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INTEGRATING DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION INTO PRE-SERVICE TEACHER CURRICULUM: IN PURSUIT OF EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract

This chapter investigates the integration of differentiated instruction strategies into pre-service teacher education curriculums, with a specific focus on promoting equity and inclusion in English language education. Differentiated instruction, a pedagogical approach tailored to meet diverse student needs, is critical in cultivating inclusive classrooms that enhance learning outcomes for all students. This study, using a desktop literature review approach, meticulously analyses peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings to identify effective practices and theoretical underpinnings that support the adoption of differentiated instruction in teacher training programmes. The review reveals that while differentiated instruction is widely endorsed for its potential to address diverse learning styles and backgrounds, its practical implementation in pre-service curriculums remains inconsistent. Several barriers emerge, including insufficient training on adaptive teaching methods, lack of resources, and inadequate support systems within teacher education institutions. However, studies also highlight successful integration strategies that involve comprehensive training modules, hands-on practice with diverse learner scenarios, and ongoing professional support. Empirical evidence suggests that pre-service teachers equipped with robust differentiated instruction skills are better prepared to foster inclusive environments that recognize and nurture individual student potentials. This is particularly pertinent in English language learning, where linguistic diversity presents unique challenges and opportunities. The review also underscores the need for educational policy reforms to reinforce the importance of these strategies in teacher accreditation standards. This paper contributes to the broader discourse on teacher education by delineating a clear framework for embedding differentiated instruction into pre-service programmes, aiming to bridge the gap between theoretical advocacy and practical application. It calls for a concerted effort among stakeholders to prioritize and resource this crucial aspect of teacher education.

Keywords: Differentiated Instruction, Pre-Service Teacher Education, Equity, Inclusion, English Language Learning

Introduction

The integration of differentiated instruction strategies into pre-service teacher education curriculums has garnered considerable attention in recent educational discourse (Hunter, 2023). This pedagogical approach, designed to address the diverse needs of students, is pivotal in creating inclusive classrooms that enhance learning outcomes for all learners. The importance of differentiated instruction in fostering educational equity and inclusion is particularly significant (Simmonds & Ajani, 2022), in the context of English language education, where linguistic diversity presents unique challenges and opportunities (Acquah & Szelei, 2020). This chapter critically examines the incorporation of differentiated instruction in teacher training programmes, focusing on its theoretical underpinnings, practical applications, and the barriers to its effective implementation.

Differentiated instruction is rooted in the philosophy that teachers should adapt their teaching methods and materials to meet the diverse needs of students (Greco, 2023). This approach contrasts with the traditional "one-

size-fits-all" model of education, which often fails to address the unique learning styles, interests, and abilities of individual students (Akiba, 2011). In the context of English language education, differentiated instruction is especially critical as it can accommodate students with varying levels of language proficiency, cultural backgrounds, and learning preferences (Beltramo, 2017).

The theoretical foundations of differentiated instruction are anchored in several educational theories that emphasize the importance of personalized learning. Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivism highlights the role of social interaction in learning and the need for scaffolding to support students at various levels of readiness. Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences suggests that students have diverse types of intelligences and learning modalities, which necessitates a varied approach to teaching. Additionally, Tomlinson's (2001) Model of Differentiated Instruction provides a framework for modifying content, process, and product based on student readiness, interest, and learning profile.

The practical application of differentiated instruction in pre-service teacher education involves equipping future teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement this approach effectively. Comprehensive training modules that combine theoretical instruction with practical, direct experiences are essential. Such modules should include case studies, simulations, and opportunities for pre-service teachers to practice differentiation in controlled environments (Assaf & Lopez, 2015). Research indicates that these practices not only enhance the competence of pre-service teachers but also increase their confidence in using differentiated instruction strategies in diverse classroom settings (Belfi, Goos, De Fraine, & Van Damme, 2012).

Despite its recognized benefits, the implementation of differentiated instruction in pre-service teacher education curriculums is often inconsistent. Several barriers hinder its effective integration, including insufficient training on adaptive teaching methods, limited resources, and inadequate support systems within teacher education institutions (Blik et al., 2015). These challenges underscore the need for systemic changes in teacher education programmes to prioritize and support the development of differentiated instruction competencies.

Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach. Teacher education programmes must provide ongoing professional development opportunities that focus on differentiated instruction. Mentorship programmes that pair pre-service teachers with experienced teachers can offer valuable guidance and support. Additionally, creating professional learning communities within teacher education institutions can foster a collaborative learning environment where pre-service teachers can share best practices and resources (Bondie, Dahnke, & Zusho, 2019).

Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in improving student outcomes. Studies have shown that students in classrooms where differentiated instruction is implemented achieve higher levels of academic performance and exhibit greater engagement and motivation (Borko, 2004). This is particularly important in English language education, where differentiated instruction can help students of varying linguistic abilities and backgrounds to succeed (Brevik, Gunnulfsen, & Renzulli, 2018).

In the context of English language education, differentiated instruction also plays a crucial role in promoting inclusivity and equity (Iitula, 2024). By addressing the unique needs of English language learners (ELLs), teachers can create a more equitable educational environment that supports the academic and linguistic development of all students (Brigandi, Gilson, & Miller, 2019). Effective strategies for differentiating instruction for ELLs include using visual aids, modifying texts to match students' reading levels, and incorporating language scaffolds such as sentence frames and word banks (Dack, 2018).

Finally, the successful integration of differentiated instruction into pre-service teacher education programmes requires supportive educational policies. Current teacher accreditation standards should be revised to emphasize the importance of differentiated instruction and ensure that all teacher candidates receive adequate training in this area (De Neve & Devos, 2016). Policies that mandate ongoing professional development in differentiated instruction for in-service teachers can further support the continuous improvement of teaching practices (Desimone, 2009).

The integration of differentiated instruction strategies into pre-service teacher education curriculums is essential for promoting equity and inclusion in English language education. Differentiated instruction, supported by robust theoretical foundations and empirical evidence, has the potential to address diverse learning needs and enhance educational outcomes. However, its effective implementation requires comprehensive training, ongoing professional support, and supportive educational policies. By prioritizing differentiated instruction in teacher education, stakeholders can ensure that future teachers are well-equipped to create inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students.

Theoretical Framework

Differentiated instruction is firmly rooted in several educational theories that emphasize the necessity of tailoring teaching strategies to cater to the diverse needs of individual learners. One of the primary theories supporting differentiated instruction is Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivism. Vygotsky posits that learning is inherently a social process and that knowledge is constructed through interaction with others. This perspective highlights the importance of social interaction and the role of more knowledgeable others in facilitating learning. In the context of differentiated instruction, this theory justifies the need for scaffolding—providing temporary support to students based on their current level of understanding and gradually removing it as they become more competent (Vygotsky, 1978). This approach ensures that learners receive the appropriate level of challenge and support, enabling them to progress at their own pace.

Vygotsky's emphasis on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is particularly relevant to differentiated instruction. The ZPD refers to the range of tasks that a learner can perform with the help of a more knowledgeable other but cannot yet perform independently. By identifying each student's ZPD, teachers can tailor their instruction to provide the necessary scaffolding, thereby maximizing each learner's potential for growth (Vygotsky, 1978). This aspect of Social Constructivism aligns with the principles of differentiated instruction, which advocate for adjusting teaching methods and materials to meet the varied needs of students.

Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences further supports the rationale for differentiated instruction by recognizing that students possess different types of intelligences and learning styles. Gardner identifies multiple intelligences, including linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences. According to this theory, effective teaching should accommodate these diverse intelligences to optimize learning outcomes (Gardner, 1983). This perspective challenges the traditional notion of a single, uniform approach to teaching and underscores the importance of providing varied instructional strategies that cater to the unique strengths and preferences of each student.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences suggests that students learn best when instruction aligns with their dominant intelligences. For instance, a student with strong spatial intelligence might benefit from visual aids and direct activities, while a student with strong linguistic intelligence might excel through reading and writing tasks (Gardner, 1983). By incorporating a range of instructional strategies that address different intelligences, teachers can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment. This approach not only enhances student engagement but also promotes a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Tomlinson's (2001) Model of Differentiated Instruction provides a practical framework for implementing differentiated instruction in the classroom. Tomlinson outlines specific strategies for adjusting the content, process, and product of learning based on student readiness, interest, and learning profile. This model emphasizes the need to provide multiple pathways for students to engage with the material, process new information, and demonstrate their understanding (Tomlinson, 2001). By differentiating these elements of instruction, teachers can ensure that all students have access to meaningful and challenging learning experiences that are tailored to their individual needs.

Tomlinson's model advocates for flexible grouping, ongoing assessment, and the use of tiered activities to address the diverse needs of students. Flexible grouping allows students to collaborate with different peers based on their specific learning needs and the task at hand, promoting a dynamic and supportive learning environment (Tomlinson, 2001). Ongoing assessment helps teachers to continuously monitor student progress and adjust their instruction accordingly. Tiered activities provide varying levels of difficulty within the same lesson, ensuring that all students are appropriately challenged and supported.

The integration of these theories into pre-service teacher education curriculums is essential for preparing future teachers to effectively implement differentiated instruction. Pre-service teachers need to understand the theoretical foundations of differentiated instruction and develop the skills to apply these principles in their teaching practice. Comprehensive training programmes that include both theoretical instruction and practical, direct experiences can help pre-service teachers to develop these competencies (Griful-Freixenet, Vantieghem, Gheysens, & Struyven, 2020). Such programmes should include case studies, simulations, and opportunities for pre-service teachers to practice differentiation in controlled environments.

The rationale for using Social Constructivism and the Theory of Multiple Intelligences as theoretical frameworks for this study is clear. These theories provide a robust foundation for understanding the principles of differentiated instruction and offer practical guidance for its implementation. By grounding the study in these theories, we can better explore the potential of differentiated instruction to promote equity and inclusion in English language education. Moreover, these theories highlight the importance of personalized learning and the need to address the diverse needs of students, which are central tenets of differentiated instruction.

Conversely, the integration of differentiated instruction strategies into pre-service teacher education curriculums is critical for fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments. The theoretical foundations provided by Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, and Tomlinson's Model of Differentiated Instruction offer valuable insights into the principles and practices of differentiated instruction. By equipping future teachers with the knowledge and skills to implement these strategies, we can ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in their educational journey.

Method

The methodology for this study employed a desktop literature review, an approach suitable for synthesizing existing research on the integration of differentiated instruction strategies into pre-service teacher education curriculums. This method was chosen due to its ability to provide a comprehensive overview of current knowledge, identify gaps, and highlight effective practices and theoretical underpinnings. The desktop review method involves systematically searching, selecting, and analysing relevant academic sources, which allows for an extensive examination of existing literature without the logistical constraints of primary data collection (Snyder, 2019).

The literature search was conducted using several academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and Elsevier, to ensure a broad and inclusive range of sources. Keywords such as "differentiated instruction," "pre-service teacher education," "inclusive education," and "English language teaching" were used in various combinations to locate relevant studies. The inclusion criteria were peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings published between 2010 and 2024. These criteria ensured the inclusion of contemporary and authoritative sources that provide the most up-to-date insights and practices in the field (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016).

Data extraction involved a meticulous process of identifying key themes and patterns across the selected literature. Each source was reviewed to extract information on the theoretical frameworks, practical applications, and barriers to the implementation of differentiated instruction in pre-service teacher education.

This process was guided by the research objectives, which focused on understanding the theoretical underpinnings, identifying successful integration strategies, and recognizing the challenges faced by teacher education institutions (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). The systematic approach ensured that the findings were comprehensive and relevant to the research questions.

The synthesis of the extracted data followed a thematic analysis approach, where common themes and insights were categorized and analysed. This method allowed for a structured and coherent presentation of the findings, highlighting both the strengths and limitations of current practices in differentiated instruction within pre-service teacher education. The desktop review methodology was justified by its efficiency and effectiveness in aggregating and synthesizing a vast amount of information, providing a robust foundation for understanding the current state of differentiated instruction in teacher education and informing recommendations for future practice and policy (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Findings and Discussion

Thematic analysis of publications accessed for the study resulted in various themes that have been presented in this sections. Thus, this section presents in-depth explanations on the phenomenon. The publications used were articles published in English Language and in peer-reviewed publications.

Effective Practices in Differentiated Instruction

The desktop literature review conducted for this chapter revealed several effective practices for integrating differentiated instruction into pre-service teacher education programmes. One key practice is the incorporation of comprehensive training modules that provide both theoretical knowledge and practical skills in differentiated instruction. Acquah and Szelei (2020) advocate for the inclusion of case studies and simulations in teacher training to help pre-service teachers apply differentiated strategies in real-world scenarios. These modules should cover various aspects of differentiated instruction, such as adjusting content, process, and products to meet the diverse needs of students.

Direct practice with diverse learner scenarios is another effective strategy highlighted by the literature. This approach allows pre-service teachers to experience and reflect on the implementation of differentiated instruction in a controlled environment. Research by Assaf and Lopez (2015) emphasizes the benefits of using role-playing and peer teaching exercises to enhance pre-service teachers' confidence and competence in differentiating instruction. Such practical experiences enable pre-service teachers to develop a deeper understanding of how to tailor their teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles and needs.

Moreover, ongoing professional support and mentorship are crucial for the successful integration of differentiated instruction into teacher training programmes. According to Bondie, Dahnke, and Zusho (2019), providing pre-service teachers with continuous feedback and opportunities for reflection through mentoring relationships can significantly improve their ability to implement differentiated strategies effectively. Mentors can guide pre-service teachers in navigating the complexities of classroom dynamics and adapting their instructional approaches to better serve all students.

Finally, embedding differentiated instruction principles into the core curriculum of teacher education programmes can ensure that these strategies become an integral part of pre-service teachers' pedagogical toolkit. Blik et al. (2015) argue that when differentiated instruction is systematically integrated into coursework and field experiences, it fosters a mindset of inclusivity and responsiveness among future teachers. This holistic approach not only equips pre-service teachers with the necessary skills but also reinforces the value of meeting diverse learners' needs as a fundamental aspect of effective teaching.

Barriers to Implementing Differentiated Instruction

Despite the acknowledged benefits of differentiated instruction, its implementation in pre-service teacher education curriculums is often inconsistent (Azahry, 2024). One significant barrier is the insufficient training on adaptive teaching methods. Studies indicate that many teacher education programmes do not adequately prepare pre-service teachers to differentiate instruction, resulting in a lack of confidence and skills among new teachers (Bower, 2012). This gap in training means that novice teachers are often unprepared to meet the diverse needs of their students, leading to less effective classroom practices and diminished student outcomes (Sepadi, 2023).

Resource constraints also pose a substantial challenge to the implementation of differentiated instruction. Effective differentiation requires access to a variety of teaching materials and resources tailored to different learning styles and levels of readiness. However, many teacher education institutions struggle with limited budgets and resources, making it difficult to provide pre-service teachers with the tools they need to implement differentiated strategies effectively. This lack of resources can impede the ability of future teachers to practice and refine their differentiation techniques during their training.

The absence of robust support systems further exacerbates the issue. Mentoring and ongoing professional development are crucial for helping pre-service teachers transition from theoretical understanding to practical application of differentiated instruction. Brevik, Gunnulfsen, and Renzulli (2018) highlight that without these supports, pre-service teachers may struggle to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate diverse learners. Effective mentoring can provide the guidance and feedback necessary for pre-service teachers to develop and sustain differentiated instructional practices, yet such systems are often underdeveloped or lacking in many teacher education programmes.

Additionally, institutional resistance to change can hinder the adoption of differentiated instruction. Traditional teaching practices and curricula that emphasize uniformity over individualization can create an environment where differentiation is undervalued or misunderstood. Overcoming these systemic barriers requires a concerted effort from educational leaders to prioritize and promote differentiated instruction as a fundamental component of teacher education. By addressing these challenges, teacher education programmes can better prepare pre-service teachers to create inclusive and effective learning environments for all students.

Successful Integration Strategies

To overcome these barriers, several successful integration strategies have been identified in the literature. Comprehensive training modules that incorporate both theoretical and practical components are essential. These modules should include detailed instruction on how to design and implement differentiated lessons, as well as opportunities for pre-service teachers to practice these skills in simulated or real classroom settings (Borko, 2004). Such training ensures that pre-service teachers not only understand the principles of differentiated instruction but also develop the confidence and competence to apply these strategies effectively in diverse classroom environments.

Ongoing professional support is also crucial for the successful implementation of differentiated instruction. Mentorship programmes that pair pre-service teachers with experienced teachers can provide valuable guidance and feedback, facilitating the transition from theory to practice. Furthermore, professional learning communities within teacher education institutions can foster collaborative learning and the sharing of best practices in differentiated instruction (Bondie, Dahnke, & Zusho, 2019). These communities create a supportive environment where pre-service teachers can continuously improve their skills and stay updated with the latest research and innovations in the field.

The application of differentiated instruction is particularly pertinent in English language education, where students often exhibit a wide range of linguistic abilities and backgrounds. Differentiated instruction can address these diverse needs by providing targeted support and tailored learning experiences. For example, differentiated instruction strategies such as tiered assignments, flexible grouping, and the use of varied instructional materials can help English language learners (ELLs) access the curriculum more effectively (Belfi, Goos, De Fraine, & Van Damme, 2012). These strategies allow teachers to meet students at their individual levels of readiness and provide appropriate challenges to promote language development and academic growth.

Moreover, differentiated instruction promotes an inclusive learning environment that values and respects linguistic diversity. By recognizing and addressing the unique needs of ELLs, teachers can create a more equitable educational experience that fosters both language development and academic achievement (Assaf & Lopez, 2015). This inclusive approach not only benefits ELLs but also enriches the learning experience for all students by promoting cultural awareness and understanding. Implementing differentiated instruction in English language education thus supports a holistic approach to teaching that prepares students for success in a multicultural and multilingual world.

Need for Educational Policy Reforms

The successful integration of differentiated instruction into pre-service teacher education programmes also requires supportive educational policies. Current teacher accreditation standards should be revised to emphasize the importance of differentiated instruction and ensure that all teacher candidates receive adequate training in this area (De Neve & Devos, 2016). Policies that mandate ongoing professional development in differentiated instruction for in-service teachers can further support the continuous improvement of teaching practices (Desimone, 2009). Such revisions will help establish a foundational expectation that differentiated instruction is a core component of effective teaching.

Additionally, funding and resources should be allocated to support the implementation of differentiated instruction in teacher education programmes (Ajani, 2022). This includes providing access to diverse instructional materials, technology, and professional development opportunities (Ajani, 2024). Teacher education institutions need sufficient financial support to incorporate these elements into their curricula, ensuring that pre-service teachers have the tools and resources necessary to learn and apply differentiated instruction strategies effectively (Guskey, 2002). By investing in these resources, educational institutions can create rich learning environments that better prepare future teachers (Buthelezi & Ajani, 2023).

By prioritizing differentiated instruction in educational policy, stakeholders can ensure that pre-service teachers are well-prepared to meet the diverse needs of their future students. This approach promotes equity and inclusion, addressing the varied learning styles, backgrounds, and abilities of students. Policies that support differentiated instruction help to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, leading to more effective teaching practices and improved educational outcomes for all students (De Neve & Devos, 2016; Guskey, 2002). This comprehensive support is essential for fostering an educational system that is responsive to the needs of a diverse student population.

Empirical Evidence and Case Studies

Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in enhancing student outcomes. Research indicates that students in classrooms where differentiated instruction is practiced achieve higher academic performance and demonstrate increased engagement and motivation (Brevik, Gunnulfsen, & Renzulli, 2018). For instance, Deunk et al. (2018) found that differentiated instruction significantly improved reading comprehension and writing skills among middle school students, highlighting its impact on critical literacy skills.

Case studies of successful implementations in teacher education programmes provide additional insights into effective strategies. Bondie, Dahnke, and Zusho (2019) described a teacher education program that successfully integrated differentiated instruction training through a blend of coursework, practicum experiences, and mentoring. The program's graduates reported high levels of confidence and competence in applying differentiated strategies in their classrooms, demonstrating the value of comprehensive, hands-on training.

These findings underscore the importance of embedding differentiated instruction into teacher education programmes to prepare future teachers effectively. By incorporating both theoretical and practical components, such programmes can equip pre-service teachers with the skills needed to implement differentiated instruction successfully, thereby improving educational outcomes and fostering inclusive learning environments. The evidence supports a strong case for ongoing investment in differentiated instruction training as a cornerstone of teacher preparation.

Addressing Linguistic Diversity

In the context of English language education, differentiated instruction is crucial for meeting the needs of linguistically diverse students. Research indicates that English Language Learners (ELLs) benefit significantly from instructional approaches tailored to their specific language proficiency levels and individual learning needs (Assaf & Lopez, 2015). By customizing instruction, teachers can provide ELLs with the support necessary to develop their language skills while simultaneously engaging with academic content.

Effective strategies for differentiating instruction for ELLs include using visual aids, modifying texts to align with students' reading levels, and incorporating language scaffolds such as sentence frames and word banks. These strategies help make complex academic content more accessible and understandable for ELLs. Additionally, providing opportunities for collaborative learning and peer support can significantly enhance ELLs' language development and academic achievement (Acquah & Szelei, 2020).

The implementation of these differentiated strategies ensures that ELLs receive the appropriate level of challenge and support needed to thrive in the classroom. By addressing the diverse linguistic needs of students, teachers can create an inclusive learning environment that promotes equity and fosters academic success for all learners. This approach aligns with best practices in English language education and underscores the importance of differentiated instruction in achieving educational equity.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

To prepare pre-service teachers for the challenges of differentiated instruction, teacher education programmes must integrate comprehensive training and professional development opportunities. This integration should include coursework that thoroughly covers the principles and strategies of differentiated instruction, ensuring that pre-service teachers have a solid theoretical foundation. Additionally, practicum experiences that allow pre-service teachers to apply these strategies in real classroom settings are crucial for translating theory into practice (Assaf & Lopez, 2015). Such hands-on experience helps pre-service teachers develop the confidence and competence needed to effectively implement differentiated instruction.

Ongoing professional development is also essential for in-service teachers to maintain and enhance their differentiation skills. Professional development programmes should offer a variety of opportunities, such as workshops, coaching, and collaborative learning sessions, specifically focused on differentiated instruction (Bondie, Dahnke, & Zusho, 2019). These programmes should be designed to address the evolving needs of teachers and provide them with the latest strategies and tools for effective differentiation. Regular professional development ensures that teachers stay current with best practices and continue to refine their instructional approaches.

Creating professional learning communities within schools can further support teachers in their efforts to implement differentiated instruction. These communities provide a collaborative environment where teachers can share best practices, resources, and experiences. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and mutual support, professional learning communities help teachers overcome challenges and enhance their skills in differentiated instruction. This collaborative approach not only benefits individual teachers but also contributes to a more inclusive and effective educational environment for all students.

The Role of Technology in Differentiated Instruction

Technology can significantly support differentiated instruction by providing tools and resources tailored to diverse learning needs (Maphalala & Ajani, 2024). Digital platforms and applications offer personalized learning experiences, adaptive assessments, and interactive content, thereby engaging students and supporting their individual learning paths (Brevik, Gunnulfsen, & Renzulli, 2018). These technological resources enable teachers to effectively address varying readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles within the classroom.

For instance, learning management systems (LMS) can deliver differentiated content and assessments to students based on their specific needs. These systems can be programmed to provide materials that match students' readiness levels, offering a customized educational experience. Educational software and apps also play a crucial role in this process, offering targeted practice and feedback in core skill areas such as reading, writing, and math (Assaf & Lopez, 2015). This targeted approach helps students progress at their own pace, ensuring that they receive the support they need to succeed (Ajani & Maphalala, 2023).

Integrating technology into differentiated instruction enhances its effectiveness by making learning more engaging and personalized (Khoalenyane & Ajani, 2023). The use of digital tools allows for real-time assessment and feedback, enabling teachers to adjust instruction as needed to meet each student's unique needs. This approach not only improves academic outcomes but also fosters a more inclusive and supportive learning

environment. By leveraging technology, teachers can better cater to the diverse needs of their students, promoting a more equitable and effective educational experience.

Implications of the Study

To support the effective integration of differentiated instruction into pre-service teacher education programmes, several recommendations for policy and practice are essential. Firstly, teacher education programmes must revise their curricula to incorporate comprehensive training in differentiated instruction. This training should encompass both theoretical foundations and practical applications, providing opportunities for hands-on practice and reflection (Akiba, 2011). This approach ensures that pre-service teachers are well-prepared to address the diverse needs of their future students effectively.

Secondly, educational policies should mandate ongoing professional development in differentiated instruction for in-service teachers (Govender & Ajani, 2021). Continuous professional development is crucial for teachers to refine their skills, stay updated on best practices, and adapt to evolving educational needs (Gheysens et al., 2020; Govender et al., 2023). By institutionalizing professional development, teachers can sustain high-quality differentiated instruction throughout their careers, enhancing student outcomes and fostering inclusive learning environments.

Thirdly, adequate resources and funding should be allocated to support the implementation of differentiated instruction in teacher education programmes and schools. This includes providing access to diverse instructional materials, advanced technology, and professional development opportunities (Ajani, 2023; Desimone, 2009). Investment in these areas is critical for creating the infrastructure needed to deliver differentiated instruction effectively, ensuring that all students receive the individualized support they require.

Finally, collaboration among stakeholders—such as policymakers, educational institutions, and community organizations—is vital for the successful implementation of differentiated instruction. Policymakers should create supportive frameworks and allocate necessary resources, while educational institutions must commit to embedding differentiated instruction in their training programmes. Community organizations can also play a role by providing additional support and resources. Through coordinated efforts, stakeholders can create an educational environment that prioritizes equity and inclusion, improving learning outcomes for all students.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the integration of differentiated instruction strategies into pre-service teacher education curriculums is essential for promoting equity and inclusion in English language education. Differentiated instruction, supported by robust theoretical foundations and empirical evidence, has the potential to address diverse learning needs and enhance educational outcomes. However, its effective implementation requires comprehensive training, ongoing professional support, and supportive educational policies. By prioritizing differentiated instruction in teacher education, stakeholders can ensure that future teachers are well-equipped to create inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students.

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