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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES TEACHER EDUCATION: PEDAGOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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Abstract

The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into global education has raised significant opportunities and ethical questions, particularly for faith-based disciplines. Christian Religious Studies (CRS) teacher education, which sits at the intersection of theological tradition and contemporary pedagogy, offers a compelling context for examining AI's implications. Despite growing global scholarship on AI in religious education, no study has specifically examined this intersection within the Nigerian CRS teacher education context, a critical gap this paper addresses. Drawing on constructivist learning theory, technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK), and the theology of education framework, this paper conceptually explores five key pedagogical opportunities: personalized learning, enhanced access to theological resources, AI-assisted lesson planning, simulation-based teaching practice, and global collaborative learning communities. The paper equally foregrounds five ethical tensions: algorithmic bias in representing Christian doctrines, erosion of relational and spiritual teacher formation, threats to academic integrity, the digital divide, and the preservation of human moral agency. As an original scholarly contribution, the paper proposes a theologically-informed, critically reflexive framework grounded in five principles: purposeful integration, theological discernment, relational primacy, equitable access, and ethical AI literacy as a responsible pathway for AI adoption in CRS teacher education in Nigeria. The paper concludes that the

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future of CRS teacher education lies not in choosing between technology and tradition, but in cultivating AI-literate teachers equally grounded in faith, ethics, and pedagogical excellence.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Christian Religious Studies, Teacher Education, Pedagogical Opportunities, Ethical Considerations

Introduction

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a transformative force in global education has compelled educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to critically reassess how teachers are prepared for the classrooms of the twenty-first century. Globally, AI is increasingly described as among the most significant drivers of change across sectors including healthcare, finance, and education (Papakostas, 2025). Within education specifically, AI offers new possibilities for personalized learning experiences, providing instant feedback, and supporting data-driven instructional decision-making (UNESCO, 2024). In Nigeria, where the education sector continues to grapple with challenges of quality, access, and relevance, including a student-to-teacher ratio in public primary schools that averages 1:70, nearly triple the global recommended average (UBEC, 2023) the promise of AI-enhanced pedagogy presents both a timely opportunity and a significant responsibility.

This opportunity is particularly significant for teacher education programmes in Christian Religious Studies (CRS), a discipline that plays an important role in the moral, spiritual, and civic formation of learners in Nigeria. Although CRS teacher education in Nigerian higher institutions has traditionally relied on lectures, seminars, teaching practice, and theological reflection, the emergence of AI technologies presents new possibilities for improving pedagogical effectiveness and expanding access to educational resources (Technext, 2025).

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Despite the growing relevance of AI in educational practice globally, concerns remain regarding its responsible integration into faith-based teacher education programmes such as CRS in Nigeria. These concerns constitute the problem this study seeks to address.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing global integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into education, Christian Religious Studies (CRS) teacher education in Nigeria has remained largely dependent on traditional instructional approaches such as lectures, seminars, teaching practice, and theological reflection. While these methods retain their relevance, they appear increasingly inadequate for preparing teachers to engage digitally literate learners in a technology-driven educational environment. The emergence of AI tools including intelligent tutoring systems, adaptive learning platforms, and generative AI technologies such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot presents significant opportunities for improving pedagogical effectiveness and expanding access to theological and educational resources.

However, the integration of AI into CRS teacher education raises serious ethical, pedagogical, and theological concerns. Questions persist regarding the ability of AI systems to accurately represent diverse Christian doctrines, preserve the relational and spiritual dimensions of teacher formation, ensure academic integrity, and guarantee equitable access in a country where digital inequality remains significant. Although global scholarship has increasingly examined AI in religious education, there is still a noticeable lack of studies addressing these issues specifically within the Nigerian CRS teacher education context.

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This gap in literature creates uncertainty about how AI can be responsibly and effectively integrated into CRS teacher preparation programmes in Nigerian higher institutions. It is against this backdrop that this study explores the pedagogical opportunities and ethical considerations associated with AI integration in CRS teacher education and proposes a theologically-informed framework for responsible adoption.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

i. examine the pedagogical opportunities offered by Artificial Intelligence in CRS teacher education in Nigerian higher institutions;

ii. identify the ethical considerations arising from the integration of AI technologies into CRS teacher preparation;

iii. analyse the implications of AI adoption for the spiritual, relational, and formational dimensions of CRS teacher education;

iv. propose a theologically-informed framework for the responsible integration of AI in CRS teacher education; and

v. recommend policy and practice directions for AI adoption in Nigerian CRS teacher education programmes.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

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i. What pedagogical opportunities does Artificial Intelligence offer for CRS teacher education in Nigerian higher institutions?

ii. What ethical considerations arise from integrating AI technologies into the preparation of CRS teachers in Nigeria?

iii. How does AI adoption affect the spiritual, relational, and formational dimensions of CRS teacher education?

iv. What principles should inform a theologically-grounded framework for responsible AI integration in CRS teacher education?

v. What policy and practice recommendations are appropriate for AI adoption in Nigerian CRS teacher education programmes

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design employing a conceptual-analytical approach. The conceptual method was considered appropriate because the study is concerned with examining, interpreting, and synthesizing existing theoretical and empirical knowledge about AI and CRS teacher education, rather than generating new primary data through fieldwork. Conceptual research of this kind is well-established in educational studies, theology, and curriculum scholarship as a rigorous means of building theoretical frameworks and advancing disciplinary understanding (Holmes et al., 2019; Papakostas, 2025).

The study draws exclusively on secondary data sources. Sources were selected according to the following inclusion criteria: (a) direct relevance to Artificial Intelligence in education, religious education, teacher education, or Christian Religious Studies; (b) publication within the period

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2019–2025 to ensure currency, with the exception of foundational theoretical works; (c) accessibility in a retrievable peer-reviewed journal, edited academic volume, or established institutional publication; and (d) relevance to the Nigerian, African, or comparable developing-country context wherever available. Sources addressing only Western educational contexts without clear transferable insights to the Nigerian CRS setting were treated with appropriate caution.

Data were analysed through thematic synthesis, whereby key findings from the reviewed literature were identified, grouped under the study's major thematic concerns pedagogical opportunities, ethical considerations, and framework development and interpreted in relation to the research questions. The three theoretical frameworks that underpin the study; TPACK, constructivist learning theory, and the theology of education provided the conceptual lenses through which the literature was read and synthesized. This approach is consistent with established qualitative practice in conceptual educational research (Ateeq et al., 2024; Gulo et al., 2025).

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three complementary theoretical frameworks that together provide a robust analytical foundation for examining AI integration in CRS teacher education.

The first framework is Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), developed by Mishra and Koehler (2006). TPACK posits that effective technology integration in teaching requires the meaningful convergence of three knowledge domains: technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and content knowledge. In the CRS context, this means that effective AI

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adoption demands not merely technical competence with AI tools, but a simultaneous understanding of how those tools can serve the specific pedagogical demands of religious teacher formation facilitating theological reflection, nurturing critical thinking, and supporting the spiritual development of trainee teachers. Ocampo and Gozum (2024) affirm TPACK as a particularly relevant framework for examining AI integration in faith-based education contexts.

The second framework is constructivist learning theory, associated with the foundational work of Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1970). Constructivism holds that learners actively construct knowledge through experience, social interaction, and reflection rather than passively receiving transmitted information. AI tools that facilitate collaborative learning, simulate real classroom scenarios, provide personalized feedback, and scaffold complex theological inquiry align well with constructivist principles, offering rich possibilities for CRS teacher education that go beyond traditional didactic instruction.

The third framework is the theology of education, as articulated by Groome (1991) and more recently applied to the AI context by Papakostas (2025) and Gulo et al. (2025). This framework situates education within a broader theological vision of human dignity, moral formation, and the pursuit of truth and wisdom. It is critical for evaluating the ethical dimensions of AI adoption in CRS teacher education, providing the normative standard against which all technological choices must be assessed: does this tool serve the deepest goals of Christian education the formation of wise, compassionate, morally grounded, and theologically literate teachers? These three frameworks are not applied in isolation; rather, they function together as complementary lenses

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that enable a multi-dimensional analysis of AI's pedagogical opportunities and ethical challenges in the CRS teacher education context.

Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence in Education: An Overview

Artificial Intelligence in education (AIEd) refers to the application of AI technologies to support, enhance, and transform teaching and learning processes. Holmes, Bialik, and Fadel (2019) describe AIEd as encompassing a broad range of tools including intelligent tutoring systems (ITS), automated assessment and feedback systems, learning analytics platforms, AI-generated content, and conversational agents. More recently, the emergence of generative AI tools including large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT has expanded the scope of AIEd considerably, enabling the creation of original text, images, lesson plans, and assessment items from simple prompts (Ateeq et al., 2024).

UNESCO's AI and the Future of Education: Global Monitoring Report (2024) affirms that AI holds transformative potential for global education, while simultaneously warning that its benefits will not be automatically or equitably distributed. In the African and Nigerian contexts, research on AIEd is growing but remains nascent. A comprehensive review by Olatunde-Aiyedun (2024) of AI trends in Nigerian education highlights the expanding application of AI in personalized learning, automated assessment, and educational administration, while also identifying systemic barriers including unreliable electricity, poor internet connectivity, and inconsistent digital literacy among teachers. A 2023 survey by Education International found that

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68% of Nigerian teachers lack AI literacy, a figure that underscores the urgency of deliberate, structured AI integration in teacher education programmes (Spursmedia, 2025).

Research specifically examining AI's application in teacher education for humanities and social science disciplines particularly CRS remains sparse in the Nigerian context. This paper seeks to address that gap by bringing the rapidly expanding global literature on AI and religious education into dialogue with the specific challenges and opportunities of CRS teacher education in Nigerian higher institutions.

AI in Religious Education: Emerging Global Evidence

Internationally, a growing body of scholarship is examining the intersection of AI and religious education. Papakostas (2025), in a wide-ranging conceptual study published in Religions, identifies both the pedagogical promise and the significant ethical complexities of applying AI within religious education contexts. The study notes that AI platforms can tailor content, automate assessment, and widen access to theological primary texts across regions and denominations but also raise important questions about theological authority, doctrinal representation, and the integrity of moral formation.

A related study by Gulo, Mbelanggedo, and Rangga (2025) specifically examines AI integration in Christian Religious Education, arguing that AI holds substantial potential to support pedagogical innovation particularly in generating learning materials, facilitating adaptive assessment, and supporting autonomous learning while also posing risks related to the spiritual and relational dimensions of religious teacher formation. Similarly, Napitupulu and Gulo (2024) explore AI's transformative potential for Christian education in the digital era, affirming that AI

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can enrich learning through more personalized and interactive approaches, provided it is adopted with theological discernment.

In the Catholic education context, a chapter by Ocampo and Gozum (2024) in the Springer collection on generative AI in educational assessment examines AI's theological and pedagogical impacts, noting tensions between AI's efficiency gains and the relational, faith-mentoring role of the religious teacher. These global studies collectively affirm that the integration of AI in faith-based teacher education is a significant and growing field of inquiry, one that has not yet been adequately examined in the Nigerian CRS context.

Christian Religious Studies Teacher Education in Nigeria

Christian Religious Studies occupies a constitutionally recognized and pedagogically significant role in Nigeria's educational system. As specified in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014), CRS is a core subject at the primary and secondary school levels, aimed at fostering moral development, interfaith understanding, and civic responsibility. At the tertiary level, higher institutions of learning and universities offer degree programmes in CRS designed to prepare qualified teachers for these roles.

CRS teacher education in Nigeria faces well-documented challenges including outdated curriculum content, inadequate teaching resources, limited exposure to contemporary pedagogical innovations, and insufficient integration of technology in teacher preparation. These challenges are compounded by the discipline's unique nature: unlike more quantitative subjects, CRS requires teachers to facilitate deeply personal, spiritual, and morally complex conversations, demanding high levels of empathy, critical thinking, and theological literacy. Nigeria's National

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Digital Learning Policy (2023) encourages the ethical use of AI to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and inclusivity of digital learning; a policy imperative that CRS teacher education programmes must now engage with seriously and thoughtfully.

Pedagogical Opportunities of AI in CRS Teacher Education

Personalized and Adaptive Learning

One of the most significant pedagogical opportunities offered by AI in CRS teacher education is the capacity for personalized and adaptive learning. Traditional teacher education programmes in Nigerian higher institutions often adopt a one-size-fits-all instructional approach, which fails to account for the diverse prior knowledge, learning paces, and theological backgrounds of trainee teachers. AI-powered adaptive learning platforms can analyse individual learner data and dynamically adjust content, pacing, and instructional strategies to meet each trainee's unique needs (Holmes et al., 2019).

For CRS teacher-trainees, this means that a student with limited background in Old Testament hermeneutics can receive targeted resources and guided exercises, while a more advanced student is simultaneously challenged with higher-order theological analysis tasks. Adedokun and Olabode (2024), in their study of AI-powered tutoring systems for personalized learning among higher institutions students in Lagos State, Nigeria, affirm the significant potential of such systems for Nigerian teacher education contexts though they also note the importance of adequate digital infrastructure as a precondition for successful deployment.

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Enhanced Access to Theological and Pedagogical Resources

Nigeria's higher institutions of learning frequently contend with inadequate library resources, outdated textbooks, and limited access to international theological scholarship. AI-powered tools including AI-assisted literature search engines, digital theological libraries, and natural language processing applications can dramatically expand CRS teacher-trainees' access to a breadth and depth of resources previously unavailable to them. Gulo et al. (2025) specifically identify the use of AI for in-depth Bible text analysis and access to theological databases as among the most promising applications of AI in Christian religious education.

Furthermore, virtual theological assistants trained on comprehensive theological databases such as Christian AI chatbots and platforms like 'Ask Pastor AI' are already demonstrating the potential of AI to answer doctrinal questions, provide scriptural background, and support theological reflection at scale (Papakostas, 2025). When used critically and under academic supervision, such tools offer CRS teacher-trainees in Nigeria access to a quality and breadth of theological resources that physical library limitations would otherwise deny them.

AI-Assisted Curriculum and Lesson Planning

Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot offer considerable support for curriculum and lesson plan development, a core competency for CRS teacher-trainees. These tools can assist trainee teachers in drafting lesson plans, generating discussion questions, designing formative assessments, and adapting instructional materials for learners with diverse needs (Ateeq et al., 2024). Brisbane Catholic Education (2024) has already demonstrated significant gains from AI-enabled teaching and learning in faith-based education

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contexts, providing a useful model for Nigerian CRS teacher education programmes to engage with.

In the Nigerian context, AI-assisted lesson planning tools can help CRS trainee teachers explore creative, student-centred methodologies for teaching complex topics such as the theology of suffering, Christian ethics in contemporary society, or interfaith dialogue. Crucially, Napitupulu and Gulo (2024) caution that AI-generated lesson content must always be evaluated through a theological lens, with lecturers guiding trainees in critical assessment of AI outputs to develop both technological competence and pedagogical judgement simultaneously.

Simulation and Virtual Teaching Practice

Teaching practice remains the cornerstone of teacher education in Nigeria, yet it is often constrained by logistical challenges, limited supervision, and insufficient feedback. AI-powered simulation environments offer promising supplementary spaces for CRS teacher-trainees to rehearse and refine their teaching skills before entering real classrooms. Allal-Cherif (2022) documents the growing use of augmented reality and AI tools to create intense, interactive virtual learning environments in religious and cultural education contexts-a model with direct relevance for CRS teacher preparation.

AI-driven feedback systems embedded in simulation platforms can provide immediate, specific, and evidence-based feedback on a trainee teacher's instructional performance feedback that is often delayed or insufficiently detailed in traditional supervision models. For CRS teacher-trainees in Nigeria, where supervision resources are stretched and teaching practice placements

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are often geographically dispersed, this real-time feedback capability represents a significant pedagogical advantage.

Global Collaborative Learning Communities

AI-powered platforms can facilitate the creation of global collaborative learning communities among CRS teacher-trainees in Nigeria, connecting them with peers, theological scholars, and master teachers across Africa and beyond. Nigeria's National Digital Learning Policy (2023) explicitly encourages the use of digital technologies to foster global collaboration and inclusive learning communities, a policy aspiration that AI tools are uniquely positioned to support.

This global connectivity is particularly valuable for CRS teacher education in Nigeria, where the discipline's scope is expanding to include African Christian theology, comparative religious education, and the interface of faith with contemporary social issues including AI itself. AI-facilitated global learning communities ensure that Nigerian CRS teacher-trainees are not intellectually isolated, but are active participants in international conversations about the future of religious education.

Ethical Considerations in AI Integration for CRS Teacher Education

Algorithmic Bias and Theological Representation

A fundamental ethical concern in applying AI to CRS teacher education is the risk of algorithmic bias, the tendency of AI systems to reflect and amplify the biases embedded in their training data. Papakostas (2025) warns explicitly that large AI training corpora may reproduce doctrinal, cultural, or gender biases, reinforcing majority perspectives while marginalizing others. For instance, a model trained predominantly on Protestant Western theological sources will

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systematically under-represent Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, or Global South Christian interpretations; the very perspectives most central to Nigerian CRS classrooms.

Adeleke, Ogunyemi, and Olabode (2023) document the specific risks of bias in AI models for African education systems, noting that AI trained primarily on foreign datasets risks sidelining local values and knowledge. In the CRS context, this means that AI tools used in Nigerian teacher education may inadvertently promote a theologically impoverished or culturally alien understanding of Christianity undermining the discipline's commitment to contextual, inclusive religious education. This challenge demands both critical AI literacy among CRS lecturers and advocacy for the development of AI tools that incorporate African theological sources and perspectives.

Erosion of Relational and Spiritual Dimensions of Teacher Formation

CRS teacher education is fundamentally a relational and spiritual enterprise. Ocampo and Gozum (2024) identify the teacher's role as a faith mentor and the relational nature of learning as among the most significant concerns raised by AI adoption in religious education contexts. The formation of a CRS teacher involves not merely the transmission of theological knowledge and pedagogical skills, but the cultivation of virtues; compassion, integrity, wisdom, and faith that cannot be reduced to data points or algorithmic outputs.

Edugist (2025), reflecting on the broader Nigerian educational context, argues powerfully that teachers in Nigeria function as cultural interpreters, mentors, and community anchors roles that AI cannot replicate holistically. For CRS specifically, mentorship relationships between experienced lecturers and teacher-trainees, communal theological reflection, prayer, and shared

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spiritual practice are irreplaceable elements of formation. Gulo et al. (2025) affirm this concern, cautioning that AI adoption in Christian religious education risks displacing the spiritual depth that distinguishes excellent CRS teaching if it is not approached with deliberate intentionality.

Academic Integrity and Epistemic Honesty

The accessibility of generative AI tools raises significant concerns about academic integrity in CRS teacher education programmes. Ateeq et al. (2024), in a study published in Frontiers in Education, document the profound implications of AI for academic integrity in higher education, noting that the capacity of LLMs to generate coherent theological essays, sermon outlines, and lesson plans creates new temptations for intellectual dishonesty among students and trainees. Perkins (2023) similarly warns of the risk of AI being used as a substitute for genuine intellectual effort, rather than as a tool for learning enhancement.

In a discipline that places a premium on personal theological reflection, authentic engagement with scripture, and the development of an individual pedagogical voice, AI-generated content poses a particular threat to the integrity of assessment and professional formation. Nigerian higher institutions must develop clear, contextually appropriate policies on AI use in CRS coursework, policies grounded in the Christian values of truth-telling and intellectual responsibility that the discipline itself espouses. Nigeria's National Digital Learning Policy (2023) emphasizes the ethical use of AI in education, providing a policy foundation on which such institutional guidelines can be constructed.

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Digital Divide and Equity of Access

The promise of AI in CRS teacher education risks being severely undermined by Nigeria's persistent digital divide. A comprehensive review by Abubakar et al. (2025) of AI trends in Nigerian and Sub-Saharan African education highlights systemic barriers including insufficient technological infrastructure, unreliable electricity, poor internet connectivity, and inconsistent digital literacy as major impediments to equitable AI adoption. These disparities are geographically concentrated: urban institutions in Lagos and Abuja are far more likely to have access to AI-powered tools than rural higher institutions of learning in northern or underserved states (Aina &Opesemowo, 2024).

Ekanem and Emejulu (2025), examining AI governance in Nigerian higher education, underscore the importance of clear policies, investment in digital infrastructure, and ongoing professional development to bridge digital divides and ensure equitable access across institutions. For CRS teacher educators, this is not merely a logistical concern but an ethical one: a commitment to the Christian value of justice demands that AI-enhanced teacher education be pursued in ways that reduce, rather than reinforce, existing inequalities.

Human Moral Agency and Technological Determinism

Finally, the integration of AI in CRS teacher education raises deeper philosophical and theological questions about human moral agency. CRS is fundamentally concerned with the formation of morally reflective, freely choosing agents, teachers who can guide students in making ethical decisions rooted in Christian values. Papakostas (2025) warns that the unethical embrace of AI in religious education risks promoting a subtle form of technological

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determinism; the belief that technology inevitably shapes human behaviour and outcomes that is antithetical to the Christian understanding of human freedom, responsibility, and moral agency.

The Centre for Christian Thought and Action (2024) affirms that engaging with AI in Christian education requires critical reflection and proactive, theologically grounded action, not passive acceptance. CRS teacher educators must therefore position AI not as an autonomous agent that determines educational outcomes, but as a tool that human educators consciously and critically choose to deploy in service of their formational goals. This requires ongoing critical reflection on the values embedded in AI systems and a commitment to maintaining human judgement, creativity, and moral wisdom at the centre of CRS teacher education.

A Theologically-Informed Framework for AI Integration in CRS Teacher Education

Based on the foregoing analysis, this paper proposes a theologically-informed, critically reflexive framework for integrating AI into CRS teacher education in Nigerian higher institutions. The framework rests on five interconnected principles informed by both theological scholarship and the emerging evidence base on AI in religious education.

First, the principle of purposeful integration holds that AI tools should be adopted in CRS teacher education only when they demonstrably serve specific pedagogical goals aligned with the discipline's formational objectives. Gulo et al. (2025) similarly emphasized the need for intentional, purpose-driven AI adoption in Christian religious education technology for its own sake has no place in CRS teacher education, and every AI application must be evaluated against the question: does this tool help us prepare better, more faithful, more effective CRS teachers?

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Second, the principle of theological discernment requires that CRS teacher educators and trainees critically evaluate AI tools through a theological lens, asking how they represent Christian truth, human dignity, and moral complexity. Papakostas (2025) specifically identifies the need for transparent algorithms, diverse training sets, and teacher-led oversight as essential governance requirements for AI in religious education requirements that Nigerian CRS programmes must actively advocate for and implement.

Third, the principle of relational primacy insists that human relationships between lecturers and trainees, among peers, and between trainees and the communities they will serve must remain central to CRS teacher formation. Ocampo and Gozum (2024) identify the cultivation of moral agency and the relational nature of faith-based learning as irreducible elements of religious teacher education that AI must support, never supplant.

Fourth, the principle of equitable access demands that AI integration in CRS teacher education be pursued in ways that reduce, rather than reinforce, existing inequalities. Ekanem and Emejulu (2025) and Aina and Opesemowo (2024) both emphasized this requirement in the Nigerian context, calling for deliberate infrastructure investment, offline-capable AI tool development, and equitable distribution of digital resources across all institutions.

Fifth, the principle of ethical AI literacy calls for the explicit integration of AI ethics into the CRS teacher education curriculum. The Centre for Christian Thought and Action (2024) argues that Christian educational institutions have a unique opportunity to integrate AI literacy into their curricula through interdisciplinary approaches combining technology, philosophy, ethics, and

theology equipping trainee teachers to engage with AI critically and creatively, skills they will need to model for their own students in an increasingly AI-mediated world.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the integration of Artificial Intelligence into CRS teacher education in Nigeria presents a genuinely significant set of pedagogical opportunities including personalized learning, enhanced resource access, AI-assisted curriculum development, simulation-based teaching practice, and global collaborative learning. Drawing on a growing body of global literature on AI and religious education (Papakostas, 2025; Gulo et al., 2025; Ocampo & Gozum, 2024; Napitupulu&Gulo, 2024) as well as Nigeria-specific evidence on AI in education (Abubakar et al., 2025; Ekanem &Emejulu, 2025; Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2024), the paper has demonstrated that these opportunities are accompanied by serious ethical considerations relating to algorithmic bias, the erosion of relational formation, academic integrity, digital inequity, and the preservation of human moral agency.

The paper has proposed a theologically-informed, critically reflexive framework grounded in the principles of purposeful integration, theological discernment, relational primacy, equitable access, and ethical AI literacy as a responsible pathway for AI adoption in CRS teacher education in Nigerian higher institutions. The future of CRS teacher education in Nigeria does not lie in choosing between technology and tradition, but in cultivating AI-literate teachers who are equally grounded in faith, ethics, and pedagogical excellence.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

i. Higher institutions of learning offering CRS programmes should develop clear, contextually appropriate AI integration policies that reflect the discipline's theological and ethical values, drawing on Nigeria's National Digital Learning Policy (2023) as a foundation.

ii. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should incorporate AI literacy and ethics into the minimum standards for CRS teacher education programmes.

iii. Teacher educators should receive sustained professional development in both the technical use of AI tools and the critical, theological evaluation of those tools.

iv. The Federal Government of Nigeria should invest in digital infrastructure and offline AI solutions to ensure equitable access for CRS teacher-trainees in rural and under-resourced institutions. Finally, further empirical research is urgently needed on the specific impacts of AI integration on CRS teacher education outcomes in Nigerian contexts, to complement and extend the conceptual analysis offered in this paper.

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