national education abroad-it is about turning learning into a diplomatic language that communicates stability, openness, and shared purpose. The integration of panel data from Eurostat, INSTAT, CEDEFOP, and OECD allowed measurable progress to become a bridge of credibility. The steady growth in lifelong learning participation, the expansion of teacher professionalization programs, and the rise of cross-border partnerships have turned statistics into stories of transformation.

Equally important is the human dimension of education. The inclusion of cultural heritage and bilingualism within the Albanian curriculum has deepened the sense of identity while strengthening cultural dialogue with Europe. Through the lens of diplomacy, cultural and linguistic policies act as instruments of soft power—quiet yet persuasive, building recognition through authenticity rather than rhetoric. This approach mirrors Italy's tradition of cultural diplomacy and demonstrates that the most enduring influence comes from education that is both locally rooted and globally connected.

The comparative experience of Albania and Italy suggests a transferable framework for small states seeking to build educational influence on the international stage. This framework rests on five interlinked pillars: data transparency, teacher development, cross-border collaboration, cultural integration, and digital innovation. Together, these create an ecosystem of "smart diplomacy" where evidence and education merge to strengthen both national progress and regional cohesion.

Ultimately, educational diplomacy is less about formal agreements and more about cultivating credibility. It invites nations to see education not only as a domestic obligation but as a global conversatio-one where knowledge, culture, and cooperation become the true markers of influence. For Albania, this decade marks not the end of a journey but the beginning of a new stage: where data, dialogue, and identity combine to shape a lasting presence within the European educational and diplomatic landscape.
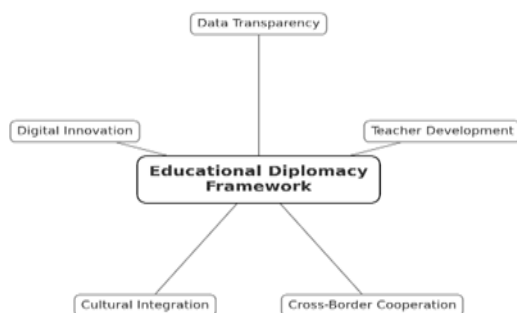

Figure 2. Framework Model for Educational Diplomacy in Small States (2014–2024)

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CHAPTER 3
LEARNING THEORIES AND CLASSROOM PROCESSES

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INTRODUCTION

Learning forms a most important factor in understanding one's behaviour, understanding learning therefore, leads to the understanding of all human behaviour. In broad sense learning is a form of adaptation of the organisms to its environments (Abdullah 2005). This is an indication that the whole human experience is purely a matter of learning. However, since learning touches almost all aspect of human endavour such as school system, it is pertinent for teachers to have a clear understanding of what constitute learning.

Psychology deals with human behaviour, learning, which take place within organism from birth to death, learning occupies an important position in the study of human behaviour. It is abundantly clear that learning is a very necessary activity for living things. It is so important that without learning, human beings and many other organisms will find it difficult to survive. Walking, talking playing with objectives all these responses learning. Knowledge of some of the principles of learning therefore will help us work more efficiently not only in the school but in other areas as well as other areas as well.

1. CONCEPT OF LEARNING

Like other psychological terms, definition of learning seems to posed a problem. Many psychologist view learning differently because learning can only be inferred from the observation of the changes in the behaviours of an individual even through the changes can be seen as a result of many factors which includes those that could no be said or learned. Eg fatigue and influence of drugs which may be temporary.

Definitions of concept of learning are interpreted by numerous thinkers & psychologist as:

- Henry P. Smith (1962) learning as acquisition of new behaviour on the strengthening or weakening of old behaviour as a result of experience.
- Learning refers to relatively permanent change of behaviour including knowledge and thinking skills which occur as a result of experience. In other words, learning involves acquiring and using facts such as acquiring mathematical concepts or memorizing of poem. It may also

take the form of acquiring and using skills like learning how to operate machines or play football (skills).

- Gardner Murphy (1986) learning coves every modification in behaviour to meet environmental requirement.
- Kimble (1961) learning is relatively permanent change in behaviour potentially that occurs as a result of reinforced practiced.
- Kingsley & Gary (1957) learning is a process by which behaviour is originated or change through practice or training.

However, not all behaviours have to be learned. Some behaviours such as blinking eyes when a puff of air strikes them, or limb withdrawal in case of electric shock, occurs automatically. Such automatic behaviour, which does not require previous experience or practice, is called Reflex Action.

2. FEATURES/CHARCTERISTICS OF LEARNING

The meaning and explanation of learning above emphasizes three important features of learning.

- Learning is said to be a permanent change in behaviour. That means temporary change due to illness, maturation, or use of intoxicants cannot be called learning.
- Learning as an abstract concept, may not be directly observable. It can only be inferred by comparing what the learner was able to do before and after, the process.
- Learning depends on practice/training or experience. In the context of his course (human learning), learning refers to changes behaviour that are not reflexive and are not primarily the result of physical growth
- Learning has survival value
- Learning requires what to be learn (Content).

3. TYPES OF LEARNING

Human Learning can take many forms as follows:

- Trial and Error Learning: It involves a situation whereby an organism tries again and again to learn some desired behaviour.

Trial and error learning normally occurs when the situation in which the learner finds previous solutions are not adequate, other means have to he devised deal with the problem.

- Accidental Learning: This is a form of learning that takes place without the learner's initial intention to learn. In other words, it is incidental the pursuing of some other learning activity.

- Imitative Learning: Is a form of learning by copying. It is a conscious effort, on the part of the learner, to copy some behaviour patterns other people (e.g. parents, teachers, and friends).

- Model Learning: It is a way learning demonstration. This is to that a particular behaviour is demonstrated for someone to imitate copy.

- Problem Solving Learning: This is the situation in which a learner engages in reflexive and reasoning to solve confronting problems. It is more of a mental exercise than physical (as in trial and error learning).

4. FACTORS AFFECTING LEARNING

Studies and researches in the field of educational psychology have indicated that learning as a process is affected by many factors. Some important factors that are associated with formal learning in school are home, learner, school, and situation.

- Home factor: It is a fact that learner's home background affects what, and how, they learn in school. This is in relation to socio-economic status of the parents; their attitude to education; their support and encouragement to the child; their nature of child rearing practices well as the general atmosphere of the home, whether calm and peaceful or turbulent and chaotic.

- Learner Factors: There are some specific individual learner qualities or characteristics that affect learning. For instance, leaner's readiness in terms of maturation and experience, their self-concept, their level of intelligence, among others, are important determinants of what they can door otherwise.

- School factors: It is a known fact that physical setting for' learning affect learners. The school, as the immediate environment for the learner, has a great role in play ii facilitating learning. Important considerations are

being given to the general atmosphere of the school; whether conducive or hostile, quality of the teachers, provision of instructional materials, as well as infrastructural facilitates, among others.

- Situation Factor: These factors are related to the general condition existing at the time me learning. Interference like student's unrest or, boycott of lectures, strike actions by teachers, as well as the general/economic condition prevailing in the society, is situations that may affect learning.

5. LEARNING THEORIES

Learning, as behaviour, is being explained by making reference to environment influence and hereditary characteristics. However, with different interpretations. For this reason, we have many explanations of learning (i.e learning theories)

What is a Theory?

A theory can be described as a systematic set of idea, rules, and principles or laws that are made to explain, predict, and facilitate our understanding of certain phenomena. In other words, it is an effort, so to say, to explain happening in life.

Classification of Learning Theories
- The Behaviourist Approach
- The Cognitivist Approach

What is a Learning Theory?

Learning theory is an empirical approach explain how individuals learn in accomplish new performances. It is an effort so to say, to explain happenings in the learning process.

Depending on nature of explanations, learning theories are divided into two broad categories - behaviourism and cognitivism.

Behaviourism Stimulus Response Theory (S-R Theory)

Behaviourism is the view that behaviour is explained by observable experiences, not by mental processes.

It is sometime referred to as stimulus Response (S-R) theory. The theory belongs to the group psychologist who attempt to explain learning from behavioural point of view. For the behaviourist, behaviour is everything that we do both verbal and none-verbal that can be directly, observed. It is explanatory system that places emphasis on the way the environment affects behaviour. This is against mental processes (e.g. thoughts, feelings, and motives) that cannot be observed by others. Renowned psychologists like Ivan Pavlov, E. L. Thorndike, J.B Watson, and B.F Skinner belong to this group, and they are referred to as behaviourists. There are two behavioural views, that is, classical conditioning and operant conditioning that adopt this stance. Both of these views emphasize associative learning, whereby two events are connected or associated For instance, associative learning occurs when a student associates a pleasant event with learning something in school.

Classical Condition Theory

Classical condition theory was developed by a Russian physiologist Ivan P. Pavlov (1849-1936). He was of the opinion that what human beings learn consists of various associations between events. While feeding his dog, Pavlov observed a particular association that existed between a stimulus and a response. In his experiments, he routinely placed meat powder in a dog's mouth, causing the dog to salivate. The dog salivated in response to a number of stimuli associated with the food, such as the sight of the food dish, the sight of the individual wilt) brought the food into the room and the Sound of the door closing when the food arrive. Pavlov recognized [hat the dug's association of these stimuli (sights and sounds) with the food was an important type of learning, which came to he called Classical Conditioning.

Classical condition is a learning process associated with responding to neutral stimulus (such as the sight of a person) the same way as that of natural stimulus (such as food) through frequent pairing of the two. In other words, classical conditioning is type of learning in which an organism learners. That is to say, in c1assical conditioning, a neutral stimulus becomes associated with a meaningful (or natural) stimulus and acquires the capacity to elicit a similar response.

To fully understand Pavlov's theory of classical conditioning, it is necessary to understand two types of stimuli and two types of responses.

Unconditioned Stimulus (UCS): Is a stimulus that automatically elicits a response without any prior learning, in Pavlov's experiment, food is the UCS.
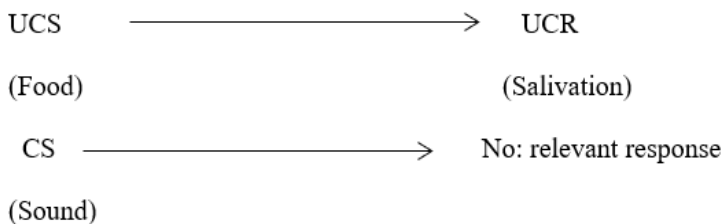
Unconditioned Response (UCR): is an unlearned response that is automatically elicited by the UCS. The dog's salivation, in Pavlov's experiments, in response to food was the UCR.

Conditioned Stimulus (CS): is a previously neutral stimulus that eventually elicits a conditioned response after being associated with UCS. Among the conditioned stimuli in Pavlov's experiments were the various sights and sounds that occurred prior to the actual eating of the food by the dog.

Conditioned Response (CR): Is a learned response to the conditioned stimulus that occurs alter UCS—CS pairing. In Pavlov's experiments, pairing of food (UCS) with sights or sounds (CS) produces a similar response (CR) of salivation.

This operation can be illustrated graphically which summarizes the way classical conditioning works.

Step I: Before Conditioning:

UCS ——————————————→ UCR

(Food)   (Salivation)

CS ——————————————→ No: relevant response

(Sound)

Step II: During Conditioning (repeated several times)

CS+UCS ——————————————→ UCR

(Sound) + (Food) (Salivation)

Step III: After Conditioning

CS ————————————→CR

(Sound)   (Salivation)

Significance of Classical Conditioning

One of the most important aspects of classical conditioning is its role in affecting our emotional responses to stimuli in our environment. Among the things in the child's schooling that produce pleasure because they have become classically conditioned are favorite song, feelings that the classroom is safe, and teacher's warmth and nurturing. For instance, a song could he neutral for the child until the child joins in with other classmates to sing it with accompanying positive feelings.

Moreover, children can develop fear of the classroom if they associate the classroom with criticism, so the criticism becomes a condition stimulus Fur fear. Classical conditioning also can be involved in test anxiety. For example, a child fails and is criticized, which produces anxiety; thereafter, the child associates tests with anxiety, so they (tests) then can become a CS for anxiety.

The law of exercise states that the more frequently a connection between a stimulus and a response is made, the stronger the connection will be.

The law of readiness states that a particular state of affairs will prove to be satisfying only ii t lie learner is ready for it. In other words, readiness is dependent upon maturation and experience at the time of learning.

Another operation conditioning theorist worthy of note is B.F Skinner. Skinner mentioned that a living organism does not have to remain passive in a learning situation. He used the term ''Operant Conditioning'' to describe the procedure in which the consequences of behaviour lead to changes in the probability that the behaviour will occur, Consequences-rewards or punishment are contingent on (he organism's behaviour. To demonstrate operant conditioning in the laboratory, Skinner developed a simple apparatus commonly known as 'Skinner box''.

As a result of his experiment, he made an important contribution to the study of reinforcement and its effects on the behaviour of people and animals.

Reinforcement

Reinforcement (or reward) is described as any event that increases the probability of a response. In other words, reinforcement is a consequence that increases the likelihood that behaviour will occur. For example, you might tell one of your students, "well done, [hat is a very good essay you wrote'. If the student works harder and writes better essay the next time, your positive comments are said to reinforce, or reward, the student writing behaviour.

When behaviour is reinforced, it means it is strengthened. There are two forms of reinforcement.

- Positive Reinforcement: It occurs whenever an event (or consequence) follows behaviour (i.e. response) and as a result increase or maintains that behaviour. In positive reinforcement, the frequency of a response increases because it is followed by a rewarding stimulus. For example, a student who study hard and receives an "A" grade in an examination, serves as a reinforcer for future study behaviour. This is so also as in the example teacher's positive comments increased the student's essay writing behaviour.

- Negative Reinforcement: Conversely, in negative reinforcement, the frequency of a response increases because it is followed by the removal of aversive (or unpleasant) stimulus. It is an increase in responses, to put in other words, that lead to the avoidance of an unpleasant stimuli or events. For negative reinforcement to occur there is need for the presence of an aversive stimulus. For instance a child is being ridiculed or teased by his friends, he Slaps or punches one of them, the ridiculing or teasing may cease/stop as a result, in future the child lights more.

The distinction between positive and negative rein reinforcement is that in positive reinforcement something is added, and in negative reinforcement something is subtracted, or removed. However, they all lead to increase iii behaviour. It is however very important to different to between negative reinforcement and punishment, because it is easy to confuse the two.

In negative reinforcement, the probability that a response will occur increases, while punishment decreases the probability that a response will occur. For more clarity, the following table summarizes and presents exam pies of the three concepts.

Table 1. Examples of Reinforcement and Punishment in Classroom Behavior

Example	Behaviour	Consequences	Future behaviour
Positive reinforcement	Student ask a good question	Teacher praises student	Student asks more good questions
Negative reinforcement	Student turns homework in on time	Teacher stops criticizing student	Student increasingly turns in homework in time
Punishment	Student interrupts teacher	Teacher verbally reprimands students	Student stop interrupting teacher

Significance of Operant Conditioning Theory

The principle of operant conditioning can be used to eliminate element of fear from the school LI atmosphere by using positive reinforcement. The desirable behaviour of the learner should be reinforced to increase the probability of reoccurrence in future. The learner should not be discouraged by his or her initial failure. The thought of eventual success provides them with the necessary energy and determination to persist.

Theory of Insight

Gestalt psychologists develop a new theory of learning popularly known as insight. These theories associated with Wolfgang Kohler who conducted a series of experiment with chimpanzees. In one of the experiments, a chimpanzee was confined to a cage and there was a stick in the cage. Outside the cage some hii1aflaS were put. Initially, the chimpanzee could not reach the bananas without the help of the stick kept in the cage. All of a sudden, the chimpanzee perceived the stick as a 'rake' and established relationship between the stick and the bananas.

In another situation, the experimental set ups were slightly changed. Instead of using one stick, two have to he used to attain similar goal. And

sometimes the bananas were hanged from the ceiling of the cage, and some boxes were put in the corner of the cage.

These experiments by Kohler show that the organism must perceive the total situation and relationship among all relevant parts of the problem before insight can occur in solving the problem. As such, the process of perceiving relationships is what is known as insight. Insight occurs when an individual reorganizes the situation in such a different way that a solution becomes clear or obvious. Kohler's chimpanzee, for instance, had an insight when it observed that the two sticks can be made into one. Insight is sometimes called 'aha" experience.

Implication of Insight learning theory

Gestalt psychology has an impact on our understanding of the nature of stimuli and the role of insight in learning. Stimuli could no longer be considered to be objective (i.e. perceived as the same by everyone), instead, they have to be considered subjective (i.e. perceived by the individual). The Gestaltists demonstration of insightful learning raised questions about behaviourists interpretations of the learning process. It appears that, rather, complex problems are sometimes solved not through a series of trials and errors, but through suddenly recognizing relationships alter reorganizing the problem.

6. TRANSFER OF LEARNING

The assumption of any educational programme or training is based on the fact that what is taught and learned will be transferred to new situations, That is to say whatever students learn in educational institutions is useful only when they can apply the same in everyday life. Basically, human beings and even animals could not learn without being affected by their past experiences. Transfer of learning. Therefore, is an important component of the learning process.

Meaning of Transfer of Learning

According to Crow & Crow (1973) the carryover of habit of thinking feelings or working of knowledge or skills from one learning area to another usually is referred to as transfer of learning.

Transfer of learning is described as the application of knowledge, skills, habits, attitudes, or other responses from the situation in which they were initially acquired to new situations. In other words, transfer of learning is the effect of previous learning or later learning. This is to say that performance on one learning task influences performance on subsequent one.

The transfer of learning implies the application of knowledge in various subjects and fields. It is assumed that whatever taught in the schools, children will use that knowledge, skills, attitudes and information to solve problems of day-to-da life after completing their schooling.

Types of Transfer of Learning

- Positive transfer of learning: this is seen as when performance on one task helps or facilitates performance on a second task. In other words, when then learning of a particular task facilitates the subsequent learning of another task, positive transfer is said to have taken place. For example, knowledge of Mathematics influences learning of physics or statistics.
- Negative transfer of learning: this is a situation in which performance on one task inhibits or disrupts performance on a second task. A negative transfer takes place when ii learning a particular task interferes with the learning of a subsequent task. For example, learning of Hausa grammar interferes with the learning of English grammar.
  Negative transfer may be proactive or retroactive in nature.
- Proactive negative transfer of learning is when previous learning inhibits new learning.
- Retroactive negative transfer of learning is when new learning interferes with the previous or earlier learning.
- Zero transfer: this happens when there is no effect of previous learning on later learning and vice-versa. In other words, if learning of a particular task makes no dcfferc1we whatsoever to the learning of subsequent task it is said to be 7ero transfer or no transfer of learning from one task to the subsequent task.

Factors Affecting Transfer of Learning

- Provision of adequate experience with the original task his been recognized as an important factor that affects transfer of learning. Extensive theory in both theory and practice increases the likelihood of positive transfer to a subsequent task. For instance, laboratory courses and projects of various kinds are designed to promote transfer to everyday life situation.

- Positive attitude on the part of the learner facilitates transfer of learning. This is to say that transfer of learning relies on the meaningfulness of the material for learning. The learner should be made to sic the purpose of the material he or she is required to learn.

- Provision of a variety of examples is conducive for transfer of learning. Teachers should give several examples, specifically when teaching concepts and skills. This is because examples strengthen the learners understanding of new ideas (or concepts) and ability to see its applicability to the life situations.

Principles of Transfer of Learning

- Transfer of learning depends on the ability of the learner. The more intelligent a learner is, the more likely it is that transfer will take place.

- Transfer of learning takes place when there is some similarity between two tasks, and the learner must realize that similarity.

- Transfer of learning is more likely to occur if the learner is keen to use his old learning in the new situation.

- The e better the first task has been learnt the more likely it is that the learning will he transferred to the new situation.

- Understanding of the underlying principles (i.e. arriving at generalization) facilitates transfer of learning.

7. MOTIVATION

Motivation is of particular interest to educational psychologist because of the crucial role in plays in students learning.

However, the specific kind of motivation that is studied in the specialized setting of education differs qualitatively from the more general forms of motivation studied by psychologist in other field.

Motivation is the cause of every human behaviours. It is, in fact, the very heart of the learning process. Adequate motivation not only set in motion the activity which results ii learning, but also sustains and directs it.

Meaning of Motivation

Motivation refers to all those phenomena which are involved in the stimulation of action towards particular objectives where previously there as little or no such movement. In other words, motivation refers to the urge or desire felt within the individual, which lead them to behaviour that will ensure attainment of their goal. Motivation involves the processes that energize, direct, and sustain behaviour. That is to say, motivated behaviour is behaviour that is energized, directed, and sustained.

Motivation may be regarded as something which prompts compel, energies an individual to act or behave in a specific goal or purpose.

Theories of Motivation

Although, motivation cannot be observed directly, inferences about then motives that might be in operation can be drawn. Since motives are based on inferences, different observers may interpret the same phenomena differently. The difference arises from a number of factors: different motives may give rise to the same behaviour; conversely, the same motive may be reflected in different behaviours. Hence, the differences in the explanations of motivation (i.e. motivation theories) have emerged. Many theories evolved to explain this abstract concept. However, two of them will be briefly discussed here. They are hierarchy of needs theory and attribution theory.

Hierarchy of Needs Theory of Motivation

Hierarchy of needs theory of motivation was propounded by a renowned psychologist in person of Abraham Maslow (1908-1970). Considering the nature of human needs, and what makes people behave as they do, Maslow maintains that human beings have many and different needs that serve as a force in directing their behaviour toward goals.

He believes that certain basic needs must be met before higher needs can be satisfied. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, human needs are arranged in a hierarchical and must be satisfied in this sequence:

- Psychological: hunger, thirst and sleep.
- Safety: ensuring, survival, such as being Free from danger, protection from war and crime, etc.
- Love and belongingness: Such as security, affect ion, and attention from others.
- Self-esteem: Feeling good about oneself, social status.
- Self-actualization: realization of one's potential.

Maslow's hierarchical order of needs starts from the basic survival of life (physiological needs) to the higher order needs self-actualization). The hierarchical structure is represented in form of pyramid.

Implication of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is directly relevant to classroom teaching-learning process. This is because teachers were made to pay attention to some important considerations:
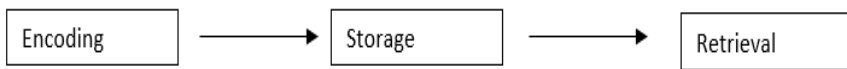
- A student who comes to school hungry, ill or suffering from parental abuse is unlikely to be highly motivated to learn in school. This is compared to a student whose basic needs are satisfied.
- Equally, if a classroom atmosphere is threatening, students may develop what is called school-public reactions in order to meet their safety needs.
- It is also important to provide Students with every opportunity to meet their Love and belonging needs; gain self-esteem as well as esteem from others.

8. MEMORY, ROTE-LEARNING, AND OVER-LEARNING

The term memory can be define as the ability to remember things. It can also be seen as the ability to store information so that it can be used in a later time. Passer and Smith (2004) perceive the term as the process that allow us to record, store, and later retrieve experience and information. Memory is described as the retention of information over time. Researchers have shown that there are three main processes or phases in memory.

Specifically, educational psychologist study how information is initially placed or encoded into memory (encoding phase), how it is retained or stored after being encoded (retention or storage phase), and how it is found or retrieved for a certain purpose later (retrieval phase). Without memory one would not be able to connect what happened to one yesterday with what is going on in one's life today. Therefore, the main focus of discussion of memory will be on encoding, storage/retention, and retrieval. The organization of memory should be thought of in terms of these three main activities.

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┌──────────┐              ┌──────────┐              ┌──────────┐
│ Encoding │ ───────────► │ Storage  │ ───────────► │ Retrieval│
└──────────┘              └──────────┘              └──────────┘
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- Encoding is the process whereby the information is put into memory. It is the first phase during which the learner takes in or assimilates the materials to be learned. Encoding has much in common with attention and learning. When a student, for instance, is listening to a teacher, watching a movie, or talking with a friend, he/she is encoding information into memory. Encoding consists of a number of processes: rehearsal, deep processing, elaboration, constructing images, and organization.

- Rehearsal; is the conscious repetition of information over time to increase the length of time information stays in memory Rehearsal works best when you need to encode and remember a list of items for a brief period of time, Rehearsal does not work well lot' retaining information cover the long term because it often involves just rote repetition of information without imparting any meaning to it.

- Deep processing; researchers believed that information can be processed at a variety of levels. Levels processing theory states that; the processing of memory occurs on a continuum from shallow to deep, with deeper processing producing better memory. This is to say that individuals remember information better when they process it at a deep level.

- Elaboration: is the extensiveness of information processing involved in encoding.

65

Researchers discovered that when individuals use elaboration in their encoding of information, their memory benefits. Thinking of examples is a good way to elaborate information. For instance, self-reference is an effective way to elaborate information. If you are trying to get students to remember the concept of fairness, the more they can generate personal examples of inequities and equities they have personally experienced, the more likely they are to remember the concept.

- Constructing images; Memories are stored in one of two ways; either as verbal-codes or as image codes. For example one can remember a picture by a label (verbal code) or by a mental image. And the more detailed and distinctive the image code, the better your memory of the information will be.

Researchers have found that young elementary school children can use imagery to remember pictures better than they can verbal materials, such as sentences.

- Organization: It is highly beneficial to the memory when students organize information at the encoding phase. As a teacher, the more you present information in an organized way, the easier your students will remember it. For instance, "chunking" is a beneficial organizational memory strategy that involves grouping or packing' information into higher order units that can he remembered as single units. Chunking works by making large amounts of information more manageable and more meaningful.

9. STORAGE/RETENTION

After encoding information, children need to retain, or store, the information. Memory storage involves three types of memory with different time frames. These are:

- Sensory memory (or register)
- Short-term memory, and
- Long-term memory.

Sensory Memory (SM)

Sensory memory is also called the sensory register holds information from the world (or environment) in its original sensory form for only an instant, not much longer than the brief time a student is exposed to the visual1 auditory, and other sensations (smell, touch, taste). Information holds in sensory memory lasts only for about one-fourth of a second, just long enough to decide whether to attend to it or not. If we don't attend to it and recognize it as meaningful, it simply gets lost or disappears. But the information that we attend to and recognize moves to the next level of memory (short-term memory) for further processing.

Short-Term Memory (STM)

Information that has been attended to and recognized as meaningful is transferred from sensory register memory. It is a limited-capacity memory system in which information is retained for as long as 30 seconds, unless the information is rehearsed in which case it can he retained longer.

Compared with sensory memory, short-term memory is relatively longer in duration. It holds information for immediate use and for further processing into the long-term memory. Information not processed within about 20 seconds disappears. However, with rehearsals and the use of other mnemonic devices, information in STM can stay longer.
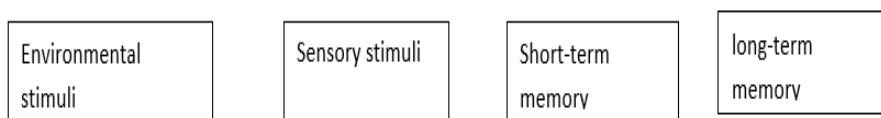
Long-Term Memory (LTM)

Long-term memory is a type of memory that holds large amount of information for a 1ong period of time which is relatively permanent. It has unlimited capacity for storing information. By knowing how the long-term memory operates, teachers can understand why students remember some Pieces of information while others cannot be recalled.

The long term memory is a series of interlocking processes rather than a fixed storage system. For example, there are different types of memory that decay at different rates over time. A funny story is forgotten in a few days, while visual memories of a holiday from early childhood can come flooding- back years after the event. The long-term memory can also be compared to a filing system that each pupil has within his/her head.

An enormous amount of information is available to be placed in it. Whether pupils can use this information at a later date depends on their placing it in such a way that they have a system for knowing where the material is stored. The issue is what sort of information is stored and how it is organized so that it can he retrieved at a later date. The following model illustrates how memory system works:

Environmental stimuli		Sensory stimuli		Short-term memory		long-term memory

Retrieval

As we have seen above, encoding and storage or retention are necessary acquire and retain information. But the most important process in remembering is retrieval, without which we could not access our memories. Unless we retrieve an experience, we do not really remember it. In the broadest sense, retrieval refers to the use of stored information. Psychologists considered memory retrieval to be the deliberate recollection of facts or past experiences.

Rote-Learning

Rote-learning can be described as learning by heart that is in terms of memorizing, retaining as well as recalling of facts that could not be ascertain through reasoning, in other words, rote-learning is the mechanical repetition of an experience without understanding. It requires constant repetition of the learnt material over a long period of time. This type of learning is commonly practiced at the lower level of elementary schools as it is one of the best ways by which certain facts will be inculcated (learned) into the learners tor instance, learning of multiplication table is always done by rote learning, in the lower primary school level, rote learning of basic facts could provide a foundation on which further learning can be built.

Over Learning

Over-learning implies practice that continuous after a perfect recall has been established. In other words, over-learning is learning beyond mastery level. It leads to better retention. However, over-learning should be moderated; otherwise it will lead to boredom. And under-learning hinders retention.

10. FORGETTING

Forgetting is defined as loss of information over time. Under most conditions, people recall information better goon after learning it than after a long delay; as time passes, they forget some of the information. As discussed earlier, learning involves the three phases of information, storing it and retrieving it when needed. It is therefore clear that forgetting may be due to failure of any of the three memory components. In other words, forgetting refers to failure at any lime to recall an experience when attempting to do so or to perform an action previously learned.

Many explanations evolved as to why we forget, among which are:

- One explanation to forgetting involves cue-dependent forgetting. Cue-dependent forgetting is retrieval failure caused by a lack of effective retrieval cues. This notion can explain why a student might fail to retrieve a needed fact for an exam even when he/she is sure of knowing the information.

- Another explanation to forgetting is interference theory. Interference theory states that we forget not because we actually lose memories from storage but, rather, because other information gets in the way of what we are trying to remember. For example, a student who studies for a biology test then studies for a history test, and then takes the biology test, the information about history will interfere with remembering the information about biology. Thus, interference theory implies that, if you have more than one test to study for, you should study last what you are going to be tested on next.

- Another source of forgetting is memory decay According to decay theory, new learning involves the creation of a neurochemical "memory trace," which will eventually disintegrate. Thus, decay theory suggests that the passage of time is responsible for forgetting.

- Other possible explanation of forgetfulness includes lack of attention; poor rehearsal; poor organization; unpleasant experiences, etc.

All functional explanation of behaviour depends on some notion of what is good and bad; good and bad correspond to reward and punishment to a situation better or worse than the current situation. Reward and punishment are just two sides of the same coin; they are alternatives of controlling people & behaviour of people can be held morally responsible, then apportioning reward and punishment seems appropriate.

11. DEFINITION AND TYPES OF REWARD

Kohn (1995) defines reward as "the satisfaction of needs for series of responses, which involves the general pleasure or satisfaction a person gets in any given situation". Reward and positive reinforcement are used interchangeably. Smith (1993) defines reward as "an act of giving tangibles in form of sweet, money or books; or intangibles in form of social approval or praise as reinforcement in return for an acceptable behaviour".

There are two types of reward: intrinsic and extrinsic reward. These are explained as follows:

- Intrinsic Reward: Reward is intrinsic if it is natural or inevitable. For instance, a boy who tries to assemble his mobile handset in order to communicate with friends can derive a satisfaction inherent in the task when he completes the instrument and finds out that it works.
- Extrinsic Reward: The established relation between a task and reward is extrinsic if it is arbitrarily or artificially established. For instance, a mother may promise to buy a handset to her daughter when she attains first position in her class .The handset is an incentive or extrinsic reward.

12. MERITS AND DEMERITS OF REWARD

According to Masha (2005), the merits of reward include:
To produce positive behaviour in the learner.

- It has strong effects on child from poor homes.
- It ensures re-occurrence of positive behaviour by promoting hard work.
- It promotes maximum effort toward school goals.
- Promotes useful competition for excellence.

Demerits of Reward

- Material rewards can become the primary goal of learning instead of learning for intrinsic value.
- Reward must be increased periodically to keep the high level of performance.
- Reward may be artificial not related to activities being rewarded.
- Sometimes, reward may not be possible to offer.
- Learners fail to develop positive attitude to learning unless induced via material reward.
- Criteria for Rewarding People

13. DEFINITION AND TYPES OF PUNISHMENT

Punishment refers to the application of negative reinforcement to learners for behaving wrongly. It is a means of forcing desirable behaviour to occur. By using negative reinforcement, the teacher presents unpleasant stimulus. Punishment can also be defined as an unpleasant stimulus that weakens an undesirable response (behaviour). It also involves the removal of positive reinforcement in order to discourage the frequency of that response (Tunji, 2005).

There are two types of punishment. These are corporal punishment and non-corporal punishment.

- Corporal punishment: This is a punishment that implicates pains on the offender. These include beating, rebuking and scolding. Such type of punishment could only be administered under authorized personality.
- Non-corporal punishment: This is a punishment that makes an offender to suffer loss of whatever he valued e.g. loss of mark, embracing him publically, etc.

Similarly, Burden and Byrd (1994) identified the following forms of punishment:

- Time-out: In this, the student is removed from an attractive situation or from the opportunity to receive attention or rewards due his engagement in unwanted behavior.

- Response Cost: This Consists of the loss of positive reinforcement due to occurrence of inappropriate behavior.
- Reprimand: This is a display of disapproval the use of either verbal or non-verbal expression. Therefore, teachers should first use nonverbal expressions of disapproval before using verbal expressions.
- Over-correction: This involves having a student to correct his own misbehaviors by practicing correct forms of the behavior. For example, a student who frequently speaks without raising hand, the teacher may ask the student to practice hand rising S to 7 times before he permitted to talk.
- Corporal punishment. This is any form of punishment that inflicts physical pain or discomfort to modify one's behavior.

Some Practices to Avoid in Punishment

Researchers believe the disadvantages of using threats outweigh any possible benefits and discourage teachers from using threats (Burden and Byrd, 1994):

- Physical Punishment. Corporal punishment is a strategy in which the teacher inflicts physical pain to the students. A research finding is clear in suggesting that corporal punishment has far more disadvantages than advantages. Furthermore, physical punishment does not work in most situations. Thus, teachers should not use corporal punishment.
- Group Punishment. Group punishment occurs when the entire class or group is punished because of the misbehavior of one or all the students. Peer pressure is intended to help modify the behavior of the individual. Group punishment is difficult to use effectively, and the undesirable side effects are likely to out weight the advantages. This technique forces students to choose between the teacher and one of their classmates. Many students will unite in defiance of the teacher and refuse to blame the classmate if group punishment is used. Even if the students go along with the teacher, the technique engenders unhealthy attitudes in the target student (Weinstein and Mignano, 1993).
- Assigning Extra Academic Work: When assigning extra academic work as a punishment, the teacher implies that the work is unpleasant.

This extra work is often in the form of homework that is not normally required. The student then associates school work with punishment. This is not the message teachers should convey.

- Reducing Grades: Penalizing a student academically for misbehavior creates an undesirable association. Students who are penalized for misbehaving may develop an attitude of "what's the use?" toward academic work.
- Suspension: Except in extreme cases, suspension causes students to lose class time and fall behind in academic work. Suspension in itself is bad, but the suspended student actually may welcome the time off from school and thus suspension is not seen by the student as punishment.
- Nagging: Continual or necessary scolding of a student only upset the student and arouses the resentment by other students.
- Forced Apologies: Forcing a student to express an apology that is not felt is a way of forcing him or her to lie. This approach solves nothing.
- Sarcastic Remarks: Sarcastic remarks are statements that the teacher uses to deride, taunt, or ridicule the student. While the teacher may consider such remarks as a means of punishment, they create resentment, may lower the student's self-esteem, and, in fact, may lower the esteem of the teacher in the eyes of the students.

Merits and Demerits of Punishment

Some of the merits of punishment as postulated by Masha (2005) include:

- Blocked of undesirable response.
- Punishments can be effective when the learner respond to a signal to avoid punishment.
- Punishment of the child to concentrate more in the class.
- Use of punishment makes a child to respect law the rules and regulations governing the school in general and the classroom in specific.
- Punishment is an example for potential offenders.

Some of the demerits of punishment as stated by Kohn (1993) include:

- Undesirable response may be substituted for the punished one.

- Punishment does not allow a child to recall what he learns at school as a result of fear and anxiety induced through the punishment.
- Punishment makes the students to dislike the teacher.
- It often leads to increased emotionality by those being punished.
- It may lead to the breakdown of class morale

14. OVERCROWDING IN CLASSROOM

One of the biggest issues facing schools and teachers today is overcrowding. A combination of an increasing population and a decrease in funding has caused class sizes to increase. In an ideal world, class sizes should be between 30-35 students. Unfortunately, many classrooms now regularly exceed thirty students, and it is not uncommon for there to be more than forty students in a single class. Classroom overcrowding has sadly become worrisome problem. It is not likely going to go away anytime soon, so schools and teachers must create workable solutions to make the best out of a bad situation for effective teaching and learning process. According to NPE National policy on education 2041 edition, in ECCE class the ratio of students to teachers is 1:25, primary is 1: 35, secondary 1:40, science technical and vocational education is 1:20.

However, Classroom overcrowding is becoming a bigger and bigger issue for teachers, parents and students alike. It's a problem in desperate need of a solution, and here some ways that it can be solved.

CONCLUSION

- Make it a last resort. Increasing class sizes should be a last resort for any school district. It should never be a starting point. There are many other ways to trim a budget. If all other options are exhausted, then schools may be forced to RIF (Reduction in Force) teachers and increase class sizes. However, they should immediately be looking for solutions to reduce class sizes back to twenty or fewer students.
- Take advantage of ability grouping. Schools should use benchmark assessments to determine student placement. Class sizes should be kept relatively small for those who perform unsatisfactorily. Students who are strong academically have less to lose in an overcrowded classroom.

- Provide teachers with an aide. Providing a teacher with an aide can help decrease the burden on the teacher. Aides receive a lower salary, so by placing them in overcrowded classrooms, you improve the student/teacher ratios and reduce cost.

- Lobby for more funding. Schools administrators and teachers should regularly lobby their state and local representatives for more funding. They should keep them apprised of issues overcrowding is causing. Administrators can also invite them to spend time at their school so that they can see the impact that overcrowding has.

- Solicit local donations. Private schools are able to keep their doors open due to tuition and to a large extent by soliciting donations. In tough financial times, public school administrators should not be afraid to solicit donations either. Every dollar counts and even garnering enough donations to hire an extra teacher or two each year can make a significant difference.

- Apply for grants. There are thousands of grant opportunities made available to schools each year. Grants exist for almost everything including technology, supplies, professional development, and even teachers themselves.

- Plan exceptionally well. Teachers in an overcrowded classroom must be exceptionally organized. They have to be well prepared for every day. They must develop a fluid system through trial and error to maximize the time they have with their students.

- Create energetic and engaging lessons. Every lesson must be enticing, energetic, and fun. It is easy for students in any class to be distracted and lose interest, but this is especially true in a large classroom. Lessons must be fast paced, unique, and full of attention grabbers.

- Tutor struggling students that need more of your time after school. There simply is not enough time to provide struggling students with the one-on-one time that they need. Tutoring these students 2-3 times after school each week gives them a better shot at being successful.

- Assign seats and rotate when necessary. With a large class, you must be structured, and this starts with strategically placed assigned seats.

Students who are low academically and/or are behavior issues should be assigned seats towards the front. Students who are high academically and/or are well behaved should be provided seats towards the back.

- Understand that the dynamics will be different. It is essential that you understand that there are significant differences in a classroom of twenty students compared to a classroom of thirty. You have no control over how many students are in your class, so you cannot allow yourself to be stressed out due to things that are out of control. Understand that you are not going to be able to spend time with each student that you would like. Understand that you will not get to know each student on a personal level. Understand that it is going to be noisy at times. Understand these things and adapt to the situation or you will become frustrated and want to quit.

- Provide a lot of structure. Structure is a critical component in any classroom but especially so in a classroom with lots of students. Establish your rules and expectations on day one. Be hard-nosed and hold each student accountable. Do not let them get away with anything, especially at the beginning.

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CHAPTER 4
THE ROLE OF MATHEMATICS TEACHERS IN THE USE OF DIGITAL AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF MATHEMATICS IN NIGERIA

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INTRODUCTION

The integration of digital and electronic devices in mathematics education has become factor in enhancing teaching and learning outcome in Nigeria. The advent of technology has transformed the way mathematics is taught and learned, shifting from traditional chalk and board methods to more interactive and engaging approaches. Mathematics teachers are now expected to leverage digital tools to create immersive learning experiences that foster deeper understanding, critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students. In Nigeria, the use of technology in mathematics education is still evolving with many schools and teachers embracing digital tools to supplement traditional teaching methods. However, the effectiveness of these tools depend largely the teachers' ability to integrate them meaningfully into the curriculum Nigeria's remarkable degree of digital penetration does not mean that students studying mathematics, who are digital natives, are completely reaping the benefits of digital technologies in terms of education, the economy, and society.

This is because digital literacy has various meanings in the educational system and the economy, and each societal institution interprets it by internal structures and imperatives in divergent discourses. The educational discourse highlights aspects of digital literacy beyond the mere instrumental use of IT, even as the economy emphasizes the significance of digital literacy as a factor of production and calls for closing IT skills gaps that could lower productivity (Gapski, 2017). This includes the self-reflexive, ethical, and digitally expressive aspects of digital literacy for students studying mathematics teaching. Therefore, what counts may be these students' capacity to implement empowering methods that are both successful and long-lasting. Academic progress and success should be focused on the main factors impeding Nigerian schools' digitalization. All the digital tools required to implement a sound educational system must be made available, even in the face of other problems like poor search skills, an epileptic power supply, pricey hardware and software, and the enormous financial burden of installing an alternative power supply system (Aasa & Sabitu, 2023). It is believed that mathematics is the foundation of science and technology and that it is how these fields might advance. Education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics is essential for emerging nations to achieve national development (Gift, 2019).

In essence, mathematics serves as an analytical tool for the advancement and rationality of science and technology (Ezeani & Ebere, 2019). It is helpful for decision-making, computer data entry, business cost analysis, and interest rates in the organization (Mathematics Worksheet Center, 2011). The imbalance between the demands of the labour market and the graduates' lack of critical marketable skills is the cause of the widespread unemployment of Nigerian graduates from different higher education institutions (Dabalen, Oni & Adekola, 2020).

Any nation's growth in science, technology, and economy is based on mathematics, which is also a vital instrument. Enrolling in mathematics classes at school or college is not the only reason it is vital; it also helps students get ready for life after graduation, regardless of the career path they ultimately take. According to Odili (2016), mathematics is one of the disciplines taught in schools that every country requires for the progress of industry and technology. It is helpful for the majority of careers and highly specialized courses of study.

According to Hom (2013), mathematics is the science that studies the logic of shape, quantity, and order. According to Wikipedia (2018), mathematical proof is used to establish the validity or falsity of conjectures, while patterns are used to generate new conjectures. Mathematical reasoning can shed light on or make predictions about nature when mathematical frameworks serve as accurate models of actual processes. Since mathematics and visualization go hand in hand, it is possible to improve student knowledge of the subject by employing various representations of mathematical objects and operations. When students can engage with these visuals and independently discover new aspects of the mathematical material, it is even more beneficial. According to Foley and Ojeda (2017), mathematics is a vital component of everyone's everyday routine and long-term planning. As a result, without mathematics, education and human life cannot work as intended. Countries whose education systems care about their development place a high value on studying mathematics. But the way mathematics has been taught hasn't been good for either teachers or pupils. The majority of generations that studied mathematics with rules and compass find that it causes bad memory and turns all efforts into repetitive, hard exercises.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN EDUCATION: THEORIES, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES

Electronic tools, systems, resources, and devices that generate, store, or process can be categorized as digital and other types of electronic gadgets. These consist of cloud computing, mobile devices, productivity apps, social media, online games and applications, and multimedia. Digital technologies, according to Clark-Wilson et al. (2021), are a group of gadgets that integrate the conventional components of software (operating system and application programs) and hardware (processing, memory, input, display, communication, and peripherals) to carry out a variety of functions. They consist of the following: consumer, instructional, technical, and communication applications. Any kind of learning that is supported by technology or by instructional strategies that effectively leverage technology is considered digital learning.

Every learning domain and location experiences digital learning. It includes the use of a broad range of strategies, such as game-based learning, blended and virtual learning, digital content access, local and global collaboration, online assessment and reporting, active engagement in online communities, and connecting, collaborating, curating, and creating with technology. Digital learning technologies can improve teaching methods, make better use of instructor time, and encourage widespread knowledge sharing. They can also help students understand concepts more thoroughly and quickly, make connections between theory and practice more skillfully, and engage in learning more easily. This will be made possible by digital technology in novel and improved ways, opening up possibilities that beyond our existing capacity for creativity. Digital technology can be employed in the classroom to increase student engagement and enjoyment, which will increase learning effectiveness. According to Maher, 2023), digital technology can improve the learning environment and allow teachers to devote less time to teaching to more student-centered instruction. According to Nair and Mukunda (2021), new technologies such as multimedia programs enable more interaction between students and educational resources. As these environments are adaptable, resource-rich, and offer engaging and relevant learning experiences to all students, regardless of their speed of learning, the author went on to say that teachers can create interactive learning environments to promote educational equality.

Put differently, digital technologies have the potential to offer every student an equal opportunity to study based on their requirements, speeds, talents, and learning styles.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Lev Vygotsky's (1978) Socio-Cultural Theory of Learning Effectiveness serves as the foundation for this investigation. According to Vygotsky, learning is a cooperative activity that uses mediated tools to take place in a sociocultural setting. According to Vygotsky, the sociocultural environment uses mediation tools to give the students a variety of roles, demands, and ways to integrate them into reality. The foundation of a media process wherein technology and other abstract, sociocultural items play a significant part in people's mental lives is mental engagement (Zhang, 2015). Human relations are mediated by physical and symbolic tools, as "learning as a mediated process has social origins and becomes individual as a result of mediated interaction between the child and teachers" (Garba, 2020).

The learning environment's activities are significantly shaped by the use of meditational technologies. Effective teaching and learning are the outcomes of an integrated (mediated) technical process between instructors and students (Adeniran, 2018). The socio-cultural theory of learning efficacy by Vygotsky has implications for the study in that it emphasizes the idea that learning effectiveness is maximized when the learning environment uses mediated tools, like electronic resources, to foster collaboration, interaction, and integration among students as well as between students and their instructors. This means that it is essential to have technological infrastructures available to improve students' access to other students both inside and outside of their institutions. Furthermore, a prerequisite for a successful university education is having constant access to lecturers and information resources for group, collaborative, interactive, and integrative learning. This suggests that students learn more effectively and vice versa when electronic learning materials are used in institutions more efficiently.

2. MATHEMATICS TEACHERS AND DIGITAL/ ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Digital and other electronic gadgets come in a wide variety that can be utilized to supplement and improve learning. In math courses, anything from digital movies and video content to laptop computers and portable devices has been used. Parallel to this, new applications for digital and other electronic devices, such as podcasting, are always being developed (Marshall, 2022). According to Marshal, diverse digital and electronic gadgets offer distinct types of information and fulfill distinct functions within the educational setting.

Today's mathematics classrooms use a variety of digital and electronic tools, from basic tool-based programs like word processors and spreadsheets to online databases of scientific data. Other resources include two-way distant learning classrooms, handheld computers, closed-circuit television channels, and original historical documents. According to Odili (2019), one can even learn mathematics with the cell phones that many people carry about these days. Instead of attempting to characterize the effects of all technologies in the same way, researchers should consider the types of digital and other electronic devices being used in mathematics classrooms, as well as the topics for which they are being used. With the help of computers and other digital and electronic gadgets, students can improve their fundamental knowledge and abilities by using them as virtual tutors. Additionally, students have access to computers for learning, where digital and other electronic devices are employed as tools to support a range of learning objectives and as a resource to foster the growth of higher-order thinking, creativity, and research skills (Zhang, 2015).

Moeller and Reitzes (2021) define computer-based instruction (CBI), computer-assisted instruction (CAI), integrated learning systems (ILS), and discrete educational software (DES) as the main ways that students learn via digital and other electronic devices. Together with word processing software, these applications are the most extensively used instructional technology in schools today and have been helping in the classroom for more than 20 years. According to Moeller and Reitzes (2021), teachers utilize DES not just to augment instruction as they have in the past, but also to introduce themes, give students a way to study on their own and give them the chance to understand concepts that they might not otherwise have access to.

Two fundamental presumptions about how computers can support learning are also demonstrated by the software. To encourage learning with the tools, the users' capacity to interact with the software is first restricted. Second, rather than being seen as instruments that could facilitate additional learning; computers are seen as a medium for learning.

Although DES is the most widely accepted method for using computers in the classroom, there has been an increase in the diversity of computer use in schools recently as teachers have realized how much technology can improve their students' ability to reason and solve problems. This change has been fueled by the abundance of new information and communication tools that students have access to both at home and in the classroom, according to Zhang (2005). These tools provide teachers and students with new opportunities to raise student achievement and meet the need for 21st-century skills. At this point, it should be mentioned that, according to (Mathematics Worksheet Center, 2021), teachers seem to be using digital and other electronic devices in three primary ways. These are:

- Integrated approach: Learn how to utilize ICT in the classroom to strengthen certain ideas and abilities and raise student achievement. This entails going over the curriculum area with great care and consideration, choosing the right ICT resource to support the goals of the curriculum and work plan, and incorporating its use into pertinent sessions.

- Enhancement approach: organizing the use of an ICT tool that will improve the current subject in a way that relates to the duties and lessons. For instance, displaying a topic's theory on an electronic whiteboard. With this strategy, the instructor intends to enhance the lesson with a cutting-edge presentation technique to encourage student participation and the visualization of issues.

- Complementary approach: utilizing an ICT tool to enhance students' learning, such as letting them use a computer to take notes, email assignments to their teacher from home, or use a word processor to produce better class work. All three strategies have the potential to raise achievement, but their results may vary. By providing students with deeper insights into the topic matter and challenges to their preexisting knowledge, the integrated method improves their learning.

By fostering student arguments, presenting information in novel ways, and letting them come up with their explanations, the enhancement approach may help students learn more. The complementary approach is based on the idea that learning can be improved by eliminating the tedious and repetitive components of assignments like writing essays by hand. This allows the student to concentrate on more difficult and subject-specific tasks (Kemmis et al., 1977 in Mathematics Worksheet Center, (2021)). These various uses call for the teacher to be well-versed in ICT and to be able to integrate it into their current pedagogy or broaden their knowledge of pedagogy to effectively integrate ICT into their instruction.

3. TEACHERS AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION IN THE CLASSROOM

In formal contexts like the classroom, students and teachers are considered to be the primary users of digital and other electronic equipment. Although most students are eager to use digital and electronic materials, teachers frequently act as the primary obstacle to adoption. As a result, instructors have received a disproportionate amount of attention in recent studies about the adoption and integration of technology in the classroom. "A teacher in a classroom views and defines a teaching situation, forms opinions and decisions, and then acts accordingly." As a result, the acceptance and successful integration of digital and other electronic devices in the classroom heavily depend on the role of the teacher. Additionally, research indicates that to completely comprehend technology adoption and integration, it is imperative to comprehend instructors' pedagogical principles. The sluggish rate at which instructors adapt and incorporate digital and other electronic devices into the classroom has been the subject of several studies. Many of these studies have been conducted in industrialized nations where there is a high degree of digital inclusion and where the government has made a consistent effort to use ICT to transform education. For instance, in 1998, the National Council for Educational Technology in the United Kingdom was reorganized and given new responsibility as the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA), to advance and use ICT in education.

Challenges associated with digital resources integration into mathematics teaching

There is evidence to show that digital resources are not widely integrated into mathematics classrooms, despite the many advantages of digital technology for mathematics education. According to Delorme (2016), the following categories best describe the primary difficulties in integrating technology into mathematics instruction:

Issues at the School or Teacher Level

Challenges faced by teachers include a lack of expertise, a lack of confidence, aversion to change, and unfavourable attitudes. Lack of time, ineffective training, accessibility issues, and a lack of technical support are among the difficulties faced by schools (Maher, 2023). According to Moeller and Reitzes (2021), "Teachers must not only be familiar with how to operate equipment but also understand how these tools are effectively used in the subjects they teach and how to incorporate resources into classroom activities that accomplish important learning goals" to use technology for educational purposes. In a similar vein, Foley and Ojeda (2007) said that many math teachers are still failing to successfully incorporate technology into their lessons, even despite their growing familiarity with it and knowledge of it. International data indicates that teachers' reluctance to adopt digital technology may arise from their concern that it may eventually replace them as educators in the classroom (Li, 2007).

Beliefs about Computers and Technology

It has been demonstrated that teachers' adoption and integration of digital technologies in the classroom are directly influenced by their pedagogical views and the knowledge they possess about these tools. One of the key factors influencing teachers' preparedness to accept and incorporate ICTs in the classroom is their personal opinions regarding the application and effectiveness of digital technologies. This research indicates that this holds irrespective of the accessibility of digital gadgets, the backing of educational administrators, and the existence of governmental regulations endorsing the use of digital technologies in educational settings.

Some of us think it is a waste of time as there are more essential things to do in the classroom than play with computers, one of the teachers explained when the matter was discussed with them in more detail. According to this comment, some educators can view the use of computers and other digital gadgets as an unneeded distraction that shouldn't be.

Competence and Digital Literacy

It has been observed that the majority of Nigerian educators, regardless of degree of education, lack the knowledge and abilities required to effectively use ICT in their work. Brzycki and Dudt (2021) also brought attention to this ICT skills and competence barrier through their work using digital educational games to teach mathematics in Nigeria. The lack of knowledge and experience needed to use digital technologies in the classroom worried the teachers in this study. The primary issue, as suggested by some of their expressed worries, is that there is a lack of confidence required to use ICT, making it difficult to apply it in the classroom before receiving the necessary training. Garba (2020) also pointed out that the curriculum design and pedagogical approaches used in Nigerian teacher preparation programs have not yet been focused on producing ICT-literate educators who can use ICT in their professional practices. The lack of complete integration of ICT in teacher education programs in Nigeria's colleges of education and other higher education institutions is a major contributing factor to the low levels of digital literacy among teachers. The Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE), the prerequisite for teaching, is awarded by the Colleges of Education. However because the training program is primarily theory-based, teachers are typically unprepared for an engaged and active learning environment in the classroom (Liu, 2022). In a similar vein, not much is done to encourage in-service teachers' adoption and integration of ICT through continuing professional development (Nair & Mukunda, 2021).

This suggests that educators who obtained their certification before the widespread usage of ICTs years ago had very little, if any, instruction regarding the application and use of digital technology in the classroom. Teachers' perceptions of themselves and what they think students, parents, and the general public think of them also contribute to this obstacle.

According to Cheng, Yang, Chang, and Kuo (2016), educators in Nigeria are expected to be "sages on a stage" and possess infinite knowledge. Teachers are not inclined to experiment with digital technology in the classroom because they are afraid of being seen as naive or untrained in the usage of ICT.

Taking into account the advantages of incorporating technology into math classes, this poor integration is concerning. Additionally, according to Nair & Mukunda, (2021), simply having digital technology available in math classrooms is insufficient. To successfully and appropriately support students' learning, teachers and curriculum writers need to be competent decision-makers (International Society for Technology in Education, 2008). According to Liu, (2022), professional development and teacher education programs need to continuously refresh practitioners' understanding of technology and how to use it to enhance learning.

CONCLUSION

Educators must make the most of the government's and their school administration's support when incorporating digital technology into the classroom. As was previously said, one of the obstacles to instructors using digital tools in the classroom is their lack of expertise. Therefore, it is advised that educators commit to developing their skill sets so they can use technology in the classroom with more ease. This dedication is based on two fundamental principles: first, a thorough comprehension of the benefits and significance of technology-enhanced learning, such as the learning and engagement possibilities it provides; and second, an appreciation of the significance and value of personal and professional development.

Recommendations

The recommendations listed below were made in light of the aforementioned study;

- The adoption and integration of ICTs are propelled by strong infrastructure needs. These include necessities like electricity, internet, laptops and other digital tools, and safe, comfortable settings that the study's teachers have highlighted.

First and foremost, the government must set aside sufficient funds for this, and then it must make sure those monies are used for the right purpose. First and foremost, the Nigerian government must raise funding for education generally to bring it into compliance with UNESCO's suggestion. Second, the ministries of education must create programs and regulations that emphasize the value of technology-enhanced learning and outline doable steps instructors may take to begin implementing it. Similarly, ICT and its application in educational activities and classroom administration (e.g., attendance and assessments) require revisions to the curriculum. The government should commission new courses that present and promote the development of digital literacy skills in its Colleges of Education and other teacher training institutions to address the barrier of low levels of digital literacy among teachers-in-training. Collaboration with professional bodies and the IT sector can help achieve this goal.

- School administration must work with the government to create an environment that makes it easy for teachers to adopt and use digital technology in the classroom. While financial support is essential for technology adoption and integration, how these processes are carried out is just as significant. The transition to technology-enhanced learning brings with it changes that must be led and managed by the school administration.

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