

Innovative Strategies for Addressing Diverse Learning Needs in Ghanaian English Language Classrooms

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Article History

Received: 25 August 2024

Reviewed: 25 October 2024

Accepted: 12 November 2024

Published: 15 December 2024

Keywords: differentiated instruction, diverse learning needs, English language education, instructional strategies, inclusive teaching

Abstract: The complexity of contemporary classrooms in Ghana necessitates innovative strategies to address diverse learning needs effectively. Hence, addressing the latter in English language classrooms (ELCs) is critical. This study explored the understanding of English language teachers regarding differentiated instruction and how they addressed the varied needs and abilities of learners in primary schools in Ho Municipality. The study is grounded in the Differentiated Instruction (DI) Theory and utilized a sample of 12 teachers from four primary schools selected through convenience sampling. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, which were meticulously coded and analyzed thematically to uncover patterns and themes. The study revealed that teachers view differentiated instruction as essential for accommodating diverse learning styles/approaches/dispositions, adapting teaching techniques to individual needs, and promoting inclusive practices. Again, it revealed that primary school English language teachers employed flexible grouping, diverse assessments, action-oriented teaching, technology integration, individualized explanations, and student-centered and peer learning activities. However, the consistent use of tiered assignments to address varying academic levels was notably absent, indicating a gap in the full implementation of DI. The study concludes that employing various innovative teaching strategies in ELCs is crucial for enhancing primary school educational quality and student achievement.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing migration to Ho Municipality has led to student diversity and presents challenges that need urgent attention in ELCs. Thus, the issue of how to cater to diverse learning needs and abilities in ELCs is becoming more pressing, especially given Ghanaian society's increasing linguistic and cultural diversity. However, creating inclusive classrooms where learner diversity and abilities are catered for is challenging in Ghana (Opoku-Nkoom & Ackah-Jnr, 2023). Due to the uniqueness of each learner in the classroom setting, catering to

learner diversity and abilities is premised on the significant strategies put in place by educators in the educational landscape. Inclusivity has become a priority in modern classrooms, and educationists express a need for ongoing professional learning to support teacher's knowledge and skills in inclusive education (Carrington et al., 2024).

Learning styles, cognitive styles, and learning preferences are only a few of the notions that have emerged due to learners' individuality (Rytivaara, 2011). The elementary school curriculum in Finland takes individual characteristics into account, such as gender and background, and acknowledges learning styles. Teachers are required to take these variances into account when instructing students (Finnish National Board of Education, 2004). In Europe, academic diversity in classrooms is frequently referred to as "heterogeneous" (Rytivaara, 2011). Catering to learner diversity and needs has been emphasized by Abney and Krulatz (2015) and Oliveira and Shoffner (2016), who highlight the importance of creating linguistically and culturally diverse environments for differentiated teaching and assessment.

Extensive research has repeatedly underscored the significance of customizing instructional strategies to accommodate the wide range of student demands. According to Petrusheva and Propeska (2023), combining generic classroom tactics with subject-specific conceptual needs and modifying teaching approaches to accommodate different learning styles is critical. According to Nanney (2020), a student-centered approach is necessary and emphasizes the value of catering to each student's unique needs, interests, and developmental stage. To create a more student-focused classroom, Hannay et al. (2010) expand on this idea by suggesting particular tactics like the "servant-professor" model and active learning. These studies show how important it is to modify instruction to fit each student's specific needs.

In 2016, a policy directive from the Ministry of Education in Ghana encouraged schools to identify and address the diverse needs of their students, take into account their varying learning styles and rates, and guarantee quality education by utilizing resources in collaboration with school communities and developing appropriate curricula, organizational structures, and teaching strategies. Ghana's policy directive on learner variety and abilities aims to establish learning environments where each student feels appreciated, encouraged, and involved in learning. Even if governmental and educational policies are shifting toward inclusive education with more significant support, most instructors still face conflicts, according to Opoku-Nkoom and Ackah-Jnr (2023). Ghanaian research has brought attention to the difficulties in addressing a range of learning requirements in the classroom. For example, Agbenyega and Deku (2011)

emphasized mechanical and prescriptive instructional approaches, disregarding student variety and various learning styles.

Notwithstanding these endeavors, the pragmatic execution of inclusive education in Ghanaian schools continues to present numerous challenges. Teachers often grapple with inadequate training and resources to effectively manage diverse classrooms and implement individualized learning approaches. These challenges may be due to a weak foundation in teacher education as student teachers have not been given enough opportunity to reflect on their values, beliefs, biases, and attitudes toward learners with disabilities to develop an appreciation of learners with disabilities and to be sensitive toward them (Naami & Mort, 2023). Furthermore, the gap between policy and practice is exacerbated by insufficient support systems and a shortage of specialized teaching materials tailored to diverse learner needs. According to Danquah (2019), the limitations range from a lack of a result-oriented curriculum to a severe lack of physical structures and facilities to foster inclusiveness in the classroom. To better address the varied needs of kids in Ghanaian schools, there is an urgent need for improved support systems, focused professional development, and more adaptable instructional strategies. It shows this mismatch between policy directives and classroom realities.

With various factors such as different learning needs, abilities, language proficiency levels, and cultural backgrounds among the students, the study aims to examine the strategies or practices that promote equitable educational experiences for all students, regardless of their characteristics. There are many studies about diverse learning needs in Ghana (Ackah-Jnr & Danso, 2019; Agbenyega & Deku, 2011; Opoku-Nkoom & Ackah-Jnr, 2023). For instance, Ackah-Jnr and Danso (2019) conducted a comprehensive examination of the challenges faced by teachers in accommodating diverse learning needs within the Ghanaian educational system. Their study focused on identifying educators' barriers, such as limited resources and inadequate training. They highlighted the impact of these barriers on the effectiveness of teaching strategies and the overall learning experience for students with varying needs. Their study, however, did not go into great detail on the particular tactics that might be used to enhance the adaptability of instructional methods. Additionally, Agbenyega and Deku (2011) looked into the pedagogical approaches employed in Ghanaian classrooms, focusing on the mechanical and prescriptive methods that frequently fall short of accommodating a variety of learning styles. They emphasized that these methods can marginalize learners with various learning needs and are not aligned with inclusive education principles. Although they contributed significantly,

their study did not provide concrete suggestions for changing these instructional strategies to be more inclusive. Additionally, Opoku-Nkoom and Ackah-Jnr (2023) examined the increasing support for inclusive education within Ghanaian policy and its practical implications in schools. They noted that while policies have shifted towards inclusivity, teachers face ongoing tensions and challenges in implementing these policies effectively. Their study highlighted the discrepancies between policy intentions and classroom realities but did not comprehensively analyze the specific support mechanisms needed to bridge this gap. Therefore, little is known about teaching strategies for catering to diverse learning needs and abilities in ELCs in primary schools in Ghana. The present study has been undertaken to bridge the gap by exploring innovative strategies for addressing diverse learning needs in Ghanaian English language classrooms. It therefore aimed to respond to the following research inquiries: (1) What is the level of comprehension regarding differentiated instruction among English language teachers in Ho Municipality? (2) How do primary school English language teachers in Ho Municipality adapt their teaching strategies to accommodate students' diverse learning abilities?

The study highlights that children have different learning styles, speeds, and capacities in an effort to contribute to the conversation about how every student has an equal opportunity for success in ELCs. The research will aid in the professional growth of teachers. Professional development programs can be informed by analyzing teachers' grasp of differentiated instruction and teaching styles. It will help to personalize training sessions and resources that will guide teachers in better assisting to meet the diverse demands of their students. Additionally, the research's conclusions will impact curriculum creation and national, state, and local educational policies. It provides policymakers with information on areas that need more significant funding or assistance to help teachers implement differentiated instruction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research utilized the Differentiated Instruction (DI) principle as its foundation. According to Rasheed and Wahid (2018), DI is one of the groundbreaking theories in education that has revolutionized how teachers adapt their instruction to the requirements of their students. DI as a concept has roots in the work of several educational theorists, but one of the key figures associated with its development is Carol Ann Tomlinson. Tomlinson's work—especially her book “Differentiated Instruction in the Regular Classroom”—has played a significant role in advancing the notion that educators should modify their pedagogy to meet

the varied requirements of their learners. Her method strongly emphasizes identifying and resolving the variation in learners' learning profiles, interests, and readiness levels. How a teacher responds to a student's needs while acknowledging that each student's needs are unique is known as differentiation. Three guiding concepts comprise the essence of the approach (Rasheed & Wahid, 2018). The three are flexible grouping, ongoing assessment, and high-quality curriculum (Rasheed & Wahid, 2018).

Internal and exterior differentiation are the two categories of differentiation. Placing diverse students in several classrooms is known as external differentiation. Here, students are arranged in groups based on their skill levels. Within the classroom, internal differentiation involves adjusting the curriculum, how it is delivered, and other factors (Sternberg & Zhang, 2005). DI gives educators the power to tackle the diversity of abilities and learning styles found in a single classroom. Within the context of the Ho Municipality, where learners converge from varied backgrounds with different levels of prior knowledge and language competence, DI offers a lens through which instruction could be personalized to suit individuals. This framework ensures that every pupil is placed at the right level, sufficiently challenging them while providing support, hence creating an all-inclusive and fair studying environment.

Within classrooms, differentiated instruction (DI) has emerged as a critical tactic for meeting a wide range of learning needs. Differentiated education, according to Tomlinson (2001), is a method of teaching that adjusts lessons to each student's needs by changing the materials, procedures, end products, and learning settings. According to Tomlinson and Strickland (2005), effective differentiation necessitates a thorough comprehension of the diverse learning profiles of students, including their interests, readiness levels, and learning profiles. Research on teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction reveals that while the concept is widely recognized as beneficial, practical implementation often falls short. For example, McCarthy et al. (2016) discovered that although many educators recognize the value of DI, they have difficulty putting it into practice because they lack the necessary tools and training.

Further research by Hargreaves (2007) highlights that teachers frequently face challenges in implementing DI due to rigid curricula and standardized testing pressures. Teachers often express a need for more professional development and support to apply DI strategies effectively. In contrast, research by Bender (2012) emphasizes that teachers who receive ongoing training and support in DI practices are more successful in adapting their instruction

to meet diverse student needs. Bender's study suggests that practical workshops and collaborative planning time can effectively enhance teachers' ability to implement DI.

Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences states that understanding and addressing various intelligence types can significantly impact how well kids learn. Teachers who employ strategies aligned with Gardner's theory, such as using varied instructional methods and incorporating multiple assessment forms, are better equipped to address students' individual learning needs. One key strategy for accommodating diverse learning abilities is using formative assessments. Black and Wiliam (1998) found that regular formative assessments help teachers gauge students' understanding and adjust instruction accordingly. This method makes it possible to provide individualized feedback and timely interventions, both essential for satisfying the needs of students with different skill levels.

Furthermore, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a concept introduced by Vygotsky in 1978, emphasizes the value of scaffolding in education. Learning growth can be facilitated by teachers who offer scaffolding or temporary support based on each student's present comprehension level. Effective scaffolding enables students to build on their prior knowledge and skills, according to research by Wood et al. (1976), which lends credence to this. A key tactic for addressing a range of learning styles in the classroom has been the increasing use of technology in education in recent years. The concepts of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), according to Rose and Meyer (2002), support the use of technology to offer a variety of engagement, representation, and action/expression options, thereby meeting the needs and preferences of diverse learners. Despite the advantages, challenges remain in implementing these strategies effectively. Research by Tomlinson (2001) indicates that teachers often encounter difficulties with resource constraints and balancing diverse needs within the constraints of a standardized curriculum. Furthermore, studies such as those by Amabile (1996) suggest that while strategies like differentiated instruction and formative assessments are beneficial, their success is contingent upon adequate training, resources, and administrative support.

METHODS

This study looks at instructional techniques for meeting the requirements of students with varying learning styles and proficiency levels in English language classes in the Ho Municipality in the Volta Region. The Volta Region's Ho Municipality served as the study's

location. Located in the heart of the Volta region of Ghana, Ho Municipality is one of the 25 political and administrative districts that make up the area. The capital town of the region is the municipality. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2014), the Ho Municipality is bordered to the south by Adaklu and Agortime-Ziope, to the north and west by Ho-West District, to the east and south-east by Adaklu-Anyigbe District, and the east by the Republic of Togo. One hundred eighty thousand four hundred twenty people live in Ho Municipality, which makes up 10.9% of the region's total population, according to the 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC) (GSS, 2021). Men comprise 47% of the population and women 53% (GSS, 2021).

The study employed the interpretivist paradigm based on understanding the real construction of concepts and meanings within actual settings used by social actors (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher was inspired to do this to learn more about how English language teachers differentiate instruction and modify their methods to meet the different learning styles of their learners. This was accomplished by gaining rich, in-depth information from participants by describing and comprehending their circumstances through verbal and nonverbal behaviors. In line with the interpretivist research paradigm, the qualitative approach was employed. According to Kusi (2012), the goal of qualitative research is to comprehend “depth” as opposed to “breadth” or thoroughly examine a phenomenon. This study methodology offers insight into the meaning that individuals have created or how they interpret the environment and their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The case study design was used in this research. When the lines separating a phenomenon from its environment are blurry, a case study aims to investigate a modern phenomenon in its real-life setting (Crompton, 2019; Yin, 2016). It was necessary to use case study design, which holistically investigates a phenomenon in its natural setting, to uncover the instructional strategies for meeting the varied learning needs and capacities of ELC learners. A purposeful sample of twelve (12) participants, three (3) instructors from each of the four (4) schools, was used. Data saturation led to the selection of this sample size. According to Glaser and Strauss (2017), saturation is crucial when figuring out the appropriate sample size for a qualitative investigation. Here, saturation refers to a state in which information gathered from study participants and subsequent respondents or samples does not offer anything new to the data already collected. The inclusion criterion for participants included teachers who had taught for 3 years or more. The four Primary Schools were conveniently sampled for easy accessibility. In addition, these schools had a mix of students with varying socio-economic backgrounds and cultural diversity.

The teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide within the school environment. Each interview session lasted for between thirty minutes and one hour. The data was quantitatively analyzed using the thematic approach to data analysis, where the interview sessions were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed. The study adhered to the ethics of confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent throughout the entire research process, including data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Throughout the research procedure, the study complied with stringent ethical guidelines to guarantee the confidentiality and integrity of the data gathered. Teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide conducted within the school environment to maintain comfort and relevance. All participating teachers were given pseudonyms to maintain secrecy and anonymity; no reports or publications revealed their actual names. Before the interviews started, all participants gave informed consent, guaranteeing they understood the study's goal and rights. This comprehensive approach to ethical considerations ensured that the study respected participants' privacy and adhered to ethical data collection, analysis, and reporting standards.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Level of Comprehension Regarding Differentiated Instruction among English Language Teachers in Ho Municipality

This section of the study discusses teachers' understanding of DI in ELCs. The study found that teachers understood DI, to a very large extent, as inclusive teaching to accommodate learning styles and adapt teaching techniques to student needs. It is themed and explained further below.

Teaching to Accommodate Different Learning Styles

The first theme from the interviews concerning teachers' understanding of DI was teaching to accommodate different learning styles. In this context, the teachers expressed that there are three main ways learners learn. They mentioned visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners as these three ways and that teaching to meet these styles is confined to differentiated instruction. The following were expressed by some teachers.

I understand differentiated instruction to be teaching to make sure that learners are sorted out adequately in line with learning styles. You see learners learning differently. So, if a teacher consciously teaches with this idea in mind, then he or she is teaching within the context of differentiated instruction. (P.4)

Students learn mainly in three ways. Some students learn by what they see. We say visual learners. Some also learn from what they hear. Such students are referred to as auditory learners. The last is kinesthetic learners. That is, those who learn when they engage by doing. In my view, differentiated instruction is when a teacher teaches to meet these diverse styles. (P.1)

As seen in the interviews, teachers in ELCs in the Ho Municipality have good knowledge of differentiated instruction. This understanding shows teachers can handle each student's unique learning needs and teaching style. Their knowledge of DI recognizes that learners prefer different learning styles through sight, hearing, and touch. This finding resonates with Salem et al. (2016), who found that learning styles-based teaching strategies are helpful for all teachers and students in all academic grades.

Adapting Teaching Techniques to Student Needs

The interviews show that teachers understood differentiated instruction to mean adapting teaching techniques that address the needs of students. The participants indicated that they do this using teaching techniques like role-play, discussion, think-pair-share, etc. A teacher stated below.

With differentiated instruction, teachers use or adapt their teaching techniques to ensure that students understand the lesson very well. I have been using the think-pair-share technique, discussion, and sometimes role-play. Some students want to play, so when you use role-play, you have done them good. (P.12)

Teachers' understanding of DI shows flexibility in teaching to meet the specific preferences of their learners. Adopting strategies such as brainstorming in pairs, dialogue, role-play, etc., changes formal teaching into a dynamic activity that accommodates various types of learning styles or desires from learners or students engaged in their different classrooms. Consequently, the approach supports each child's participation in lessons, enhancing personal awareness of studies conducted during classes. With this understanding, students will understand any new topic covered during that academic term. This finding also aligns with the proposition of Hannay et al. (2010) that calls for strategies they called the "servant-professor" model techniques to foster stronger learning outcomes by focusing on student needs.

Inclusive Teaching

The interviews revealed that DI is viewed as a means of promoting inclusive teaching practices that can accommodate students with different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. Teachers have recognized the significance of using examples and references from diverse cultures to ensure all students are represented and involved in the learning process. A participant expressed below.

Differentiated instruction is all about making sure students from different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds are catered for when teaching. For example, Ho is a city and predominately Ewe; we have students from different tribes in our classrooms. So, if a teacher uses examples from other cultures to teach such students, he or she is teaching by differentiation. (P.9)

The findings indicate that teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction is built on the differentiated theory. Their understanding helped them to create a welcoming and supportive learning environment where all students are valued and respected. This also helps acknowledge that each student has a unique experience and perspective, eventually making them feel like they are part of the class or understand what is being taught. The views of teachers indicate that they teach to promote cross-cultural understanding. Rayner (2007) posits that inclusivity for learners is key to teaching.

The Ways Primary School English Language Teachers in Ho Municipality Adapt Their Teaching Strategies to Accommodate Students' Diverse Learning Abilities

This section examines the teaching strategies for catering to diverse learning needs and abilities in ELCs in Ho Municipality. The themes that emerged from the study include assessment procedure, flexible grouping, action-oriented teaching, technology integration, individualized explanation, student-centered and peer learning. The assessment procedure was first discussed.

Flexible Grouping

The interviews revealed that primary school teachers in the Ho Municipality implemented flexible grouping strategies to meet the varied learning needs and capabilities of EL learners. The teachers shared that they grouped learners based on mixed abilities for tasks

such as discussions, ensuring that both fast and slow learners are involved. Also, seating arrangements were based on different abilities—the following were shared by teachers.

I group the students for group discussions based on mixed abilities, such as fast readers and slow readers. Even their normal seating arrangements, I mix them. I pair a fast learner with a slow learner. I assure you that I have observed that the slow learners imitate the fast learners. (P.2)

I group the students by making sure that those who are very good are not in the same group. I mix them based on different abilities and assign group leaders. When I present them with their questions, they discuss them among themselves and find answers. (P.8)

The data indicate that teachers proactively employed flexible grouping strategies, proving their readiness to address the learning requirements of diverse learners in ELCs. Teachers include every student within a given classroom by ensuring that they combine students with different abilities to create an inclusive environment where each student has a chance to contribute and learn from others. Moreover, through pairing fast learners with slow learners, peer modeling is enhanced, and slower learners can watch and copy strategies used by more skillful classmates. Furthermore, allocating group leaders enhances leadership growth among students while promoting collaborative problem-solving skills. The results supported a study by Rytivaara (2011), which found that flexible grouping can lessen challenging circumstances typically associated with diverse classrooms.

Assessment Procedure

The interviews revealed that EL teachers within the Ho Municipality employ assessment strategies to accommodate their classrooms' different learning needs and abilities. The teachers shared that they do this through diverse methods, including one-on-one interaction with learners about what was taught during class to probe their learning gaps for appropriate intervention. Teachers also help them personally after formative assessment by summoning each student at a time to clarify misunderstandings and give tips on how they could perform better. The participants recounted below.

The study found that teachers in the Ho Municipality used assessment procedures as a strategy for catering to diverse learning needs and abilities in their classrooms. (P.3)

I ask my students what they learned in the previous or the present lesson. At times, I call them by their names individually to tell me what they have learned. By so doing, I get to know their problems about the topic, so I devise ways to handle it. (P.1)

I don't give different assessment questions to students based on their learning abilities but help them to learn during assessment whenever they fail to answer correctly. In doing this, I call such students individually to my table during the marking of their scripts to explain the problem to them. They rework it right after this. (P.6)

Based on the interviews, it can be concluded that teachers' commitment to providing individualized learning support is demonstrated by their use of assessment processes to accommodate students' different needs and ability levels. The data shows that teachers gain insights into student's learning difficulties and subsequently modify their instructional approaches by engaging with students through questioning and individual feedback sessions. As teachers assist the learners during assessments, learners not only comprehend their mistakes but also become responsible for their progress in learning. This strategy creates a supportive atmosphere for studies where learners know they matter in academic life and will get assistance whenever necessary. Sing (2024) maintains that ongoing formative assessments that provide timely feedback, guiding instructions, and identifying areas for additional student support or enrichment help cater to diverse learner needs.

Action-Oriented Teaching

It was revealed in the interviews that teachers in primary schools in the Ho Municipality incorporate action-oriented strategies to cater to their diverse learners in the ELCs. They shared that actions such as gestures and movements made lesson recall easy and interactive. The interviewees shared the following.

Whenever I am teaching the English language, I try as possible to facilitate the lesson with actions. Last week, I facilitated rhymes and action words with actions. They like it whenever I do that. I have realized that teaching with actions in the classroom makes them easily remember and recall lessons. (P.5)

I use different strategies to teach. If I realize that a particular strategy doesn't work, I change it. One of the strategies I use is to teach with actions. (P.11)

The findings indicate that teachers use activity-based teaching strategies to increase student engagement and learning outcomes and incorporate gestures and movements into lessons. Teachers applied action to support verbal instruction, creating multisensory learning experiences that fit different learners' styles and preferences. These strategies foster active participation, enhancing students' ability to remember what has been learned and boosting lesson recall. These practices create appropriate learning conditions for learners. This result is consistent with a study by Huang et al. (2019), which showed that teaching a second language and introducing a word while making simultaneous gestures can help students remember new words.

Technology Integration

The interviews show that teachers in Ho Municipality utilize technology to cater to diverse learning preferences and increase student participation. The teachers shared that they use visual aids and phonics apps that allow the integration of technologies into lessons. They expressed that visual learners benefit from pictures and images, while auditory ones interact with audio materials, which can improve pronunciation and decoding skills. The participants shared the following.

I integrate technology into my teaching. You see, some students learn by seeing so when I download pictures of what I am teaching and show them. This way, they pick whatever they are learning faster. (P.12)

Some of my students learn easily through listening to technological tools. Technology makes learning fun and engaging for them. So, when it comes to reading, I download apps on phonics from the Google Play Store and connect the audio to my Bluetooth speaker for them to listen to. This helps them to break long words into syllabi for easy pronunciation. (P.7)

The data shows that how technology is employed in English language classrooms in Ho municipality reflects how teachers try to embrace diverse learners' needs and improve student participation. In such a context, pictures and phonics applications are used to deal with visual and auditory learners, respectively. For instance, images that support ideas are used as learning aids in supporting visual learning. At the same time, audio materials help to enhance pronunciation and decoding skills among students who learn using their ears. Generally, utilizing technological gadgets not only makes learning interactive and enjoyable but also enables learners to get individualized instruction that suits them best according to their

demands or inclinations. According to Yin and Chai (2020), implementing assistive technology in the classroom can help increase educational equity.

Individualized Explanation

The interviews revealed that teachers in the Ho Municipality use personalized explanation techniques to cater to English language students' learning requirements. To ascertain understanding, teachers hold personal discussions with students after lessons. Teachers deal with reading and learning challenges by giving specific explanations depending on the requirements of each pupil. The teachers shared the following.

After I teach my students anything like reading comprehension and explain it to them, I go a step further to ask them questions about it. If I notice that a particular student lacks understanding, I sit beside him or her and explain it again. I do this one-on-one interaction with them sometimes to help those with reading and learning difficulties. (P.10)

Sometimes, when I am free, I tell the students to approach me regarding any challenge they have. I use the opportunity to explain things to them that reflect on their cultural background and experiences. (P.1)

One-on-one strategy is what makes a weak student of mine become an average student. I do this a lot, and it *is my secret*. (P.2)

According to the interviews, teachers choose personalized explanation tactics to accommodate students' varying learning styles and requirements in extended learning communities. Teachers who use an individualized approach can provide learners with particular support suited to their unique requirements, even if they struggle with comprehension. Because of this, this approach not only assists kids in resolving reading and learning-related issues but also fosters a secure and encouraging learning environment where students can feel like they belong. Moreover, tutors can provide culturally sensitive explanations, making their lessons more pertinent and efficient based on what students have experienced or encountered in life. While there is debate on the efficacy of using learning styles to customize instruction in the classroom (Landrum & McDuffie, 2010), it appears that they work well for managing a heterogeneous classroom (Rytivaara, 2011). According to a recent study by de Oliveira & Jones (2023), young multilingual learners' different learning requirements were met in primary classrooms using culturally sustaining teaching methods that offer examples from pedagogy-informed research investigations.

Student-Centered Teaching with Peer Learning

The interviews revealed that teachers in ELCs in Ho Municipality have adopted student-centered teaching approaches and peer learning strategies to create collaborative learning environments for differential learning. The teachers shared that they put students at the center of instruction, leading to active participation and engagement. They engaged students through techniques such as peer questioning (whereby they learn from each other by repeating correct responses) and pre-learning assignments (whereby they prepare topics in advance and share their knowledge during lessons). The participants offered their experiences in the following comments.

I teach with the students in focus. Some of the students were academically not good when I came to this school. Some of them even pretend to know the answer to your question by raising their hands when you call them. I make them keep standing and ask a student who knows the answer to say it out loud. They then repeat before sitting down. This way, they also learn from their peers. (P.9)

I am not the type that teaches by talking a lot as other teachers do. I give them the topic I will teach for them to learn ahead. When it is time for the actual lesson, I first ask what they learned about the topic before I teach. In some cases, they end up telling me everything and learning from themselves. (P.4)

The interviews indicate a pedagogical shift towards active learning and collaboration in ELCs in Ho Municipality. This has led to the emphasis on student-centered teaching and peer learning. Autonomy and critical thinking skills are supported by teachers who involve students in learning, encouraging learners to take ownership of their education. Peer questioning is a good example of a peer learning activity that increases comprehension among students while at the same time fostering unity and social skills among classmates.

CONCLUSION

Teachers understanding of differentiated instruction are diverse. As a result, teaching strategies for meeting diverse learning needs and abilities in ELCs in Ho Municipality are based on essential themes, including flexible grouping, assessment procedures, action-oriented teaching, technology integration, individualized explanation, and student-centered teaching with peer learning. The strategies revealed in this study strongly align with the differentiated instruction theory. The teachers in the Ho Municipality take a proactive approach to addressing diverse learning needs through flexible grouping techniques that encourage inclusion and modeling among learners of various capabilities. Moreover, they use assessment processes that

give personalized support, thus promoting targeted help by creating an atmosphere conducive to learning. Also, action-oriented pedagogy improves students' engagement and retention by incorporating dynamic and interactive teaching methods.

In addition, incorporating technology accommodates different learning preferences by providing several ways for students to learn and be actively involved. Individualized explanation approaches are used to respond to learners' reading problems by providing personalized assistance based on learners' specific needs. Finally, learner-centered pedagogical approaches and cooperative learning techniques foster self-reliance and thinking abilities among learners. Therefore, teaching to cater to diverse learner needs and abilities in ELCs through diverse teaching strategies forms a key cornerstone of primary school teaching in improving learners' education quality and achievement levels.

To ensure that schools within Ho Municipality have access to modern educational resources and technology tools, infrastructure development should be given priority by the Ministry of Education. Integrated with technology, effective teaching strategies can be supported in schools by incorporating adequate technological resources, thereby improving student involvement and learning experiences. Moreover, the Ghana Education Service should regularly arrange training workshops and professional development courses for teachers to build their capacity for fully applying various teaching strategies. The focus areas for these programs should include flexible grouping, assessment procedures, technology integration, and student-centered approaches. Furthermore, teachers need to regularly improve their teaching skills and pedagogical approaches through continuous professional development activities. Therefore, these may involve attending workshops, seminars, or online courses regarding implementing different teaching strategies and effectively utilizing technology in classrooms.

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