
DISSERTATION

EXPLORING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN IMPLEMENTING DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION IN GRADE 10 ENGLISH AS FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements in respect of the Master's Degree with specialisation in Curriculum Studies in the Department of Curriculum Studies and Higher Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State.

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*Inspiring
excellence,
transforming
lives through
quality,
impact, and
care.*

DECLARATION

I, **Nonkululeko Patricia Gamede**, declare that the dissertation titled **Exploring teacher's experiences in implementing differentiated instruction in Grade 10 English as First Additional Language** that I herewith submit at the University of the Free State is my independent work.

All sources that I cited have been acknowledged in the reference list.

Gamede

Signature

29 November 2024

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Master's dissertation to my late father, Thamsanqa Nicholas Gamede. From a young age he planted the seed of love for education in me. He had big plans for my future and believed that I have so much potential. His teaching and guidance will forever be in my heart.

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All glory to God for strengthening me through challenges that I encountered in completion of this study. Isaiah 41:10 “Don’t be afraid, for I am with you, don’t be dismayed for I am your God; I will strengthen you”. This verse kept me going when I doubted myself and felt discouraged and it reassured me that I was not alone, but God is with me.

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ABSTRACT

Utilising the qualitative approach, the study explored teachers' experiences in implementing differentiated instruction in Grade 10 English as First Additional language. Teachers often rush to complete the syllabus, resulting in learners with diverse learning needs not receiving sufficient attention. The study was grounded in the theory of differentiated instruction as it aims to reduce over dependence on didactic teaching method. Teacher pedagogy, therefore, needs to be adapted and improved to develop diverse learner competencies. The study employed a comprehensive methodology, utilizing semi structured interviews, lesson observation and document analysis to generate rich qualitative data. The findings revealed a complex landscape of experiences among teachers.

Many teachers reported a strong commitment to differentiating instruction in Grade 10 English First Additional Language to meet the diverse needs of their learners. However, they encountered significant challenges. A prevalent theme was a lack of adequate training and resources, which hindered their ability to effectively implement differentiated teaching strategies. Teachers expressed a desire for more professional development opportunities focused on practical applications of differentiated instruction.

Lesson observations highlighted varying degrees of implementation; some teachers successfully adapted their instructional methods, employing strategies such as flexible grouping and varied assessment techniques. In contrast, others struggled to engage all learners, often resorting to traditional teaching methods due to time constraints and curriculum pressures. Document analysis further supported these findings, revealing inconsistencies in lesson plans that reflected a one-size-fits-all approach. Overall, the study underscores the critical need for ongoing professional development and institutional support to empower teachers in effectively implementing differentiated instruction, ultimately fostering a more inclusive learning environment for all learners.

CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
LIST OF TABLES	xi
ABBREVIATIONS.....	xii
CHAPTER 1:	
INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY	1
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.2 Problem statement.....	4
1.3 Research questions	5
1.3.1 Main research question.....	5
1.3.2 Sub-research questions	5
1.4 Research aim and objectives	6
1.4.1 Research aim.....	6
1.4.2 Research objectives.....	6
1.5 Significance of the study	6
1.6 Theoretical framework	6
1.7 Brief literature review	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.7.1 Experiences of teachers when implementing differentiated curriculum	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.7.2 Challenges of teachers when implementing differentiated curriculum	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.8 Research methodology: an overview.....	9
1.8.1 Study area.....	9
1.8.2 Research approach.....	9
1.8.3 Research paradigm.....	10
1.8.4 Research design	10
1.8.5 Sample and sampling	11
1.8.6 Data generation tools.....	11
1.8.6.1 Semi-structured interviews	11
1.8.6.2 Observation	12

1.8.6.3 Document analysis	12
1.8.7 Description and selection of participants.....	12
1.8.8 Data analysis	13
1.9 Ethical considerations.....	13
1.10 Resources.....	13
1.11 Definitions of key terms.....	13
1.12 Layout of chapters	14
CHAPTER 2:	
LITERATURE REVIEW	16
2.1 Introduction.....	16
2.2 Theoretical framework	16
2.2.1 Origins of differentiated instruction.....	16
2.2.2 Reason for using differentiated instruction in this study	17
2.3 Implementing differentiated curriculum in Australia	19
2.4 Implementing differentiated curriculum in the United States of America	20
2.5 Differentiated curriculum in Croatia.....	21
2.6 Macedonia: overcrowded and poorly-resourced	23
2.7 Applying differentiated curriculum in Greece: overcoming obstacles and seizing opportunities	24
2.8 Promoting curriculum differentiation for inclusivity: the case of Belgium.....	25
2.9 Differentiated curriculum in Indonesia.....	25
2.10 Differentiated instruction in the Middle East.....	30
2.10.1 Differentiated Instruction in Afghanistan	30
2.10.2 Differentiated instruction in Iran	32
2.11 Curriculum differentiation in Asia	33
2.11.1 Implementing differentiated curriculum in Bangladesh.....	33
2.11.2 Differentiated instruction in the Philippines	34
2.11.3 Differentiated instruction in Indonesia	35
2.12 Differentiated instruction in North Africa.....	36
2.12.1 Differentiated instruction in Morocco	36
2.12.2 Implementing differentiated instruction in the Libyan context.....	38
2.13 Differentiating learners in East Africa.....	39
2.13.1 Differentiated curriculum in Tanzania.....	39
2.13.2 Case of Djibouti.....	41
2.14 Differentiated instruction in southern Africa	41

2.14.1 Differentiated instruction in multilingual Namibia.....	42
2.14.2 Enhancing English teaching through curriculum differentiation in Botswana	42
2.14.3 Innovations and challenges in implementing differentiated curriculum in South Africa	43
2.15 Summary	45
CHAPTER 3:	
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	46
3.1 Introduction	46
3.2 Research approach	46
3.3 Research paradigm	47
3.4 Research design	48
3.5 Research site	49
3.6 Population.....	49
3.7 Purposive sampling	49
3.8 Data generation strategies.....	50
3.8.1 Semi-structured interviews.....	51
3.8.2 Observation.....	52
3.8.3 Document analysis.....	53
3.9 Data analysis	55
3.10 Interview and ethics	56
3.11 Trustworthiness	56
3.11.1 Confirmability	57
3.11.2 Transferability	57
3.11.3 Member checking.....	58
3.11.4 Rich and thick descriptions	58
3.12 Ethical considerations.....	58
3.12.1 Permission to conduct research.....	59
3.13 Summary	59
CHAPTER 4:	
DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION	60
4.1 Introduction	60
4.2 Data presentation and analysis.....	61
4.3 Themes and sub themes	61
4.4 Theme 1: understanding of differentiated instruction	62
4.4.1 Sub-theme 1: characterisation of differentiated instruction	62

4.4.2	Sub-theme 2: effective application	67
4.4.3	Sub-theme 3: training.....	71
4.4.4	Sub-theme 4: assessment and evaluation	76
4.4.5	Sub-theme 5: impact of varied instruction	79
4.5	Theme 2: alignment with Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements guidelines.....	83
4.5.1	Sub-theme 1: instructional strategies.....	83
4.5.2	Sub-theme 2: learning materials	88
4.6	Theme 3: challenges.....	90
4.6.1	Sub-theme 1: differentiation policy.....	90
4.6.2	Sub-theme 2: unique challenges.....	92
4.7	Theme 4: implementing differentiated instruction	94
4.7.1	Sub-theme 1: unique needs.....	94
4.7.2	Sub-theme 2: uncertainties	95
4.8	Discussion of findings	96
4.8.1	Differentiated instruction: meeting unique learner needs	96
4.8.2	Embracing differentiated instruction: Nonhlanhla's educational philosophy.....	98
4.8.3	Buhle's approach to differentiated instruction	99
4.8.4	Helen's implementation of differentiated instruction principles.....	100
4.8.5	Insights into Hlengiwe and Nonhlanhla's differentiated instruction approaches	101
4.8.6	Perspectives on differentiated instruction.....	103
4.8.7	Perspectives on professional development in differentiated instruction.....	104
4.8.8	Confidence, professional development, and instructional alignment in teaching practices	107
4.9	Summary	109
CHAPTER 5:		
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		111
5.1	Introduction	111
5.2	Summary of research findings	111
5.2.1	Stressing adaptability and teamwork in instructional strategies	111
5.2.2	Strengths and opportunities for development in differentiated instruction.....	111
5.2.3	Approaches to differentiated instruction	112
5.2.4	Differentiated instruction practices	112

5.2.5	Perspectives on differentiated instruction.....	113
5.2.6	Teachers' views on differentiated instruction: consistencies and difficulties	114
5.2.7	Confidence and alignment in differentiated instruction.....	114
5.3	Conclusions	115
5.4	Recommendations	117
5.4.1	Transformative pathways	118
5.4.2	Cultivating inclusive learning: innovative approaches to differentiated Instruction.....	118
5.4.3	Techniques for improving instruction to assist diverse learners	119
5.4.4	Improving professional growth for successful differentiated pedagogy	120
5.4.5	Multimodal techniques to enhance education's differentiated instruction.....	120
5.4.6	Empowering teachers: a holistic framework for transformative teaching practices	121
5.5	Final word	122
REFERENCES.....		123
APPENDIX A:		
TITLE LETTER		153
APPENDIX B:		
PERMISSION LETTERS FROM FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.....		154
APPENDIX C:		
OBSERVATION PROTOCOL.....		156
APPENDIX D:		
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL		159
APPENDIX E:		
CONSENT FORM		167
APPENDIX F:		
ETHICAL CLEARANCE		168
APPENDIX G:		
TURNITIN REPORT.....		169
APPENDIX H:		
LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR.....		170

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Differentiation overview	8
Figure 3.1: Factors to use when selecting documents	54

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1:	Data generation process in this study	51
Table 4.1:	Teachers' profile	61
Table 4.2:	Themes and sub-themes	62

ABBREVIATIONS

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
DI	Differentiated instruction
EFAL	English first additional language
EFL	English foreign language
FET	Further education training

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the study

The primary purpose of this study is to explore teachers' experiences in implementing differentiated instruction (DI) in Grade 10 English First Additional Language (EFAL). Differentiated instruction means that the teacher anticipates differences in learner's readiness, interests, and learning profiles and, as a result, creates different learning paths so that learners have the opportunity to learn as much as they can (Adare, Li and Gebresilase, 2023).

Most teachers are unprepared to handle the anxiety and distress related to change, like implementing DI in their classrooms (Gheysens, Coubergs, Griful-Freixenet, Engels and Struyven, 2022). Consequently, the difficulties of implementing DI need continual professional training and support, which can be problematic when school budgets decline (Gibbs and Beamish, 2020). Embracing DI requires sufficient time, teamwork, and operative classroom administration skills (Gibbs and Beamish, 2020).

The concept of DI is a reaction against over-dependence on didactic teaching methods (Valiandes and Neophytou, 2018). Critical thinking and problem-solving abilities may be hampered by didactic teaching approaches, which frequently result in passive learning, little engagement, and a one-size-fits-all approach. Additionally, they rely too much on textbooks, which might not be adequate for learners with different learning styles. Learners may become frustrated and disengaged as a result of this.

Additionally, a loss of involvement may result in a decline in motivation. Since it adapts training to each learner's unique needs, interests, and abilities, a differentiated curriculum is preferred because it fosters greater comprehension and memory of the material. The skills that learners need to advance their education and employment in the 21st century are increasingly more complex (Beswick and Fraser, 2019). Therefore, teacher pedagogy needs to be adapted and improved to develop relevant learner competencies, such as mastery of content, problem-solving, critical thinking,

working collaboratively with effective communication, and self-directed learning. Differentiated instruction is a complex process that relies on strong and skilful teachers to plan and teach different levels of the same content simultaneously.

To accommodate the needs of numerous learners, the teacher must devote sufficient time to preparing lessons that include the theories of curriculum differentiation (Waldron, 2020). Differentiated instruction also seems most effective when teachers collaborate with other teachers (Ofgea, 2019). However, most teachers cannot cooperate or follow collegial discussions with other teachers (Tanjung and Ashadi, 2019). This is because teachers are frequently forced to work together by educational systems, which stifles their originality and causes frustration. Another problem is a lack of time for productive teamwork; teachers frequently complain about not having enough time for meetings and introspection. Collaboration is also influenced by school culture; a hostile or alienating atmosphere encourages rivalry or autonomy. For genuine teamwork, trust issues, common objectives, and encouraging leadership are also essential. However, involvement may also be hampered by discomfiture with conventional models and doubts about the benefits of teamwork (Benouadah and Senouci, 2023). Teachers must establish encouraging settings that value meaningful cooperation while honouring the needs and teaching styles of each individual in order to address these problems. To do this, educational leaders must work together to establish encouraging surroundings that promote fruitful cooperation.

There is a lack of how secondary school teachers who teach English subjects implement curriculum differentiation. One of the critical concerns in Hong Kong classrooms is accommodating individual differences (Robinson, 2022). Teachers' principles will determine whether Hong Kong teachers can implement differentiated curricula effectively. The class size can impact learning in different ways and at various phases of schooling. Teachers may implement pedagogical practices that endorse curriculum differentiation, but large classes may constrain the individual attention that learners may receive (Spangler and Adriansen, 2021).

In Australia, as it moves towards implementing its first national curriculum to explore how teacher teachers plan to retain pedagogical space for debate, there is diversity and contestation of such systemic curricular reform. A study was conducted with nine teacher teachers across the four curriculum areas included in the first wave of the

Australian curriculum: English, science, mathematics and history. The analysis revealed how teachers reported professional dilemmas around curricular design, and planned to resolve such dilemmas between the anticipated changes and their preferences for what might have been. While different curricular areas displayed different patterns of professional dilemma, the teachers were shown to construe their role as one of active curriculum mediators, who, in recontextualising curricular reforms, will use the opportunity to reinsert both residualised and emergent alternatives in their learners' professional value sets. The study also identified a new set of dilemmas emerging around the politicisation and standardisation of curriculum, and its impact on the teaching profession and teachers.

A study conducted in the United Kingdom on the experiences of secondary school teachers with diversified curriculum approaches produced conflicting findings (Rowan Bourke, L'Estrange, Lunn Brownlee, Ryan, Walker and Churchward, 2021). Teachers frequently faced difficulties because of curricular limitations and evaluation pressures, even though many of them recognised the value of differentiation in meeting the needs of various learners. Although they thought that systemic concerns, such the need for standardised testing, hindered their ability to fully embrace DI methods, teachers stated that they regularly adjusted lesson plans to accommodate diverse learning styles. The study also showed that professional development opportunities were essential for assisting teachers in comprehending and successfully implementing differentiation. However, many teachers felt unprepared for this work.

Due to large class sizes, South African teachers face various challenges in developing differentiated activities to incorporate diverse learner needs in operative teaching and learning (Moote and Archer, 2018). A one-size-fits-all approach brought on by large classes may hinder individualized instruction and create problems with classroom management. The implementation of differentiated activities may be hampered by the increased disruptions that large classrooms can cause. Furthermore, teachers may find it challenging to develop diverse learning experiences and apply successful differentiation tactics due to a lack of resources, such as teaching materials and support personnel, maybe depending on antiquated techniques that might not be able to satisfy the needs of all learners.

Teachers in public secondary schools have serious reservations about implementing

a differentiated curriculum, mostly because they lack the necessary tools and training. They claim that their capacity to design successful differentiated activities that meet the demands of various learner types is hampered by a lack of resources and support systems. Teachers also point out issues with parental involvement and restrictions on extra language training, which makes their work even more difficult. In addition to pointing out that the process can be time-consuming and that it can be challenging to balance the demands of their teaching responsibilities, many teachers believe they lack the necessary training to create differentiated class activities (Margot and Kettler, 2019; Schmidt, Born, Bommers, Campen and Kobbelt, 2022).

The uniqueness of this study is that it explores teachers' experiences and the challenges they face in implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL lessons. Although some studies have investigated other areas of English First Language pedagogy at Grade 10, not much research has been done on teachers' experiences and the challenges they encounter in implementing the differentiated curriculum at this grade (Mariati, Abbas and Mutiani, 2021; Waters and Brooks, 2021; Waters, 2018). My study, therefore, aims to contribute new knowledge on how EFAL teachers can implement a differentiated curriculum in Grade 10.

1.2 Problem statement

In the United Kingdom, teachers face challenges in implementing DI, including insufficient planning time, large classes, heavy-workloads, lack of differentiation skills, and lack of inspiration to differentiate (Westwood, 2018). However, teacher workshop programmes are an innate fit for learning how to differentiate instruction for diverse learning abilities; the workshops often only offer an overview of the theory. Marks, Woolcott and Markopoulos (2021) state that a brief glance at the theory may not provide sufficient depth to empower teachers to embed the practice of DI, and that continuous professional learning for teachers is significant in differentiating instruction.

The United States implemented the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (Saro, Bernados, Gaviola and Cruz, 2023). This act sought to cater for learning diversity in the classroom, especially for black learners who were academically excluded because of the country's history of racial discrimination against non-whites. In the Netherlands, Van Geel and Keuning (2019) demonstrated that teachers inadequately adapt DI to

meet learner diversities, primarily due to their inability to implement effective differentiation strategies. This inadequacy stems from various factors, including insufficient training, limited resources, and a lack of support structures. As a result, teachers often struggle to create differentiated activities that address the diverse needs of their learners, ultimately compromising the effectiveness of the educational experience.

The problem in the South African context is how teachers accommodate learners with diverse learning needs. In South Africa, teachers rush to finish the syllabus, resulting in learners with diverse learning needs not receiving sufficient attention (Machisi, 2023). Teachers leave learners with diverse needs behind as they try to cover subject content as given in the syllabus (Nunan and Shantone, 2022). Learners are affected negatively if the teacher does not execute DI to cater for diverse learning needs. If the teacher continues to use a blanket approach, learners with diverse learning needs will be disadvantaged. Therefore, this proposed study will explore teachers' experiences in implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL classes in secondary schools in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District.

1.3 Research questions

1.3.1 Main research question

What are teachers' experiences implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL classes?

1.3.2 Sub-research questions

1. What are teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction in Grade 10 EFAL classes?
2. How are EFAL teachers' instructional practices aligned with Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) guidelines on differentiated instruction?
3. What challenges and opportunities are teachers facing in implementing differentiation policy in EFAL classes?
4. How can the implementation of differentiated instruction be understood and explained in EFAL lessons?

1.4 Research aim and objectives

1.4.1 Research aim

This study explores teachers' experiences implementing differentiated instruction in Grade 10 EFAL classes.

1.4.2 Research objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction in Grade 10 EFAL classes.
2. Explore if EFAL teachers' instructional practices align with CAPS guidelines on differentiated instruction.
3. Analyse challenges and opportunities faced by teachers in implementing differentiation policy in EFAL classes.
4. Discuss how the implementation of differentiated instruction can be understood and explained in EFAL lessons.

1.5 Significance of the study

This study is important because it explores teachers' experiences while implementing DI in their lesson planning and classrooms in EFAL Grade 10. Learners with diverse learning needs will be well accommodated; in this way, they will be taught how they understand, and it will be easy for them to grasp concepts. The challenge of teachers in implementing DI in EFAL Grades 10 has been given little attention. Hence, insights from this study may contribute to the body of knowledge on the influence of DI. Findings from this study may inform education stakeholders about the current situation regarding DI and prompt review and debates on relevant policies. Differentiation can liberate learners from labels, giving them different opportunities to achieve their best (Tomlinson, 2003).

1.6 Theoretical framework

The theory that underpins this study is Differentiated Instruction by Carol Tomlinson

(Tomlinson and Jarvis, 2023). The theory suggests that curriculum differentiation can be achieved through four aspects, namely content, process, product, and learning affect/environment (Emralino, 2023). The first aspect of content is that the teacher differentiates the content by creating activities that will accommodate groups of learners from all the different levels of Bloom's taxonomy. Huitt (2011) describes Bloom's taxonomy as classifying intellectual levels from low-order to high-order thinking skills. The levels are classified from low to high-order thinking skills. The levels are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

The second aspect is process; the teacher differentiates instruction by providing teaching aids to help learners internalise content through their learning styles. The visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners should be provided with assistance to help them process the content. To ensure the success of DI, the teacher should continuously support the learners in class. Examples of teaching aids the teacher can use are Task Cards, Creating Learning Stations, and making time for Journaling.

The third aspect is product; the learners now produce content they have learnt. "Product" is one of the curricula differentiating features in the teaching of EFAL. This component focuses on the results or products that learners create due to their learning. It comprises tailoring expectations and criteria for assignments or projects to individual learners or groups of learners' skills and learning styles (Simsek and Can, 2020). Assessments like quizzes and examinations can be tailored to different skill levels. For EFAL, this may include giving various reading passages or questions based on learners' reading abilities. It allows learners to study at their own pace and capability level, enabling personalised learning experiences (Van Tassel-Baska and Baska, 2021). The teacher assesses the learners according to their learning styles. The assessments can be a test, oral report, or diorama. The last aspect is the environment. This includes making the learning environment conducive to both psychological and physical.

The fourth aspect is learning environment. The physical and emotional setting in which learning takes place is referred to as the learning environment. This component places a strong emphasis on developing a welcoming environment that encourages participation and meets the requirements of various learner populations. Flexible seating arrangements, cooperative group projects, or creating a classroom

environment that celebrates variety and promotes taking risks in the learning process are some possible strategies. The furniture should be there and well-organised should learners be arranged to be seated in groups. Teachers should create a safe environment for learners to ask questions, and the learning space must be quiet for teaching and learning to be conducive (Porta and Todd, 2022).

Figure 1.1 illustrates a curriculum differentiation overview structure showing the teacher's response to learners varied needs.

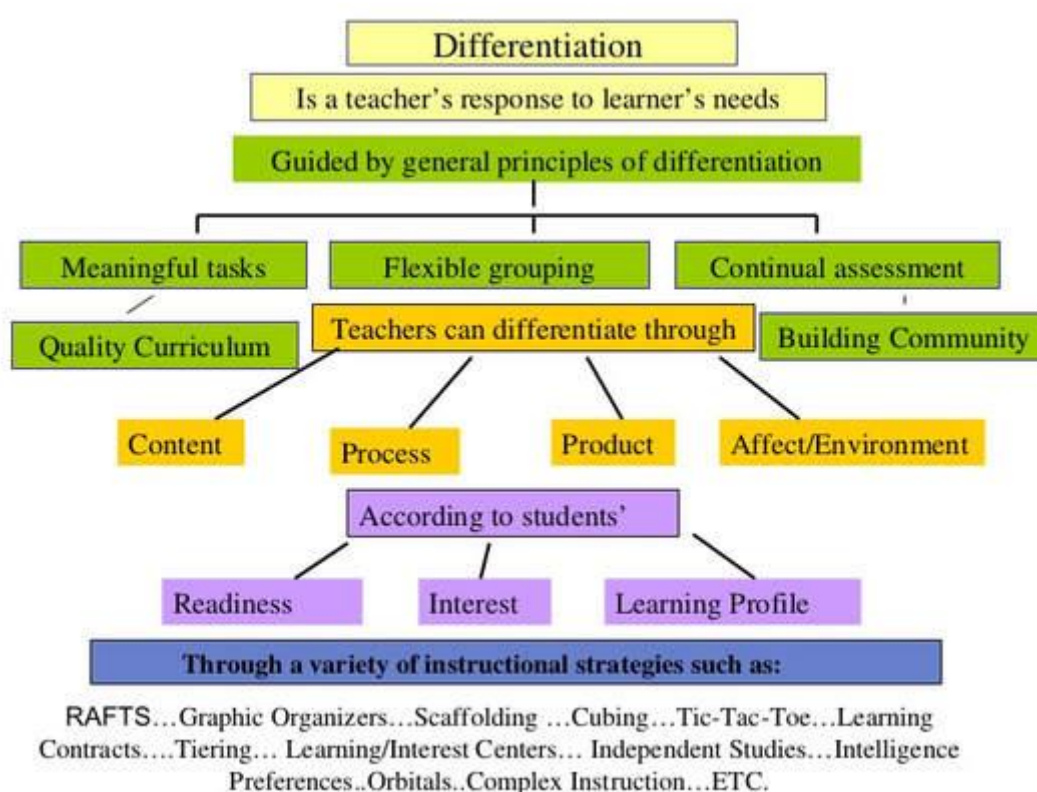


Figure 1.1: Differentiation overview (Source: HMS Instructional Coaching, 2019)

The success of the content, process and product depends on how flexible the teacher is (Tomlinson and Imbeau, 2011). To modify the DI, the teacher should look at three characteristics: readiness, interest, and learner profile.

- Readiness is a learner's present proximity to detailed information, comprehension, and skills. The purpose of readiness differentiation is to construct work slightly challenging for learners at a particular stage in their development (Smale-Jacobse, Meijer, Helms-Lorenz and Maulana, 2019).
- Interest is the curiosity and participation of a learner. When learners are

interested, their motivation to acquire knowledge increases, consequently improving learning outcomes (Yusuf, 2021). The purpose of interest differentiation is to aid learners with new knowledge, understanding, and skills by creating links with things they are familiar with.

- Effect/environment is a choice for discovering or articulating content. Four aspects form effect/environment intelligence preference, gender, learning style and culture (Lunevich and Wadaani, 2022). The learning style of learning profile differentiation aims to teach how learners learn best and extend ways in which they can learn effectively.

This theory is appropriate to guide my study because it proposes a solution to the diverse learning needs of our learners. The theory permits teachers to identify different competencies and potential of the learners in the classroom. Also, it allows teachers to differentiate the instruction to adjust their lesson preparation to accommodate all the diverse learning styles of the learners in the classroom. Additionally, the theory embodies the current platform of the 21st global century's strategies and methods of teachers' compassion about meeting the learners' diverse needs and that of the government that all learners must progress to the next grade irrespective of learning barriers. It is suitable for this study because it will aid in unpacking the experiences and challenges teachers face in implementing curriculum differentiation in Grade 10 EFAL classes.

1.7 Research methodology: an overview

1.7.1 Study area

The study will be conducted in three selected secondary schools in Intabazwe and Khalanyoni Townships in Harrismith Town, in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District, Free State Province.

1.7.2 Research approach

The study employs the qualitative approach because it mainly emphasises comprehending, clarifying, and investigating conditions of emotional state, perceptions and experiences as (Kumar, 2019). This approach will allow me to discover and

understand teachers' experiences and challenges in implementing curriculum differentiation in Grade 10 EFAL classes. Furthermore, it will give me the opportunity to discuss how implementing curriculum differentiation can improve EFAL lessons.

1.7.3 Research paradigm

The constructivist paradigm will be used for this study. This paradigm was selected because it can be used as an efficient tool that can yield many benefits when implemented in the carrying out of research and in undertaking teaching and learning activities at any educational level. Constructivism postulates that knowledge is not waiting to be revealed but is relatively constructed by people through contact with the world and one another (Xu and Shi, 2018).

The constructivist paradigm is relevant in the study because the exploring of experiences and challenges of teachers in using the differentiated curriculum in English as the First Additional Language in Grade 10 can successfully happen when teachers inspire learners to measure how the task is serving them to continually acquire understanding by interrogating themselves and their approaches.

Within this paradigm, learners are not idle recipients of information but active leaders of the learning process. Additionally, the constructivist paradigm encourages practices missing in traditional education frameworks, such as learners motivating themselves to construct new knowledge through active contemplation (Gallardo-Alba, Grüning and Serrano-Solano, 2021). In this sense, learners in the classroom ideally become “expert learners”, giving them ever-broadening tools to keep learning.

1.7.4 Research design

The study will use the case study research design. Pathiranage, Jayatilake and Abeysekera (2020) state that a case study is a comprehensive investigation of a contemporary phenomenon that examines its real-life perspective practically, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its view are unclear. The case study may also explain or investigate an occurrence through data generation tools such as interviews, observations, documents and reports (Khoa, Hung and Hejsalem-Brahmi, 2023).

The study will position itself in selected secondary schools in Harrismith Town in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District, Free State Province. This design is of massive importance when the aim of a study is broadly exploring and understanding instead of validating and quantifying (Kumar, 2019). This research design is suitable because it explores the experiences and challenges in implementing a differentiated curriculum in Grade 10 EFAL.

1.7.5 Sample and sampling

This study will employ purposive sampling. Purposive sampling depends on the researcher's judgement regarding who gives the most related, rich, insightful information aligned with the research objectives (Moisey, Campbell, Whitmore and Jack, 2022). A sample of six EFAL Grade 10 teachers in three selected secondary schools in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District will participate in this study.

The purposive sampling method is non-probabilistic, ensuring that a small cohort of samples is sufficiently represented (Labree, Hoare, Fackrell, Hall, Gascoyne and Sereda, 2022). The sample of teachers will involve the ones who went through the workshop of 2011 when the policy Guidelines for Responding to Learners' Diversity in the Classroom through CAPS was implemented (South Africa. Department of Basic Education, 2011). This method will allow my study to get in-depth information about teachers' experiences in implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL.

1.7.6 Data generation tools

The researcher will use interview, observation and document analysis to generate data. The study participants will be six EFAL teachers from three selected secondary schools in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District. The participants will be purposefully selected based on their knowledge and understanding of the principles and guidelines of curriculum differentiation.

1.7.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

The study will employ this tool because it will allow me to have intensive discussion about the experiences and challenges teachers encounter when implementing differentiated curriculum in Grade 10 English as First Additional Language. I consider

semi-structured interviews as an effective method for providing reliable, comparable qualitative data with different participants, even given different interviewers (McCain, Kemp, Baier, Zea, Sabottke, Schachner, Pirtle, McLean, Maupin, Detiege and Spieler, 2022).

1.7.6.2 Observation

Observation is a data generation method that involves observing participants, and they are informed of being observed. This kind could be considered as direct observation, which standard is done without interrelating with objects or people under study in the setting (Wagner, Kawulich and Garner, 2012). Observation has also been selected on the basis that it will provide the researcher with better understanding of how teachers are implementing differentiated curriculum in Grade 10 EFAL.

1.7.6.3 Document analysis

As defined by Linton, Coast, Williams, Copping and Owen-Smith (2019), document analysis is the arranged process of analysing and understanding applicable materials and relevant government and school documents in this case. Gasva and Mukomana (2020) state that document analysis data can be generated through government and school policies, school-based improvement plans, lesson plans, and learners' workbooks. Document analysis was chosen because it will allow the researcher to use data drawn from documents, for example, to contextualise data generated during interviews. It further allows the researcher to make sense of her resources and select the appropriate pieces for her study. In this study, I will analyse the following documents: Annual teaching plans, lesson preparation documents, and assessment plans.

1.7.7 Description and selection of participants

The participants of this study will be teachers whom the Department of Basic Education permanently employs. The participants must be teachers specialised in teaching English as a First Additional Language in the Further Education Training phase (FET), which is Grades 10–12. Furthermore, the teachers must be registered with the South African Council for Teachers, as it is the body that governs and regulates the teaching practice.

1.7.8 Data analysis

The study will use thematic analysis to present and analyse data (Bryant and Charmaz, 2010). As the study will be generating qualitative data, this analysis will be useful in that it will help in identifying, analysing, defining, and arranging data into broader themes. This analysis consists of seven steps, namely: coding, familiarisation, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up (Thorne, 2000).

1.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance will be obtained from the University of the Free States' Ethics Committee before the study commences. The approval letter to proceed with the study will be obtained from the Department of Education in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District and the respective principals of the selected secondary schools.

The study participants will be informed of their right to voluntary participation (Weisleder, 2020) and that they can withdraw at any research stage should they wish to do so (Xiao, 2020). Participants will receive and sign a consent form to understand what they are partaking in; this incorporates information concerning the study's benefits, risks, and institutional approval.

Pseudonyms will be used to hide the despondence's individuality, and the research site to safeguard the participant's rights to privacy was protected (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

1.9 Resources

A recording device called Otter will be utilised to capture the data. All literature will be gathered through the University of the Free State Library and Information Services and Google Scholar.

1.10 Definitions of key terms

Differentiated instruction: This means that the teacher anticipates the differences in learners' readiness, interests, and learning profiles and, as a result, creates different learning paths so that learners have the opportunity to learn as much as they can

(Adare et al., 2023). In this study, the term differentiated curriculum will be used to mean strategies teachers can use to provide meaningful learning experiences for diverse learners in the Grade 10 classrooms.

EFAL: In South African education, teaching English as a second or additional language is a key component of the EFAL approach (Pretorius and Murray, 2023). The curriculum has four primary learning domains: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Assuming some level of competency in the learners' native tongue, it expands on their existing understanding of it. The goal of the additive bilingualism technique is to improve learners' proficiency in both their native tongue and English at the same time, allowing for easier transitions into English literacy. A communicative approach is essential to effective EFAL education, which prioritizes meaningful engagement above formal grammar instruction. According to studies, children who fail to acquire EFAL frequently do not reach literacy abilities in their native tongue. In this study, EFAL is part of the South African educational curriculum, focusing on listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The CAPS framework uses an additive bilingualism approach, aiming to enhance learners' communication skills in both languages and enhance their overall language competence.

1.11 Layout of chapters

Chapter 1: Orientation of the study

The focus of the chapter is the introduction and background to the problem that drives the proposed study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Related literature on teachers' experiences implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL will be reviewed. Also, the chapter will present the theory of DI by Carol Ann Tomlison as a framework that underpins the study.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology that direct the study.

Chapter 4: Presentation and discussion of the findings

The focus of the chapter is presenting and discussing the findings from the study.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and the contribution of the study

The chapter will present the findings outlined in Chapter 4 and the conclusions.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature review on teachers' experiences and challenges in implementing DI in Grade 10 English as a First Additional Language. The theory that underpins this study is DI by Carol Tomlinson. This theory allows the tailoring of lessons to meet each learner's interests, needs, and strengths (Padmore and Ali, 2024). Implementing DI gives learners choice and flexibility in learning and helps teachers personalise learning (Zakaria, Lim, Jalil, Anuar and Aziz, 2024). The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The study on teachers' experiences while implementing DI in Grade 10 English as a first additional language is illuminated by the theory of DI.

2.2.1 Origins of differentiated instruction

Differentiated instruction was developed by Carol Ann Tomlinson in 1999. Her theory proposes that teachers need to adjust the content, process and outcomes of a lesson to improve the likelihood of learners' engagement and achievement (Dack and Tomlinson, 2024). Differentiated curriculum, according to Carol Ann Tomlinson, is a teaching strategy in which learners' learning experiences are tailored to their interests, readiness level, and chosen learning style (Susilawati, Chakim and Putri, 2024). This methodology offers several alternatives for content acquisition, information processing, and learning expression. Tomlinson highlights projects, the learning environment, processes, and content as the four main areas for distinction (Rita, Neviyarni and Irdamurni, 2023). By concentrating on these components, teachers may establish a welcoming and productive learning environment that accommodates each learner's unique abilities and difficulties.

Emphasis is placed on demonstrating, scaffolding, and lesson design for learners to understand and extend their knowledge of the subject. In his theory, he insists that this

may be done in various ways, using various materials, such as visual aids, manipulatives, audio recordings, and supplementary texts (Özgüler, 2024). Moreover, through this theory, teachers may also differentiate how learners demonstrate their understanding by designing tiered activities or variations of different products that meet the same learning goals to allow learners to choose how to express and display their learning. By differentiating how learners receive new information and display their understanding, each learner gains access to the curriculum and receives appropriate support to demonstrate the new knowledge acquired knowledge (Renzulli, 2023).

2.2.2 Reason for using differentiated instruction in this study

Teachers have been intrigued and challenged by learner diversity but have not always adequately responded to learners' varied needs (Nicholas, Skourdoumbis & Bradbury, 2024). Instead, they tend to rely on the teach-to-the-middle or one-size-fits-all approach, expecting all learners to do the same activity, work at the same pace, do the same homework, and take the same test (Pascaru, 2023). Typically, the result is frustration on the part of many learners. Some learners may find the work unchallenging and therefore boring, while others may find the work too challenging then there are those whose learning styles or strengths are not engaged. There is also frustration on the part of teachers because they are not reaching every learner. So, in their search to create genuinely challenging and engaging learning experiences for their learners, teachers can better meet the diverse needs of their learners by differentiating instruction.

According to the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius, in order to teach effectively, teachers must respond to learners' varying abilities, by teaching learners at their particular readiness levels (Cai, Hwang, Melville and Robison, 2023). Indeed, in any classroom, learners exhibit a range of abilities and learning needs. It is the teacher's responsibility to be prepared for these differences and tailor their curriculum and instruction to meet each learner's needs, ensuring every chance of academic success for all learners.

In this study, DI is chosen because it offers teachers a means to meet learners' varying needs, as it recognises the spectrum of differences among learners and enables teachers to attend to the specific learning styles of each learner by adjusting what they

teach, and how they teach it in English as an Additional Language (Chan, Monaghan and Michel, 2023). At its core, DI is a responsive instructional approach that facilitates learners' learning, according to their individual abilities and, just as importantly, to their interests. Through DI, teachers can identify learners' starting points rather than simply starting at the front of a curriculum guide (Tomlinson and Imbeau, 2023).

Teachers should recognise learners' readiness, interests, and learning profiles when planning differentiated lessons in English classrooms. In addition, when planning a differentiated curriculum, teachers must consider and respond to learners' dynamic needs. As learners' learning needs often differ according to particular subjects or even from day to day, teachers using this theory can offer additional support, extend learning or spontaneously adjust the grouping of learners when it is appropriate. Kostopoulou (2023) asserts that DI is like jazz; it is continual improvisation based on themes and experiences. Taking these factors into account allows teachers to make sure that each learner receives and is able to demonstrate learning in a way that fosters engagement and meets his or her unique learning needs, thereby increasing the chances of each learner achieving success in learning (Hanaysha, Shriedeh and In'airat, 2023).

In response to the increasing diversity in classrooms, I consider DI as an essential form of instruction for teaching learners from a wide array of backgrounds and ability levels. The use of DI in this study is motivated by my concern that there is a critical need for authentic assessment and differentiation of instruction and curriculum, to effectively teach all learners (Roberts and Inman, 2023). Lavi, Tal and Dori (2021) also acknowledge the effects of learners' backgrounds on their learning, as they assert that learners' gender, culture, experiences, aptitudes, interests, and approaches to learning affect how learners learn. Thus, a differentiated approach is needed to attend to the unique learning needs of each learner. According to Heacox and Cash (2020), in differentiated classrooms, all learners can be successful, from learners who struggle to gifted learners, since all learners are supported and challenged in their work. In a DI approach, the classroom is considered a community where all learners belong and are encouraged as individual learners. Differentiated instruction is a valuable instructional approach for teachers working with learners in inclusive classrooms, as it enables learners with special needs to access the curriculum while being held to

high expectations appropriate to each learner. Lawrence-Brown (2020) asserts that DI serves two main goals: it provides additional support for learners who find language and literacy challenging while adapting or extending the curriculum to meet learners' needs.

2.3 Implementing differentiated curriculum in Australia

International research on barriers for teachers in implementing DI has been limited, but it has highlighted internal and external factors. Self-efficacy factors, such as fear and uncertainty, can hinder successful implementation (Haukilahti, 2022). External challenges include lack of time for planning, unmotivated learners, and class size (Tapala, Van Niekerk and Mentz, 2021). Limited support from school leaders and administration is also a barrier. School principals play a crucial role in successful DI implementation, as they articulate DI as an appropriate teaching methodology and believe teachers can develop the necessary knowledge and skills (Gibbs and Beamish, 2021). Pre-service teachers often lack quality training in DI, find it challenging to implement DI during practicum experiences, and lack confidence in differentiating in multi-ability classrooms (Gibbs, 2023). A systematic review of DI literature in Australia found limited small-scale qualitative empirical studies, with teacher concerns focusing on accountability pressures, limited confidence, poor understanding of DI, and difficulty implementing DI elements (Gibbs and McKay, 2021). School leaders and DI practitioners need to participate in ongoing professional learning and receive support to effectively implement DI (Sharp, Jarvis and McMillan, 2020).

Teachers face multiple barriers to implementing DI, as highlighted in a study by Gibbs (2023), including challenges such as learner behaviour, time constraints, rigid curriculum structures, teacher reluctance, and parental involvement. Tang (2020) notes that budget limitations further impede the effective adoption of DI. Classroom environment issues, such as the need for specialised furniture to enhance personalised learning and learner engagement, were raised by Reinius, Korhonen and Hakkarainen (2021). Lazarides, Watt and Richardson (2020) emphasise the difficulty of classroom management, with teachers' perceptions linked more to the number of learners with behavioural issues rather than years of teaching experience. Additional barriers identified include school pressures, teacher resistance to differentiation, and

parental constraints (Oates, 2023), with some teachers more accustomed to traditional teaching methods, making the shift to adaptable differentiation strategies challenging (Cheng and Lander, 2024).

Several administrative barriers to effective implementation of DI in classrooms are identified by Shareefa (2021), including varying levels of teaching experience, lack of enthusiasm for differentiation, inconsistencies in record-keeping among feeder primary schools, and the demanding documentation requirements at a systems level. Heng and Song (2020) highlight the disparity in staff knowledge and understanding of DI, with new teachers being more theoretical and experienced teachers showing greater practical knowledge. Overcoming staff misconceptions and fostering a positive attitude towards differentiation is crucial. Time constraints, hindering mentoring and professional development on differentiation principles, are noted as challenges by Whitley et al. (2021). Additionally, constraints related to documentation for learners with additional needs and administrative tasks impede the effective implementation of DI (Yazcayir and Gurgur, 2021).

2.4 Implementing differentiated curriculum in the United States of America

Differentiated Instruction has effectively reduced classroom achievement gaps by fostering learner engagement, self-efficacy, and a challenging learning environment, ultimately leading to improved test scores and interest in reading (Roberts and Inman, 2023; Sökmen, 2021). However, challenges in implementing DI persist, including resistance to change, the need for ongoing professional development, and limited resources due to shrinking educational budgets (Kilag, Quezon, Pansacala, Suba-an, Kilag and Esdrelon, 2023). Teachers require more time, collaboration opportunities, and effective classroom management skills to cater to diverse learners effectively, yet many teachers lack the necessary support and collegial interactions to enhance their teaching practices (Lindner and Schwab, 2020; Nordgren, Kristiansson, Liljekvist and Bergh, 2021).

To address the obstacles in implementing DI and close achievement gaps, it is essential to amplify teachers' voices, address their concerns, and provide the necessary support for effective implementation. Recognising the importance of

teacher collaboration, professional development, and effective classroom management can lead to more successful differentiation practices and ultimately contribute to narrowing the achievement gap in education (Smets and Struyven, 2020; Archer, 2021). National assessments highlight persistent achievement gaps, emphasising the urgency for targeted interventions and support to improve learner outcomes and bridge educational disparities (Johnson, Kuhfeld and King, 2022; Zhang et al., 2020).

Despite the persistent achievement gap, DI is advocated as a strategy to mitigate it in the United States. This approach tailors instruction to individual learner needs, enhancing engagement, content retention, and overall achievement levels (Roberts and Inman, 2023; Lester, 2023). Studies have demonstrated significant improvements in learner achievement in English and reading following the implementation of DI, with increases exceeding 10% (Magableh and Abdullah, 2020). By leveraging learner interests and readiness levels, teachers can foster engagement, motivation, and academic success, leading to reduced discipline issues and improved attendance (Robertson and Padesky, 2020; Allred and Cena, 2020).

Differentiated instruction, focusing on matching learner readiness and prerequisite skills to new content, offers various instructional supports like tiered literacy instruction to scaffold learning effectively (Mengistie, 2020; Fien, Chard, and Baker, 2021). By differentiating based on readiness, teachers can challenge gifted learners to achieve at their highest potential, leading to enhanced literacy skills, comprehension, and overall academic performance (Alomari and Alarfaj, 2023; Haymon and Wilson, 2020). Addressing learner affect through DI fosters a supportive learning environment, building a sense of community, respect, and motivation that positively impacts learner achievement and engagement (Hehir, Zeller, Luckhurst and Chandler, 2021; Grant and Hill, 2020). Continuous formative feedback and the use of varied instructional strategies tailored to learner needs are essential for effective differentiation and narrowing the achievement gap in middle and high school settings (Byrd, 2020; Al-Shaboul, Al-Azaizeh and Al-Dosari, 2021).

2.5 Differentiated curriculum in Croatia

In Croatia, the educational landscape reflects a tendency to integrate children into

mainstream education, although those with severe disabilities often attend special education schools (Nikolić, Cvijetić, Branković, Đorđić and Johnstone, 2020). Despite satisfactory legal frameworks, ensuring equal educational opportunities for all learners remains a significant challenge in Croatia (Ljubetic and Maglica, 2020). The main obstacles to differentiation in Croatian schools include a shortage of teachers, inadequate didactic resources for learners with special needs, architectural barriers, lack of professional training and support, teacher workload, and varying attitudes towards the inclusion of learners with special needs (Žic Ralić et al., 2020).

While some positive changes have been noted in recent years, many schools in Croatia still lack comprehensive solutions and an entirely inclusive atmosphere. Teachers with positive attitudes towards inclusion are more likely to adapt their teaching environments to cater to diverse learner needs (Heyder, Suedkamp and Steinmayr, 2020). Research indicates that classrooms with teachers holding positive attitudes exhibit higher satisfaction levels, cohesion, and lower levels of friction and competitiveness compared to those with less positive attitudes (Vidić, 2021).

Croatian teachers generally exhibit positive attitudes towards differentiation, demonstrating readiness to accept learners with disabilities and understanding the benefits of inclusive education on social development. However, there is some indecision among teachers regarding differentiation support due to concerns about school readiness for inclusion, managing learner disabilities, and reluctance to take full responsibility for teaching learners with disabilities (Lyra, Koullapi and Kalogeropoulou, 2023). Teachers in Croatia tend to teach learners with milder difficulties more frequently than those with complex needs due to insecurity, lack of preparedness, limited knowledge of learner needs, and insufficient professional support (Žic Ralić et al., 2020).

In terms of teacher self-assessment, Croatian teachers view themselves similar to Slovenian counterparts regarding the integration of developmental disabilities into general education settings (Vlah et al., 2021). Positive perceptions of DI implementation have been reported in certain regions like Lika-Senj County (Nikčević-Milković et al., 2021). While some teachers lack specific training on teaching learners with disabilities during their pre-service education, those receiving greater school support despite limited training show more positive views on teaching methodology

and are more inclined towards individualised programmes and professional development (Gilmour and Wehby, 2020).

The challenges posed by mixed-ability classrooms are significant as they impact both teachers and learners. These classes can lead weaker learners to fall behind irreversibly while causing high achievers to lose motivation. Maintaining learner interest is crucial, as boredom can lead to disruptive behaviour or disengagement. Effective teaching strategies should cater for diverse learning preferences and abilities within the classroom to ensure all learners reach their maximum potential. Balancing individualised instruction while fostering a sense of connection and safety among learners is essential for creating an inclusive and effective learning environment in mixed-ability classrooms.

2.6 Macedonia: overcrowded and poorly-resourced

In the Macedonian context, overcrowded classrooms, lack of appropriate resources, few teaching hours, and time for preparation make implementation difficult (Segooa and Molise, 2023). Additionally, lack of cooperation among colleagues, teachers' beliefs and experience, and inadequate or no pre-service or in-service training on DI affect the use of differentiation strategies (Griful-Freixenet, Struyven and Vantieghem, 2021). Teaching experience plays a significant role in influencing teachers' decisions to implement DI. Teachers with 5 or less years of experience are more willing to adopt innovations than those with over 20 years of experience, as they are more able to realise the different needs of their learners and adapt their lessons based on these needs (Vidergor, 2023). However, experienced teachers are not willing to design differentiated materials by themselves or make adaptations, preferring ready-made differentiated materials (Peng and Lu, 2023).

While many teachers are skeptical about DI, there are several factors that can influence their decision to implement it. By understanding the importance of diverse classrooms, addressing the needs of individual learners, and implementing effective differentiation strategies, teachers can work towards creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment (Talaftian, Lundsgaard, Mahmood, Shafer, Stelzer and Kuo, 2023).

Ashton (Gordon, 2023) identified eight dimensions of teacher efficacy: a sense of

personal achievement, positive beliefs about learner behaviour and achievement, feeling of personal responsibility for learner success, strategies for achieving goals, positive feelings, sense of control, sense of common teacher-learner objectives, and participatory decision-making. Successful teachers believe they have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities to instruct learners of different needs, profiles, and proficiency levels, resulting in their effectiveness and learners' successful knowledge acquisition (Jimoyiannis and Koukis, 2023).

2.7 Applying differentiated curriculum in Greece: overcoming obstacles and seizing opportunities

Teachers in Greece face difficulties while implementing diversified curricula, especially in basic school. These include the requirement to modify teaching procedures to accommodate a range of learning needs, the underutilisation of differentiated instructional strategies, and a deficiency in differentiation-related knowledge. One major challenge is the variability of classrooms, which calls for ingenuity and imagination to overcome. In Greek primary and secondary education, the idea of pedagogical differentiation places a strong emphasis on procedures, context, learning objectives, and assessment.

Encouraging inclusive education in Greece necessitates resolving issues with legislation, policy, and practice. In order to enable schools to effectively address the needs of learners, supportive structures and a rights-based approach are necessary. Greece has implemented initiatives like Education Priority Zones to improve access to education and combat school failure.

However, a thorough assessment of how these approaches affect learner outcomes is required. There are additional difficulties associated with requiring 4-year-olds to attend school, including a lack of available spots and financial aid for low-income families. Through the implementation of creative teaching strategies, ongoing professional development, and thorough policy evaluations, Greece may establish an educational system that is both more inclusive and efficient.

2.8 Promoting curriculum differentiation for inclusivity: the case of Belgium

The implementation of a differentiated curriculum in Greece presents challenges for teachers, particularly in primary education. These include the need to adapt teaching methods to cater to diverse learning needs, limited use of differentiated instructional strategies, and a lack of knowledge about differentiation. The heterogeneity of classrooms is a significant obstacle, and overcoming this requires creativity and innovation. The concept of pedagogical differentiation in Greek primary and secondary education emphasizes processes, context, learning outcomes, and assessment.

Promoting inclusive education in Greece requires addressing challenges related to legislation, educational policy, and practice. Supportive structures and a rights-based approach are needed to empower schools to respond effectively to learners' needs. Greece has implemented initiatives like Education Priority Zones to improve access to education and combat school failure. However, systematic evaluation of these initiatives' impact on learner outcomes is needed.

The extension of compulsory schooling to 4-year-olds also poses challenges, such as shortages of places and subsidies for low-income families. By overcoming these obstacles through innovative teaching practices, continuous professional development, and comprehensive policy evaluations, Greece can create a more inclusive and effective educational system.

2.9 Differentiated curriculum in Indonesia

Indonesia is a large archipelagic country. Having diverse cultures and languages makes Indonesia have diverse learner characters. They have different learning styles and emerge from different cultural backgrounds. They have varying degrees of mental and social maturity when they first enroll in school. Teachers get various kinds of characters in one class. In mixed classes, teachers face various challenges with different abilities at each grade level. Besides the culture, their learning style is also different (Tomlinson, 2001). Learners have the right to obtain a top-notch education, regardless of their diverse backgrounds. According to the legal foundations and human rights treaties, every child has the right to receive a high-quality education that is appropriate for his or her abilities and characteristics, free from discrimination based

on gender, economic and social status, mental and physical abilities or other disparities (Aldossari, 2018; Salleh, Rauf and Saat, 2022). Learners from various backgrounds attempt to acquire different languages and behaviours. They may have trouble using the language and sit next to those who have superior learning skills.

As a global language, English is essential to learn (Nyoman, Nyoman and Hery, 2022; Ilyosovna, 2020; Oktaviani and Fauzan, 2017). It is used in every source of information nowadays, including in communication. Billions of people from various nations interact with one another and use English as a universal language (Uddiniyah and Silfia 2019). Learners can gain access to more extensive sources of information by learning English because a large number of the most current scientific findings are described in English and because a large number of books are written in English (Tillayeva, 2020). The importance of learning English has been proved by previous studies, including a study on the impact of language learning methods on language proficiency, attitudes, and academic success by Habok and Magyar (2018).

Another study explained the importance of English in the modern era and found that due to its widespread use and significance, the need to acquire English is great (Rao, 2019). In the teaching and learning process, the appropriate method of teaching based on what learners acquire has a good impact. Teachers' have suggested that methods of instruction have a big impact on what learners acquire (Sutarto et al., 2020). The success of the learner in learning English is positively impacted by putting different instructional strategies into practice (Ismail, 2019; Kotob and Arnouss, 2019; Sandra and Kurniawati, 2020). Learners in an English Language class originate from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, and they have a wide range of interests, needs, and developmental stages (De Graaf et al., 2019; Putri et al., 2020). The idea that learners learn in a variety of methods is not new (Gorghiu et al., 2015; Magableh and Abdullah, 2020). The variety of learners' characteristics requires the use of instructional methods that can accommodate the classroom's various mixed abilities (Moosa and Shareefa, 2019).

However, a substantial number of teachers use a one-size-fits-all approach to all learners (Alsubaie, 2020). The diversity and differences of learners in recent years have created a significant need for teachers to be more proactive in developing lessons that are tailored to learner's demands and needs (Tomlinson, 2017; Variacion

et al., 2021). The basic elements of DI for achieving effective learning and true integration in the learning environment are the harmony of instructional activities with the learner's characteristics, interests, and attitudes (Jacobs et al., 2019; Petrina, 2007).

Effectively implementing the DI approach in the classroom continues to be a challenge for many teachers (Cornelius et al., 2018). Additionally, previous DI studies (Grecu, 2023) showed that teachers encountered a variety of difficulties that prevented them from implementing DI successfully in the classroom, including a lack of resources, a lack of time, larger class sizes, a lack of support, a lack of knowledge, and a lack of training (Aldossari, 2018; Lavania and Nor, 2021; Shareefa, 2021). Although DI has many benefits, there are numerous challenges that teachers must overcome before they can use it in the classroom (Wan, 2017; Jager, 2017; Boston, 2017), such as time management, classroom environment management, learner reaction, and individual teaching beliefs (Mariyam Shareefa, 2019; Merawi, 2018).

The study conducted by Suryati, Ratih and Maryadi (2023) analysed the challenges faced by teachers and schools in implementing DI. They found out that teachers faced challenges such as time and effort in preparing and designing the learning process, while schools faced human resources and learners' readiness. In that same process, teachers faced challenges of time and energy to think and provide suitable media and methods for learners. In the preparation stage, teachers conducted assessments of learners' needs and learning styles, and then adjusted and designed lesson plans accordingly. This involved providing appropriate media, models, and learning methods. The biggest challenge in implementing DI was preparation, which required extra energy and time. However, when implementing DI in the classroom, teachers found it easier and there were few challenges. They believed that good preparation would make the teaching and learning process easier because it was tailored to the needs of learners in class. In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of time and effort in preparing and designing the learning process for DI implementation in English teaching. Teachers must be prepared to adapt to new teaching methods and appropriately support learners. By addressing these challenges, schools can better support their teachers and ensure a successful implementation of DI in their classrooms.

Research on implementing DI by Tobin and Tippett (2014) revealed that teachers face the possibilities and potential barriers. The possibilities are: DI provided a framework for teaching, planning, and reflecting on practice, student appeared more involved in learning, DI provided multiple representation of content, and called for teacher to be facilitator of learning instead of dispenser information. The barriers are: teachers experienced fears and insecurities related to the new expectation about their performance, the lack of time, curricular and assessment demand, and lack of resources. Another study on teacher education showed incongruent results (Valcke, Struyven and Rots, 2012). These researchers identified a strong reported emphasis on student diversity during pre-service education. But this was in particular true for kindergarten and primary school teachers, and less so in junior and senior high school teachers.

However, a further qualitative analysis showed that practical skills to cope with DI were less developed and that innovation competences of future teachers were weakly pursued and weakly developed. Student teachers were convinced that DI was important, but were not well prepared to tackle DI. The findings in the Indonesian setting have key implications at policy level; in particular, when it comes to the professional development of in-service teachers, next to reconsidering the curriculum for pre-service teachers. However, the lesson on professional development should be matched to the teaching reality, as in some respects, there is a mismatch between the lessons of university instruction and the real contexts of the classrooms where many Indonesian teachers work (Luschei and Zubaidah, 2012). Secondly, their findings help looking at the “nature” of DI-adoption by Indonesian primary school teachers. Teacher responses to the vignettes show a clear awareness of the importance of DI and the fact that student diversity should be considered during instruction. In relation to dimension 1, coping with student diversity, most of the teachers realised the diversity of their students, and they wanted to cope with it by looking for appropriate teaching strategies. In relation of dimension 2, adopting specific teaching strategy, most of the teachers reported the adoption of grouping strategies. Most teachers did not agree with OSFA strategy, and wanted to accommodate student diversity. Reacting to dimension 3, invoking a variety of learning activity, most teachers were willing to use teaching aids and play/games to motivate students and making them more active. Considering dimension 4, monitoring individual student needs, most teachers felt

realistic about monitoring individual needs, and felt responsible. Regarding dimension 5, pursuing optimal learning outcome, most teachers recommend students to buy teaching aids/learning support. Regarding most DI-dimensions, teachers mentioned a lack of parental support, the lack of student motivation, and the lack of teaching aids. It is also important to indicate that teachers in the present study remained very general and even abstract in the way they talk about student diversity and the way to implement DI. It is somewhat striking that teachers hardly mentioned very concrete strategies that are known to be effective in a DI setting, such as peer tutoring, student tutoring, student tracking programmes, direct instruction, and so forth. Though teachers were explicitly invited to give examples of their own instructional strategies, teacher input remained rather vague and general. This introduces some limitations of the present study. Despite the fact that the results build on the input from a large-scale sample, the present study reflects limitations. Firstly, the study builds on survey data. Teachers “talk” about DI and the way they cope with student diversity.

The question is, to what extent teachers do “walk the talk”? Future studies could complement the current findings with information from other stakeholders; for example, students, parents, educational authorities. Also, the findings could be compared to factual data resulting from observation studies. This reflects the approach adopted by authors like, Lucero, Valcke, and Schellens (2013) in the Ecuadorian setting, who compared reported inquiry teaching approaches and student centred techniques of primary school teachers with data resulting from video analysis of actual classroom teaching. They found conflicting results between the “talk” and the way teacher actually carry out their instruction. Second, the vignettes reflected particular concrete situations that might have differed from the teacher’s own reality; thus neglecting their own professional behaviour in their own setting. This calls for other research strategies that invite teachers to discuss their own classroom reality and how they cope with their student diversity. Thirdly, the current study did not develop an inventory of concrete instructional approaches of teachers, did not generate ways to develop an in-depth understanding of student diversity (instruments, lesson plan, observation checklists, interviews, focus group discussions), and did not develop an overview of materials currently used by teachers to be distributed within the professional community. Future research could build on the “community of learners” idea to invoke this kind of exchange of strategies, instruments, and materials. The

quality of education in Indonesia - currently at a low level – can clearly be improved. Although the present research shows that teachers recognise student diversity and try to cope with it, they still have problems implementing DI. This calls for central policies to push the professional development of in-service teachers. The Ministry of Education should pay more attention to the teacher professional development. For instance – but in a developed country context - the Belgian Ministry of Education changed the law on teacher education and required all teacher education curricula to pay explicit attention to teacher competences that cater for student diversity, coping with student heterogeneity in urban settings, and problems related to multilingual and multicultural settings. Mills et al. (2014) also emphasise professional standards that cater for DI. Central policies should also launch comprehensive professional development plans involving in-service teachers. These plans could build on a school-based exchange of good practices, school-based lesson plan studies focusing on DI-solutions, collegial consultation when attempting to implement DI.

2.10 Differentiated instruction in the Middle East

This section focuses on the Middle East.

2.10.1 Differentiated Instruction in Afghanistan

Learners' needs encompass a wide range of information about the learner, teacher, target language, and the language acquisition environment. Brown (2007) identified four kinds of needs: gaps between future learners' language performances and what they can now achieve, learning goals beneficial to stakeholders, based on learners' information and learning processes, whatever the learners would study next, and any linguistic features or skills that would be problematic if lacking. To address these needs, DI is a vital tool that helps keep learners engaged and provides for their individual needs. Differentiated Instruction is crucial in keeping learners engaged and providing for their individual needs. Teachers should consider the class as a whole and the individuality of learners when exploring their strengths, weaknesses, interests, and needs. In English as Foreign Language (EFL) or English as Second Language contexts, the need for implementing DI is even more evident since learners come to class with varying proficiency levels, needs, cultures, and language backgrounds. Studies have shown that DI can motivate learners to read, improve their reading

abilities, and change attitudes about learning. Servilio (2009) investigated the impact of DI in motivating learners to read in an elementary school in the US, and found that an average of 83.4% of learners' grades improved in reading, 12.5% remained the same, and 4.1% of the grades decreased. Tulbure (2011) researched 94 Romanian teachers of foreign languages and mathematics, applying DI to unique learning styles, showing a significant difference between the performances of experimental and control groups in terms of academic success. Hernández-Chérrez et al. (2020) conducted an experimental study in a reading class in Venezuela, finding that learners who received differentiation instruction scored higher than the control group in the post test, and their vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension improved. In conclusion, DI is essential in language classrooms to cater to the diverse needs of learners, particularly EFL or English as a Second Language. However, teachers face numerous challenges when implementing DI in actual contexts.

Differentiated Instruction is a complex process that requires teachers to adapt their teaching methods and strategies to meet the unique needs of different learners. Challenges include time constraints, set curriculums, sociocultural norms, and personal challenges faced by learners. In Jordan, a study found that teachers lack knowledge of DI techniques due to professional development and administrative issues. The size of the class also impacts DI, as it requires more differentiation and coping with individual differences. To differentiate content, teachers need to provide learners with access to the material they want them to acquire. This can be achieved through flexible grouping, books, tapes, or the internet. However, resource scarcity for language teachers often prevents them from focusing on content-based instruction. DI is a proactive learner-centred method for educating diverse learners in a supportive environment guided by instruction assessment. Differentiated assessment is essential to DI, as it helps quantify and document learning and encourage it. There are three types of classroom assessments: pre-assessment, formative, and summative. Pre-assessment gathers data to define instructional baselines, while formative assessment monitors learner progress during instruction. Summative assessments evaluate instruction and provide information on learner mastery levels, such as grades. In conclusion, effective DI implementation requires teachers to adapt their teaching methods and strategies to meet the unique needs of different learners. However, overcoming these challenges and implementing DI effectively can lead to

improved learner outcomes and better educational outcomes.

Differentiated teachers create a positive classroom environment that encourages learner engagement and success. The physical aspects of the classroom, such as furniture arrangement, comfort, sound volume, temperature, and lighting, are crucial. This environment fosters rapport among learners, encouraging them to share ideas and ask questions without fear of criticism. Teachers share authority, fostering a sense of community and motivation. The learning environment in a differentiated classroom influences every learner's learning process, stimulating language proficiency and boosting classmates' achievement. Good interactions between learners and teachers contribute to a successful learning experience.

2.10.2 Differentiated instruction in Iran

In their classrooms, Iranian English language teachers face diverse learners with varying backgrounds, educational needs, interests, learning styles, and non-academic problems. Despite adopting different teaching models, teachers can only fulfill the needs of some learners. This heterogeneity and the need for training accomplished learners reflect the need for responsiveness to diverse educational needs.

Differentiation in classrooms has been found to be effective and constructive in fostering learners' knowledge in vocabulary and reading comprehension. Thornton (2011) referred to flexible grouping, peer tutoring, anchor activities, scaffolding, and modelling as the best practices of differentiation in classrooms of struggling learners. McCullough (2011) considered DI effective and constructive in fostering learners' gained knowledge in the realm of vocabulary and reading comprehension. Eastman (2010) examined the efficacy of using learning style preferences on 1st grade learners' reading achievement by arranging them into groups based upon their dominant learning style. Cummings (2011) found no difference between learners' achievement when leveled instruction or traditional-based implementation is exercised, and no difference between male and female learners' achievement when differentiation was incorporated.

Alavinia and Farhady (2012) conducted a quasi-experimental study to examine the usefulness of DI on the vocabulary achievement of Iranian female EFL learners. The experimental group received instruction based on their dominant intelligence and

learning styles, and the posttest results indicated that the learners in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group. Khaled Haghighi (2012) supported the effectiveness of DI in enhancing Iranian learners' reading comprehension.

Various studies have explored the administrators', teachers', and learners' evaluation of DI. Dunn and De Bello (1999) discovered that attitude toward learning improves when implementation is matched with the learners' learning style. Chen (2007) sought college learners' perspectives toward differentiated assessment in the EFL situation in Taiwan, finding positive attitudes towards the levelled assessment strategy, increased motivation, increased efforts, promotion of English skills, and greater confidence. Waller (2011) investigated the attitudes of educated placement teachers towards DI, and found that incorporating differentiation in the process and product was beneficial.

Hickerson (2012) investigated the relationship between differentiating reading homework and learners' motivation/interest/attitude toward homework. After implementing two surveys, the researcher found no difference between the two groups' attitudes toward homework but a remarkable difference between learners' interest in reading and motivation to read.

2.11 Curriculum differentiation in Asia

This section shifts attention to Asia.

2.11.1 Implementing differentiated curriculum in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has made significant efforts to improve English language teaching and learning after independence (Islam, Hasan, Sultana, Karim and Rahman, 2021). However, challenges persist in primary and secondary education, such as the lack of qualified teachers, the use of communicative language teaching books, and teacher-centered learning methods (John, 2020). These issues worsen when learners move to college and university levels, where specialized courses are taught without need analysis, leading to insufficient knowledge and inadequate skills.

Differentiated Instruction has been successfully used in higher education institutions to improve learners' quality of learning (Ginja and Chen, 2020). A study by Lavania

and Nor (2021) found that half of the learners were taught using DI, while the rest were taught using the traditional approach. This led to a significant improvement in learners' performance, understanding, and involvement with learning. Another study by Lombarkia (2023) found that the DI approach improved learners' enjoyment and performance in undergraduate first-year English courses. Saban and Atay (2023) found that the DI approach can be effectively applied in higher education courses, making a significant difference in learners' performance. Lai, Zhang and Chang (2020) also found success when applying DI in undergraduate courses, taking feedback from 33 learners. The use of DI strategies has been shown to improve learner performance, satisfaction, and confidence. Research has shown that learners respond positively, become highly enthusiastic, and produce better work when options are given to them. Teachers also enjoy and become more satisfied while teaching (Archer and DeWitt, 2020). Whitehouse (2023), Callahan, Plucker, Gluck and Rodriguez (2020) have consistently found positive results across a broad range of targeted groups. Mićanović, Vučković, Maslovarić, Šakotić and Novović (2023) found that DI is effective for keeping high-ability learners challenged. Ghorbanian (2021) confirmed that DI spurs learner motivation and learning irrespective of their ability and intelligence. Differentiated Instruction makes learners independent, allowing them to set personal goals and assess their progress independently (Roberts and Inman, 2023). It also makes learning an enjoyable journey, making it more engaging and motivating. Overall, DI strategies have been shown to improve learner performance, satisfaction, and confidence (Lai et al., 2020).

2.11.2 Differentiated instruction in the Philippines

Differentiated instruction is crucial in English language classrooms in the Philippines, a multilingual country with a diverse learner population with varying language proficiency levels and learning styles (Quisto, 2022). This presents teachers with unique challenges in meeting the diverse learning requirements of their learners. Implementing DI is essential for promoting inclusive and learner-centred education (Barrot, 2023). Studies have shown that DI can increase learner engagement, motivation, and academic achievement by considering diverse learning styles, interests, and readiness levels. It also fosters a positive classroom climate by recognizing the uniqueness of each learner and fostering a supportive learning

environment (Magayon and Tan, 2020; Resplandor, 2021). However, research on DI in English Language classrooms in the Philippines is limited, with existing research primarily focusing on general education contexts like mathematics and science. It is essential to consider the unique cultural and educational factors in the Philippines, such as the national curriculum, teaching standards, and learner demographics, when examining teachers' attitudes and challenges related to DI (Saguin, Inocian and Un, 2020).

Differentiated Instruction can significantly improve English Language instruction and learning in the Philippines. However, understanding teachers' attitudes towards it is crucial as it impacts their willingness, commitment, and motivation to adopt and implement differentiated instructional strategies (Talain and Mercado, 2023). Studies have shown that teachers with positive attitudes report increased learner engagement, motivation, and improved outcomes (Hatmanto and Rahmawati, 2023a). However, some teachers are concerned about the difficulties associated with implementing DI, such as time constraints, lack of resources, and managing diverse classroom dynamics (Crisologo, Borines, Castañeda, Clemor, Dela-Cruz, Bagunas and Mendoza, 2023).

Some obstacles teachers face when implementing DI include teacher training, resource availability, curriculum constraints, and classroom dynamics (Hatmanto and Rahmawati, 2023a). Teachers and policymakers can develop targeted support systems and professional development programs to address these challenges if they comprehend them.

Existing research on the difficulties associated with instituting DI provides valuable insights, such as the need for more planning time, limited professional development opportunities, and difficulty managing DI within existing curriculum frameworks (Barrot, 2019).

2.11.3 Differentiated instruction in Indonesia

Indonesia, a diverse archipelagic country, has a diverse learner population with varying learning styles and backgrounds. Teachers face challenges in implementing DI in teaching English as learners from different backgrounds have varying degrees of mental and social maturity (Tricahyati and Zaim, 2023). However, regardless of their

diverse backgrounds, learners have the right to a top-notch education. Legal foundations and human rights treaties ensure every child receives a high-quality education free from discrimination based on gender, economic and social status, mental and physical abilities, or other disparities (Hasibuan and Agustina, 2023). Learners from different backgrounds may struggle with language use and social interaction (Paramesthi and Suwartono, 2023). The idea that learners learn in a variety of methods is not new, but many teachers use a one-size-fits-all approach. The diversity and differences of learners in recent years have created a significant need for teachers to be more proactive in developing lessons tailored to their demands and needs.

Implementing DI in the classroom remains a challenge for many teachers, with various obstacles such as lack of resources, time, larger class sizes, support, knowledge, and training. Despite its benefits, DI also presents numerous challenges, such as time management, classroom environment management, learner reaction, and individual teaching beliefs (Suryati, Ratih and Maryadi, 2023). These challenges must be overcome for DI to be effectively implemented in the classroom.

2.12 Differentiated instruction in North Africa

This section of the literature review moves to Africa.

2.12.1 Differentiated instruction in Morocco

Differentiated Instruction is a proposed alternative to the dominant teaching-based model in universities worldwide, but it is often overlooked at the university level. The Moroccan education system suffers from chronic dysfunctions due to a one-size-fits-all approach to instruction and assessment, with a prescribed curriculum (Hu, 2024). English Foreign Language teachers often prepare one lesson plan and deliver it to all classes, regardless of the learners' mixed abilities and individual needs (Alam and Mohanty, 2023). They also assess learners in a similar way without considering their differences and disabilities. Teachers often know little about learners' socio-economic status, interests, strengths, and weaknesses, leading to little focus on identifying their personal learning needs (Macaulay, Webber and Fraunholz, 2023). These unfair practices towards young learners have resulted in an educational system that

underserves or even ill-serves them. Languages, particularly foreign languages, have always been included in subsequent reforms since the National Charter for Education and Training was established in 2000 (Ennser-Kananen, Kilpeläinen, Saarinen and Vaarala, 2023). These reforms focused on reinforcing the teaching and learning of Arabic and Amazigh, and boosting the teaching and learning of foreign languages, particularly English. However, challenges related to language learning in Morocco still persist in languages in general, French, French and Arabic in high school, Arabic and French in primary and middle schools, and reading in the 4th Grade (Dahbi, 2023).

The one-size-fits-all approach to education is essential for successful educational systems, and there is a need to rethink traditional approaches and revisit instructional practices in Morocco (Kurni, Mohammed and Srinivasa, 2023). To achieve instructional equity, EFL teachers should recognise learners' differences and respond to them differently to avoid instructional flatness (Emeny, 2023). Differentiated Instruction, based on various instructional skills, is needed at this juncture in Moroccan educational history. This paradigm fosters learners' autonomy as mandated by the English language guidelines for secondary schools (Chetouane, 2023). Multimethodology, the use of various teaching procedures, becomes indispensable in EFL classes in Morocco because learners' background experiences differ enormously (Skarpaas, 2023). Teachers must appeal to every learner's learning modality and provide enough multimethodological experiences for them to reach maximum growth (Pham, 2023). By varying activities, teachers will accommodate the spectrum of individual differences and avoid being stuck in the proverbial rut that characterizes language classrooms (Plotinsky, 2023). Teachers need to adapt their teaching styles to match the learners' preferences, which is ascribable to an educational philosophy called DI (Maser, 2023).

Moroccan English Foreign Language learners should become fully independent thinkers and assume leadership roles in a highly competitive twenty-first century job market (Errihani, 2024). The Official Guidelines of teaching English in high school urge teachers to help learners develop the necessary skills to become more successful and independent learners. Differentiated Instruction goes hand-in-hand with the principles embedded in these guidelines and the SV principles which mandate plurality and equal opportunities for each learner inside and outside the confines of school (Tyson, 2024).

Understanding learning styles and implementing teaching styles accordingly is crucial for understanding the urgent need for differentiation in education (Alkhawaldeh and Khasawneh, 2023). Yuen, Peacock, Man, Callinan, Slade, Farrell, Mattick and Livingston (2023) suggest that when learner and teacher styles are better matched, learners are likely to work harder both in and outside the classroom and benefit more from their EFL classes. Knowing about learning styles helps teachers reach out to all learners in their classrooms and teach them effectively. Matching teaching styles with learners' learning styles is crucial for better performance and motivation. Teachers should strive for a balanced teaching style that accommodates multiple learning styles, rather than excessively favouring anyone. Awareness of learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) helps teachers gear their input delivery towards making it appropriate for each learner's type, implementing effective teaching (Pressley, Allington and Pressley, 2023).

English as Foreign Language teachers should increase their understanding of how learners learn and be conscious of individual learning styles to ensure maximum learning success. Effective learning occurs when teachers affirm the presence and validity of diverse learning styles and maximize the climate for learning in and out of the classroom (Shatri and Kelmendi, 2023). This may reduce failures of learning and frustration. Although research suggests that EFL learners prefer some learning styles, teachers need to use a diversity of differentiated input to respond to the mix of learners' preferences and strengths during their learning process (Raza, 2018). Empirical research partially supports this suggestion, showing that a mismatch between learning style and teaching style yields insignificant effects on proficiency and motivation, while a match shows only limited significant positive effects (Wang, An and Wright, 2018).

2.12.2 Implementing differentiated instruction in the Libyan context

Libya's educational system, linguistic regulations, and historical backgrounds all impact the experiences and difficulties of implementing a diversified curriculum there (Elshegmani, 2023). Despite initiatives to improve curriculum modifications and English language education, difficulties remain in effectively putting DI into practice. The Libyan education system's emphasis has impacted DI on Arabic as the primary language of instruction and historical changes in English language teaching approaches (Elshegmani, 2023). Conflict-related disruptions have also made adopting

cutting-edge teaching techniques like DI more difficult. To overcome the difficulties involved in adopting a differentiated curriculum in Libya, it is imperative to address the following critical areas: teachers' professional development, the availability of resources, and alignment with the national curriculum (AlManafi, Osman, Magableh and Alghatani, 2023).

2.13 Differentiating learners in East Africa

This section reviews literature from East Africa.

2.13.1 Differentiated curriculum in Tanzania

Differentiated Instruction is a promising approach to address diverse learning needs in Tanzania, but its implementation faces challenges such as limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and large class sizes (Milinga, Amani and Lyakurwa, 2023). Research in the Mwanga District of Tanzania has shown the positive impact of DI on learner performance, but the complexity of implementing DI is a significant barrier (Nguvava and Meremo, 2021). To improve the implementation of DI, studies have explored teachers' perceptions of working with high-achieving learners in Tanzanian secondary schools (DeJaeghere, Duong and Dao, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges, as studies have highlighted the challenges and opportunities of incorporating Differentiated Instruction in remote or hybrid learning environments. Adapting DI practices to online or blended settings requires innovative approaches and additional support for teachers (Gheysens, Coubergs, Griful-Freixenet, Engels and Struyven, 2022).

Similar challenges have been observed in multicultural schools in South Africa, with factors such as limited resources, large class sizes, time constraints, and teachers' reluctance or lack of training hindering the effective application of DI strategies (Ajani, 2023). Overcoming these obstacles requires providing teachers with necessary support, resources, and professional development opportunities (Gibbs, 2023). Despite these challenges, the potential benefits of DI in Tanzania and beyond are significant. By addressing barriers to implementation, providing ongoing support for teachers, and fostering a culture of inclusive teaching practices, schools can create learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of all learners (Larios and Zetlin,

2023). Through collaborative efforts and a commitment to educational excellence, DI can play a vital role in enhancing learner engagement, achievement, and overall academic success (Abella, Dejito, Bubuli, Birao, Arador and Kilag, 2024).

A teacher has to know the learning profiles of learners to meet individual needs in an inclusion-based classroom (Thwala, 2023). Varying the content, process, and product enables learners to grasp concepts by meeting them where they are (Bo'riboyev, 2023). Differentiated Instruction involves learners with learning disabilities and others with diverse learning needs, providing instructional methods and materials matched to their individual needs (Thapliyal, Ahuja, Shankar, Cheng and Lander, 2024). Differentiated Instruction requires general and special teachers to possess flexible teaching approaches and be flexible in adjusting the curriculum based on learner need (Strogilos, Lim and Binte Mohamed Buhari, 2023). Differentiated Instruction improves the possibility of academic success for diverse learners, creates independent, responsible, and confident learners, and moves learners toward academic achievement by meeting their individual needs (Alsalhi, Abdelrahman, Abdelkader, Al-Yatim, Habboush and Al Qawasmi, 2021). It is one of many best practices used to increase learner achievement and learning outcomes for special education learners (Sun and Xin, 2020). Diverse curriculum and instruction should be differentiated to meet the needs of learners, as inclusive education setting increases higher order thinking skills and exposure to advanced curriculum (Alam and Mohanty, 2023). However, factors such as the Social Model of Disability by Mike Oliver in 1976 can lead to the ineffective application of DI (Mwangi, 2021). School administrators must ensure that schools have the right resources and infrastructure, and teachers possess requisite skills to accommodate SNE learners (Mwanzia, 2022).

These elements are divided into three categories: stakeholder/guardian related variables, teacher personal aspects, and school-based considerations. Teaching tools and supplies, a dynamic curriculum, class size, ongoing professional development for teachers, and a support network are examples of school-based elements (Hennessy, D'Angelo, McIntyre, Koomar, Kreimeia, Cao, Brugha and Zubairi, 2022). A teacher's attitude, degree of education, daily workload, and comprehension of DI are among their personal factors (Shareefa, 2021). On the other hand, stakeholder/guardian related factors include team support, guardian involvement, and family-school

relationships (Ismajli and Imami-Morina, 2018).

2.13.2 Case of Djibouti

The implementation of a differentiated English curriculum in Djibouti presents unique challenges and experiences for teachers and policymakers (Fanjanirina, 2023). Factors such as limited resources, language proficiency levels, and linguistic diversity add complexity to the process (Uskul, Bernardo, Gonzalez, Kende, Laher and Láštíková, 2023). Teachers must adapt instructional strategies to meet the varying proficiency levels of learners while ensuring quality English language education for all learners (Abulibdeh, Zaidan and Abulibdeh, 2024). Research on teachers' experiences can provide valuable insights into effective practices and strategies. Policymakers can develop targeted interventions to support teachers in delivering high-quality English instruction tailored to individual learner needs (Kilag et al., 2023). Engaging stakeholders in discussions about the benefits and challenges of implementing a differentiated English curriculum can foster collaboration and support for initiatives aimed at enhancing language learning outcomes in Djibouti (Fanjanirina, 2023).

Challenges such as limited access to educational resources, inadequate teacher training, and large class sizes may hinder the successful implementation of a differentiated English curriculum (Adare et al., 2023). Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that includes providing teachers with professional development opportunities, leveraging technology to support DI, and fostering a supportive learning environment that values linguistic diversity (Le, Phuong, Nguyen, Pham, Huynh Thi and Nguyen, 2023). Through collaborative efforts between teachers, policymakers, and stakeholders, Djibouti can overcome these challenges and leverage the power of DI to enhance English language education for all learners (Wamwara, Spillan and Onchoke, 2023).

2.14 Differentiated instruction in southern Africa

This section now reviews literature from southern Africa, to which South Africa belongs.

2.14.1 Differentiated instruction in multilingual Namibia

Namibia, a multilingual country with many learners speaking indigenous languages as their first language, faces challenges in implementing DI due to language barriers and limited professional development opportunities (Nghuulikwa, 2023). Traditional forms of assessment, such as exams and quizzes, may not accurately measure the learning of all learners, necessitating alternative forms of assessment that allow multiple pathways to mastery (Zhai, Haudek and Ma, 2023). Namibia's Inclusive Education Policy, launched in 2015, aims to provide equal access to education for all learners, providing a framework for implementing DI in schools. This policy also presents an opportunity for teachers to leverage the knowledge and skills of learners from their home languages to support their learning in English (Grimes, Dela, Diana, Soliman, Lester, Kaisa, Sol, Sophia, Vocaes, Foster and Brigitte, 2023). Incorporating indigenous languages into the curriculum can promote cultural awareness and inclusivity (Thwala, 2023).

Technology advancements, such as online learning platforms and educational apps, can support DI in Namibia by providing personalized learning experiences and supporting teacher training and professional development (Goburdhun, 2023). Curriculum design should be designed to support DI, offering flexibility in content and pedagogy, and providing alternative forms of assessment (Grecu, 2023). Engaging parents and community members in the education process can promote inclusivity and support DI (Kilag, Diano Jr, Bulilan, Allego and Cañizares, 2024). Private schools can serve as models and partners for DI, sharing expertise and resources with nearby government schools (Lestari, Wahyono, Akkuşci, Purwanto, Anas, Nurmallasari, Bibi and Yunus, 2023). Partnerships between schools and universities can facilitate workshops and trainings to build teacher competencies in DI (Larios and Zetlin, 2023).

2.14.2 Enhancing English teaching through curriculum differentiation in Botswana

In Botswana, teachers face numerous challenges in implementing curriculum differentiation in English language teaching. Limited resources, such as textbooks, technology, and teaching aids, make it difficult for teachers to tailor instruction to meet diverse learner needs (Ookeditse and Molemane, 2024). Large class sizes also complicate this process. Inadequate training in DI techniques and strategies further

hinders teachers' ability to adapt teaching methods. The lack of professional development opportunities also limits their ability to cater to learners with varying learning styles and language proficiency levels. Teachers often fear accommodation or adaptation when implementing changes for learners with special education needs. This fear stems from the compression of time and space, leading to innovation overload and intensification in teaching. To effect change, teachers must question their assumptions about society, culture, history, economy, and politics. Meaningful change requires more than just new knowledge or teaching techniques.

Frequent curriculum changes also pose a significant challenge for teachers, disrupting established teaching practices and creating uncertainty in incorporating differentiation effectively (Jele, 2023). This instability can impact the quality of English language instruction. Despite these challenges, teachers in Botswana recognise the importance of personalized learning experiences and the benefits of catering to individual learner needs. They create inclusive and engaging learning environments through creative lesson planning, collaborative activities, and varied assessment methods (Wyss, Qargha, Arenge, Mukoyi, Elliott, Matsheng and Clune, 2023). To improve the implementation of curriculum differentiation in English teaching, it is crucial to prioritise teacher training and professional development. This will empower teachers to meet diverse learner needs and improve learning outcomes. In conclusion, personalised instruction and inclusive practices can be beneficial in creating more effective and engaging English Language classrooms in Botswana.

2.14.3 Innovations and challenges in implementing differentiated curriculum in South Africa

Implementing a differentiated curriculum in South Africa is a complex task due to socio-economic disparities, language barriers, limited professional development opportunities, overcrowded classrooms, and the national curriculum framework (De Jager, 2023). Despite these challenges, South Africa has promoted inclusive education through initiatives like Screening, Identification, Assessment, Support and Response to Intervention, which aim to identify and support learners with diverse learning needs through targeted interventions. However, many teachers in South Africa demonstrate innovation and creativity in implementing DI, using strategies such as flexible grouping, tiered assignments, and technology integration (Yuen, Luo and

Wan, 2023). Collaborative learning communities are crucial in supporting DI in South African schools, where teachers collaborate with colleagues, educational specialists, and community stakeholders to share best practices, resources, and expertise (Nkengbeza, Maemeko and Mashebe, 2023). To successfully implement DI, it is essential to invest in comprehensive professional development programs, adapt the national curriculum framework to incorporate differentiated principles, ensure equitable access to resources, and integrate technology into teaching practices (Huang, 2023). Engaging parents, caregivers, and community members is crucial for creating a supportive learning environment that values diversity and inclusivity (Hernandez and Torres, 2023). Collaboration between schools and communities can foster partnerships that enhance educational outcomes for all learners. In conclusion, implementing a differentiated curriculum in South Africa presents numerous challenges, including socio-economic disparities, language barriers, limited professional development opportunities, overcrowded classrooms, and the need for collaboration between schools and communities (Ngobeni, Chibambo and Divala, 2023). By investing in comprehensive professional development programs, ensuring equitable access to resources, and fostering partnerships between schools and communities, South Africa can successfully implement DI and improve educational outcomes for all learners (Kilag, Miñoza, Comighud, Amontos, Damos and Abendan, 2023).

Despite the enabling policy described above, the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa is slow and only partial (Wildeman and Nomdo, 2007). The reasons for this are numerous and relate to problems that affect the education system as a whole, the role of special schools, and other support structures and conditions of poverty, amongst others (Stofile and Green 2006; Engelbrecht, 2006). The issue that this study addresses, however, is Universal Design for Learning as a potential framework to deal with teachers' lack of knowledge and skills on how to design and present the curriculum in ways that can meet the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms. Teacher training programmes do not appear to be adequately addressing this need, resulting in stress for teachers and lack of progress of learners with disabilities (Engelbrecht, Swart and Eloff, 2001; Chataika et al., 2012; Engelbrecht, 2006). The issue of curriculum differentiation is fundamental to the implementation of inclusion. In its apparent absence, children who experience barriers to learning cannot

expect to have their needs met in a least-restrictive and inclusive setting with their age-mates.

2.15 Summary

This chapter presented literature review on the challenges and experiences of teachers when implementing differentiated curriculum. The review was a combination of the challenges of teachers in implementing differentiated curriculum and the experiences of teachers when implementing differentiated curriculum. The theory that underpins this study is DI by Carol Tomlinson, which allows for tailoring lessons to meet each learner's individual interests, needs, and strengths. Implementing DI gives learners choice and flexibility in how they learn, and helps teachers personalise learning. The chapter concludes by summarising the key points of the literature review and the importance of DI in education.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter unpacks the methodology that was employed, in alignment with the main research question and the objectives of the study. The chapter explains how data were gathered in selected secondary schools in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District in the Free State Province. The chapter starts by explaining the research approach, which is the qualitative approach. Constructivism that guides the researcher's philosophical orientation is discussed. The multiple case study research design is explored to show how this study was situated in this design. The chapter also revealed the sampling procedure used in this study. Data generation tools are also explained, followed by thematic analysis as a technique by which data were analysed. Finally, the ethical considerations observed are discussed.

The data generated in this study addressed the following objectives to:

- examine teachers' understanding of DI in Grade 10 EFAL classes.
- explore if EFAL teachers' instructional practices align with CAPS guidelines on DI.
- analyse challenges faced by teachers in implementing differentiation policy in EFAL classes.
- discuss how the implementation of DI can be understood and explained in EFAL lessons.

3.2 Research approach

This study employed qualitative research approach. Various researchers present slightly common meanings of qualitative research (Williams, 2021; Fischer and Guzel, 2023; Tuval-Mashiach, 2021). Qualitative research is a methodical and idiosyncratic approach to describe life experiences and make sense of them (Delgado-Hito et al., 2021). The most important aspect of qualitative research is that it produces data as words as opposed to numbers and statistics (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Dissimilar to the quantitative approach, which studies variables in controlled settings, the qualitative

approach studies behaviour as it occurs naturally, free from influence, control, or any effort to infer causation.

Shkedi (2019) describes three characteristics of qualitative research. Firstly, qualitative research is conducted in the human language within the context of natural human setting hence the teacher's instructional methods are better understood when studied in the classroom when they are conducting their EFAL lessons and working with the learners. Edmonds and Kennedy (2017) concur that a qualitative study adopts a naturalistic approach to studying the social world. Secondly, it incorporates natural human research methods that require researchers to participate personally with the phenomena and participants. Lastly, it includes using human research skills to analyse data. The purpose of qualitative research is to comprehend meaning, and the data to be examined are words and observations (Adler, 2022).

According to Shkedi's (2019) three qualitative research features, structured interviews will be done in a human language, which in this case is English, and the context of natural human setting will be at selected schools after the knockoff time to avoid interference with teaching duties. Natural human research methods like probing will be used. The qualitative approach will aid the researcher to discuss how the implementation of DI can be understood and explained in EFAL lessons. In a nutshell structured interviews, observation and document analysis will be used in ensuring that trustworthiness of the study is achieved.

3.3 Research paradigm

The paradigm that underpins this study is the constructivist paradigm. Constructivism is a system of perceiving the world that stresses the role of interpretation in understanding reality (Omoda,2022). Constructivism is based on the assumption that individuals comprehend the world they live in through development of idiosyncratic meaning of their experiences. The paradigm assumes that learning happens only when learners discover knowledge through experimenting and doing (Kumatongo and Muzata, 2021). This implies that teaching and learning does not transpire from the traditional method of teachers standing in front of the learners and teaching.

The relevance of this paradigm is that constructivism encourages the use of multiple modes of teaching through the use of video, audio, charts, and others (Saleem et al.,

2021). Teachers can utilise raw data, primary sources, and cognitive terminology to differentiate instruction in EFAL in order to deliver instruction to learners. This is what DI is emphasising. Additionally, institutions of learning should respect learners' uniqueness and/or diversity and offer a foundation for learners to construct reality from their unique perspectives (Rannikmäe, Holbrook, and Soobard, 2020).

3.4 Research design

Multiple case study is the selected research design in this study. Schoch (2020) states that case study contains a thorough and intensive analysis of a particular event, situation, organisation. Hancock et al. (2021) explain that a case study is when the researcher conducts of a current phenomenon within its natural context using various sources of evidence. In this study, I used semi structured interviews, non-participant observation and document analysis to generate data from Grade 10 EFAL teachers.

The common sample size for multiple case studies are four to five cases, as suggested by Creswell (2013). I selected six cases for in-depth exploration so that I could develop insights into each Grade 10 EFAL teacher's experiences and understanding of DI in their lessons. Yin (2018) proposes engaging knowledgeable participants in the case.

A multiple case study allows numerous cases to be examined to understand similarities and differences between the cases, with the aim to replicate results across cases (Baxter and Jack, 2008). I selected five schools as cases, that would allow me to look at the similarities and differences of teachers' experiences and understanding of DI. Also, that would allow me to replicate the findings from each case. A multiple case study can be defined as a qualitative inquiry with its everyday context and has clear boundaries (McNabb, 2010). Harrison (2017) states that a multiple case study can be depicted as a research design in which the researcher explores one site or one subject or a single incident and gathers data by using different data generating methods during a persistent period. It afforded a unique opportunity of studying Grade 10 EFAL teachers in their real settings, and therefore, it allowed the researcher to understand ideas more clearly. Moreover, Cohen et al. (2011) argue that case studies examine and report on the real-life, complex and dynamic interactions of actual events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance as contexts are always unique and dynamic.

The relevance of the use of multiple case study in this research is that it would permit me to get in depth information about the experiences of teachers in EFAL Grade 10 when they implement DI in their lessons. A multiple case study also provided an opportunity to gather different kind of information through the use of structured interviews, observation and documents analysis. Also, the advantage of the multiple case study is that it provides process and outcome. As a result, it would lead to broad understanding of a bounding unit. It also allowed the researcher to use the outcomes discovered from the multiple cases to other relatable cases or situations, leading to transferability (Schoch, 2020).

Moreover, multiple cases have the capability to improve the trustworthiness and credibility of the research, by providing additional evidence and information to support the research findings. Additionally, this design would amplify the transferability and applicability of the research, by presenting how the research findings can be relevant and advantageous for different settings, audiences or scenarios.

3.5 Research site

The research was carried out in the five selected schools in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District in the Eastern part of the Free State Province, where EFAL teachers in Grade 10 were participants in exploring teacher's experiences in implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL lessons.

3.6 Population

Target population is defined as qualities of a specific group that the researcher is interested in researching about (Pandey and Pandey, 2021). For instance, people who possess particular qualities such as teaching attitudes or experience. The target population were all the EFAL teachers in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District. From this target group, I purposively selected two teachers per school, from five secondary schools in Harrismith for participation in the study.

3.7 Purposive sampling

This study employed purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability method in which the researcher, acting on conviction, selects only people who meet

the research objectives (Obilor, 2023 and Labree et al., 2022). These individuals are considered to be informed about the phenomenon that is being studied. Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgement sampling, is an approach whereby participants are intentionally selected by the researcher according to qualities that may be important to understanding the topic under study.

Purposive sampling relies on the researcher's intentional selection of participants due to their qualities, which could be critical in understanding the phenomenon being studied. Such participants are usually well-informed about the phenomenon and could provide rich information that allows a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Etikan et al., 2016). While there is a possibility for the researcher to consider participants with the same viewpoint as the researcher, Yin (2016) argues that the goal should not be only to select participants who will provide the data that confirm the researcher's perspective. It is important to consider, selecting participants who share a different point of view. This could render the study more credible and less biased.

This type of sampling was an advantage for this study as it intentionally selected five Grade 10 EFAL teachers with at least five years of experience in implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL lessons. The sample of teachers was selected because they are qualified to teach EFAL in Grade 10, they hold a Bachelor's Degree in Education, majoring in English and or hold a Post Graduate Certificate in Education also majoring in English. The sample of teachers involved the ones who have been capacitated with the policy Guidelines for Responding to Learners' Diversity in the Classroom. This method allowed my study to get in-depth information about teachers' experiences implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL.

3.8 Data generation strategies

In this study, data were generated through semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observations. Semi structured interviews were conducted with six EFAL teachers in Grade 10 EFAL to examine teacher's experiences with implementing DI in their classroom. The objective was to examine teachers' understanding of DI and, investigate challenges they face with when implementing differentiation policy in EFAL classes. Observation was another method that was used to generate data from the teachers. The aim was to find out whether teachers' instructional practices align with

CAPS guidelines on DI.

Table 3.1: Data generation process in this study

Sub-research questions	Data generation strategy	Data source	Analysis procedure
1.Examine teachers' understanding of DI in Grade 10 EFAL classes.	- Structured interviews -Lesson observation -Lesson plan analysis (document analysis)	- EFAL Grade 10 teachers	Thematic analysis
2.Explore if EFAL teachers' instructional practices align with CAPS guidelines on DI.	-Lesson observation -Lesson plan analysis	- ENGAL Grade 10 teachers	Content analysis
3. Analyse challenges faced by teachers in implementing differentiation policy in EFAL classes.	- Structured interviews -Lesson observation	- ENGAL Grade 10 teachers	Content analysis Thematic analysis
4. Discuss how the implementation of DI can be understood and explained in EFAL lessons.	- Structured interviews	- ENGAL Grade 10 teachers	Thematic analysis

3.8.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used as the first method to generate data from Grade 10 EFAL teachers. Semi-structured interview is an effective method for providing reliable, comparable qualitative data with different participants (McCain et al., 2022). This method enabled me to get and gain in depth insights into teacher's experiences and challenges they encounter when implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL lessons.

Mansouri (2022) claims that conducting interviews enables the researcher to ask a predetermined series of questions in a specific order, which can aid in identifying patterns in a participant response while holding other variables constant. In doing so, the study's credibility and confirmability may increase and research biases be lessened. The questions are not necessarily presented in a rigid order. In this kind of the interview, the participants have more opportunity to expand on their thoughts and to discuss the topics the researcher has brought up (Nayak and Singh, 2021). Open-ended questions are used with greater focus on the interviewee expanding on their areas of interest. The interview protocol that serves as an "interview guide" is formulated in advance. Every participant in a semi structured interview is asked the

same questions (Hurst, 2023). In this study, all six Grade 10 EFAL teachers were asked the same questions from the interview protocol prepared beforehand.

The study used semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth insights from Grade 10 EFAL teachers about their experiences and challenges in implementing Differentiated Instruction (DI). The interview protocol included open-ended questions to encourage detailed responses and explore specific themes related to DI implementation. Interviews were conducted individually, allowing for flexible yet focused conversations. The interviews provided rich, qualitative data that was analysed to identify patterns and themes in teachers' experiences with DI. The use of semi-structured interviews confirms existing literature on their effectiveness in gathering in-depth, qualitative insights. The study faced challenges such as the risk of bias, data analysis complexity, and scheduling and access. However, the interviews provided valuable data that could not be obtained through more structured methods.

3.8.2 Observation

Observation is the second method that was used in this study. By definition, observation is a method of generating data by observing actions or occurrences or noting physical qualities in their natural environment (Nayak and Singh, 2021). Lesson observation has become important feature of professional life for teachers irrespective of the division within which they work (O'Leary, 2020).

This study adopted non-participant observation. I was an observer in the EFAL Grade 10 lessons. I examined if EFAL teachers' instructional practices align with CAPS guidelines on DI and strive not to influence the lesson in any other way. Also observation was scheduled for certain hours a day depending on the participants. I scheduled time with EFAL Grade 10 teachers as to when should I come to observe as they deliver lesson in their classrooms. Each teacher was observed once.

To minimize disruptions and distractions during non-participant observation, strategies include scheduling observations in advance, limiting observer involvement, implementing structured observation, building trust with teachers, and minimizing visibility. Scheduling observations allowed teachers to prepare without feeling rushed, while structured observation maintains focus and avoids drawing attention away from the lesson. Building trust with teachers and minimizing visibility can also helped to

reduce initial distractions.

Observations were selected on the basis that they provided the researcher with better understanding of how teachers are implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL. Mishra and Alok (2022) outline that it is important for the researcher to establish the focus of the observation, draw up a system for data generation, have recording sheets and checklists and lastly the researcher must write down field notes. My focus was to observe how the teachers differentiated their instruction for inclusivity of every learner in class.

Hurst (2023) emphasises that everything the researcher observes and hears that is related to research question must be noted as field notes. Field notes were written before or after the observation but mostly I wrote field notes during observation while my mind was still alert and the occurrences were still fresh. I used the observation protocol that was prepared prior to the observations. I observed whether the environment was supportive and positive for learning, preparation done for and respond to learner needs, quality curriculum and learner assessment. The field notes were then transcribed and consolidated in the observation protocol.

Advantages of conducting observations include minimising the distance between the researcher and the participants, the potential discovery of topics that the researcher may not have realised were relevant, and gaining deeper insights into the real-world dimensions of the research problem at hand (Busetto and Gumbinger, 2020).

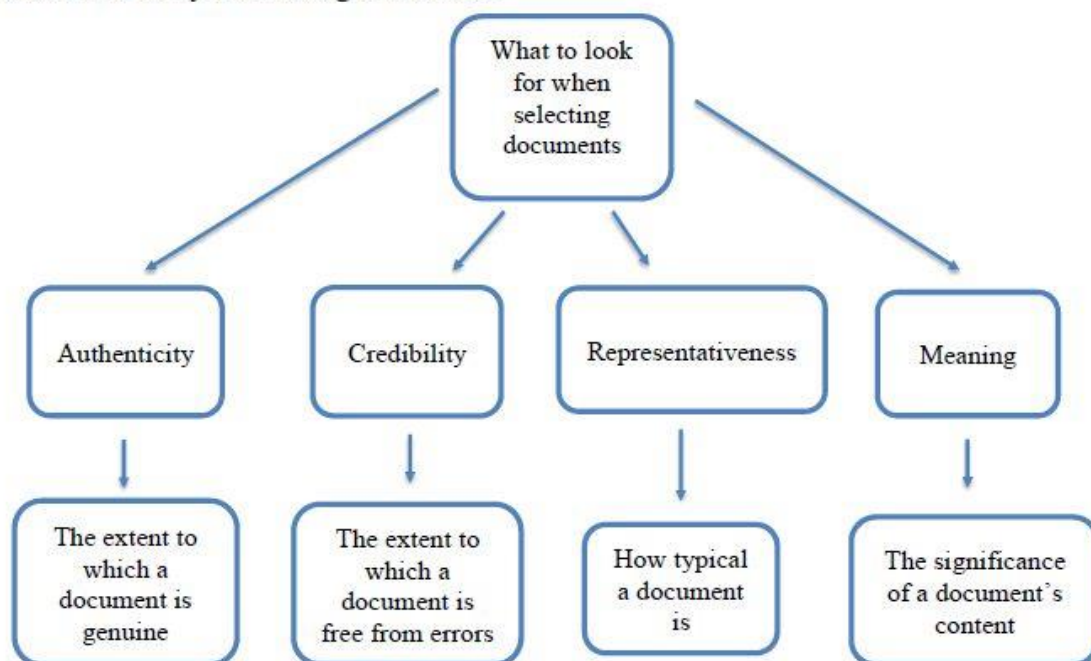
3.8.3 Document analysis

The third method that was used to generate data in this study is document analysis. As defined by Linton et al. (2019), document analysis is the arranged process of analysing and understanding applicable materials and relevant government and school documents. Gasva and Mukomana (2020) state that document analysis data can be generated through government and school policies, school-based improvement plans, lesson plans, and learner's workbook's. In this study I analysed lesson plans from six Grade 10 EFAL teachers, 2023/2024 annual teaching plans and assessment programmes. I analysed five lesson plans. I also analysed how in these programme preparations, differentiation is done for, and respond to, different learner needs. Through the analysis of Grade 10 EFAL teachers', lesson plans I got insights

into how the teachers' instructional practices align with CAPS guidelines on DI and how they understood DI. This study employed thematic analysis to analyse the selected documents. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) state that thematic analysis is a method that identifies patterns with the data, developing themes into groupings for analysis.

The predetermined pseudonym was used, particularly in that the document analysis is supplementary to other research methods employed in the study. The pseudonym that was used in interview transcripts, for instance, can be applied to the content of documents, claims (Armstrong, 2021). Pseudonym and the themes that were generated served to integrate data generated through various methods. In selecting and analysing information gathered from documents, I fairly presented the research material and responded to even slight clues to significance. Document analysis was chosen because it allowed the researcher to use data drawn from documents, for example, to authenticate data generated during interviews.

Figure 1
Factors to Use for Selecting Documents



Note. The information in this figure is from Kridel (2015).

Source: Kridel (2015)

Figure 3.1: Factors to use when selecting documents

Through the use of various methods to generate data, researchers are in a position to verify their findings across data sets, thus decreasing the possibilities for biases. For example, participant observation allows researchers to observe settings stated in interviews and situations participants may be hesitant to disclose. Observation permits researchers to advance new understandings and awareness of any descriptions the participants may have provided throughout the interview (Morgan, 2022).

3.9 Data analysis

This study used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phased guide to thematic analysis. The six phases are explained below.

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data

This phase involved familiarising myself with the data through repeated reading as I made notes and developed ideas for coding. I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews, observation and document analysis.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

This is a phase where initial codes were created. The research process involved identifying appealing sections of data, creating initial codes to capture their essence, and making meaning of the data. This involved reviewing the data, identifying relevant sections, assigning initial codes, and making sense of the data. The codes helped organize the data into categories, themes, or patterns, allowing for further analysis and trend identification.

Phase 3: Searching for themes stemming from the analysis of the codes

In this stage, I examined initial codes to identify connections, similarities, and patterns. I grouped codes addressing similar ideas into potential themes. After matching coded data extracts to relevant themes, then I reviewed original data to confirm their fit. Themes provided a higher-level understanding of the phenomena studied, capturing the essence of multiple codes.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

The themes primarily developed in phase three were reconsidered and refined. Some

of the themes were grouped into one theme. Other themes required to be separated into different themes.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

This phase included describing and further refining the themes that were used to analyse the data within them. This stage involved recognizing and understanding what each theme was about and therefore decided what part of the data each theme represented.

Phase 6: Producing the report

Following the definition and the naming of themes, what followed was the final analysis and production of a complex narrative of the data that assures and convinces the reader that the analysis is meritorious and valid.

3.10 Interview and ethics

The six selected teachers' participation in this study was entirely voluntary. The study was based on their free decision; when they accepted to engage in my study, consent forms were given to them in order to read and sign. Their signatures on the consent form were utilised as proof of their voluntary participation. Husband (2020) states that each participant must grant their permission to engage in a study and be provided with relevant information in order to provide informed consent. The research participants were provided with everything they need to know about the study so they took a well-informed decision about participating. I informed each participant that they are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time should they wish to do so, with or without giving motives. The duration for each interview was approximately 30 minutes. Interviews were held with each teacher at his/her school when the teacher was not teaching, but during working hours. Lastly, the interviews were led in the place where teachers feel relaxed within school premises.

3.11 Trustworthiness

A study that follows the trustworthiness criterion must reflect accuracy, reliability and show close attention to detail in the research methodology (Nowell et al., 2017). A study is regarded trustworthy when readers view it so. Consequently, detailed,

systematic descriptions used in the research process assist readers judge the extent to which data and the constructs made from the data may be acceptable (Gunawan, 2015). Though it is not fixed, the criteria usually followed in qualitative research are based on credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The presentation of trustworthiness in this study is described below.

3.11.1 Confirmability

Confirmability requires the researchers to provide explicit details that reveal how conclusions and interpretations were made to ensure that the interpretations and findings are distinctly developed from the data (Tobin and Begley, 2004). This process ensures that the researcher strived to present and interpret data from the participants' points of view. Confirmability is a point to which research findings can be confirmed by other researchers (Awan et al., 2023). Moreover, confirmability was demonstrated by providing a paper trail which describes each step of data processing. Finally, in this study, the confirmability of qualitative data was ensured by checking and rechecking data throughout data generation and analysis to verify the reliability of the findings. A precise coding system was used to document confirmability, identifying the codes and patterns discovered during the study.

3.11.2 Transferability

Transferability emphasizes on whether the research findings of a qualitative study can be transferred to other groups and settings (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Since qualitative studies are constrained to small, context-bound settings, it is challenging to show that the research findings can be applied to different settings and populations. Hence, qualitative researchers have to give detailed descriptions of the research processes, participants and the context in which the study will commence. Such descriptions permit the readers to associate the situations and the contexts and determine whether the findings can be employed in different contexts. In this study, the participants and all the data generation and analysis procedures were explained thorough so that other researchers or readers can decide if the findings can apply to other contexts or settings.

3.11.3 Member checking

Member-checking is the process whereby the researcher enlists the participants' contribution on the findings of the study so that they can confirm the accuracy and the credibility of the findings (Creswell and Poth, 2018). In this study, the research findings were presented to the participants. EFAL Grade 10 teachers were given an opportunity to confirm that the research findings accurately represented the information they shared during the semi-structured interviews. Therefore, any misconstructions I had made were refined by the teachers and instantly corrected so that the teacher's classroom practices and interpretations of policy are noted accurately.

3.11.4 Rich and thick descriptions

Interview transcriptions, completed observation and document analysis procedures, and fieldwork memos constituted the foundation for the primary evidence used to generate a full description of each case. The teachers' actual words from in-depth semi-structured interviews, observation, and fieldwork memos assisted in the development of dense and rich descriptions of each teacher's experiences and challenges in implementing DI in EFAL Grade 10. Audio-recorded interviews lessened my personal biases and subjectivity in transcription and interpretation of interview data since I was able to cite the precise responses of the teachers from the tapes. At the conclusion of every interview session, I collated and transcribed reflecting memories as fieldwork memos, these assisted me in developing detailed descriptions.

3.12 Ethical considerations

The study participants were informed of their right to voluntary participation (Weisleder, 2020) and that they can withdraw at any research stage should they wish to do so (Xiao, 2020). Participants received and signed a consent form to understand what they are partaking in; this incorporated information concerning the study's benefits, risks, and institutional approval. Pseudonyms were used to hide the despondence's individuality, and the research site to safeguard the participant's rights to privacy will be protected (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

When studying participants, it is important to prioritise ethics to avoid causing harm to them. As a result, following the concepts of autonomy, beneficence, and justice is

considered normal procedure in ethical concerns. By exercising autonomy, the researcher ensured that participants are well-informed about the research study in which they are going to engage, as well as any potential dangers. Beneficence was shown in the researchers' efforts to minimize any dangers to participants. Yin (2016) emphasises that the study should be presented to the participants in clear, easy-to-understand language so that the participants can fully understand what the study entails and what they agree to participate in.

3.12.1 Permission to conduct research

I successfully defended my proposal to the Committee for Title Registration in October 2023 at the University of the Free State. They approved my research proposal and allowed me to conduct the study under the agreed-upon title. I then applied for ethical clearance from the Research Information Management Systems, and the ethical clearance was granted in March 2024. The ethical clearance number is UFS-HSD2023/2226. To obtain access to the schools, permission was requested in writing from the Free State Department of Education. The district director in the Thabo Mofutsanyana district granted me permission in November 2024 to conduct the study in the selected schools under the district.

3.13 Summary

In this chapter, the study's methodology was discussed. The discussion began with the exposition of the research approach, which is a qualitative approach. The research paradigm was also discussed, with the constructivist paradigms guiding the researcher's philosophical orientation. The multiple case study research design was also explored to show how this study was situated in this design. The chapter also revealed the sampling procedure used in this study. Purposive sampling was chosen for the study. Data generation tools were also discussed, followed by thematic analysis as a technique by which data was analysed. Finally, the ethical considerations were also explained.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data generated from the five Grade 10 EFAL teachers who participated in this study. This data were generated using semi structured interviews, lesson observations and document analysis. The study to explore the teachers' experiences while implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL classes.

This chapter presents, explains and analyses the findings from the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis (lesson plans). The study investigated teachers understanding of DI in Grade 10 EFAL classes. The themes that guided the data presentation and analysis were: understanding of DI, alignment of instructional practices with CAPS guidelines, challenges in implementing differentiation policy, and understanding implementation of DI in EFAL lessons.

The following sub-questions assisted in deriving each theme.

1. What are teachers' understanding of DI in Grade 10 EFAL classes?
2. How are EFAL teachers' instructional practices aligned with CAPS guidelines on DI?
3. What challenges are teachers facing in implementing differentiation policy in EFAL classes?
4. How can the implementation of DI be understood and explained in EFAL lessons?

The four aforementioned sub-research questions served as the basis for the analysis. The themes and sub-themes that appear in the Table 4.2 were produced by manually categorising the interview transcripts.

Five teachers participated in this study on teacher's experiences in implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL. These participants varied in age, ranging from 28 to 45 years old. They had teaching experience of five to eighteen years and held qualifications that ranged from a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education to a Senior and FET degree.

Table 4.1 provides a summary of the five teachers' backgrounds.

Table 4.1: Teachers' profile

Semi-structured interviews	Age	Gender	School name	Teaching grade	Teaching experience	Qualification
Hlengiwe	45	F	Hlalanathi High	Grade 10	18 years	PGCE in Senior and FET
Helen	41	F	Hlalanathi	Grades 9–10	15 years	B-Ed degree in Senior and FET
Buhle	38	F	Nhlakanipho High	Grades 10–12	9 years	B-Ed degree in Senior and FET
Bophela	32	F	Nhlakanipho	Grades 10–11	5 years	PGCE in Senior and FET
Nonhlanhla	28	M	Boitumelo High	Grades 8–10	6 years	B-Ed degree in Senior and FET

4.2 Data presentation and analysis

This section presents, explains and analyses the data from the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews, observations, and lesson plans. The analysis of the transcripts was conducted using the steps outlined in Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The four sub-research questions mentioned above served as the foundation for the analysis, which resulted in the themes and sub-themes that are displayed in the table below through manual categorisation of the interview transcripts.

4.3 Themes and sub themes

In this section, I used thematic analysis for data interpretation in exploring teacher's experiences in implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL. The six-step thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke's (2006) serves as a guide in analysing and presenting the data. This study has four research questions that were answered through interviews, and subthemes emerged from the participant's responses.

The table presented below shows the themes which emanated from secondary research questions of this study as well as sub-themes which emerged from questions asked in semi-structured interviews, as well as from observations and document analysis (lesson plans).

Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Understanding of DI	▪ Characterisation of DI ▪ Effective application ▪ Training ▪ Assessment and evaluation ▪ Impact of varied instruction
2. Alignment of instructional practices with CAPS guidelines	▪ Instructional strategies ▪ Learning materials ▪ Language proficiency levels
3. Challenges in implementing differentiation policy	▪ Differentiation policy ▪ Unique challenges
4 Understanding implementation of DI in EFAL lessons	▪ Unique needs ▪ Uncertainties

4.4 Theme 1: understanding of differentiated instruction

With this theme I aimed to unpack how the six teachers understood DI in Grade 10 EFAL classes.

4.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Characterisation of differentiated instruction

For this sub-theme I wanted to discover how teachers characterise DI in Grade 10 EFAL context.

In the interview I conducted with Helen, she asserted that, *“I would acknowledge that there are different learners who are different human beings with different needs and different abilities and differentiating is to cater for them to the best of your ability.”*

An analysis of Helen’s response underscores the significance of recognising that learners are different human beings with different needs and different abilities. This supports the fundamental tenet of DI, which acknowledges that learners have a range of learning styles, interests, and readiness levels. According to Helen, a crucial component of individualised learning is allowing teachers to modify their approaches to the best of their abilities. This method emphasises how crucial it is for teachers to modify their methods of instruction to meet the specific requirements of all learners. This can involve altering processes, products, or content in light of each learner’s unique needs and challenges, guaranteeing that all learners have equitable access to the curriculum.

Helen's description of DI is consistent with the principles of this teaching approach, according to a study of her response. Her focus on recognising the diversity of learners, meeting their needs, and preserving flexibility in teaching methods highlights the fundamentals of DI, which is an inclusive and adaptable method of teaching that aims to satisfy the various needs of every learner in a Grade 10 first additional language classroom. Her statement also implies that educational approaches need to be flexible. Continuous evaluation and modifications to instructional tactics based on performance and feedback from learners in real time are necessary for effective differentiation.

Hlengiwe's perspective emphasised the need for teachers to adapt their methods to accommodate learners of different learning styles, she said that, *"We have learners with different learning abilities. So now, what we do we often use different learning styles and different learning strategies. For example, let me mention learners who are visually orientated, the learners who are auditory, learners who are...who are. What is this one. Learners who are kinetics, those who learn better by touching."*

However, Nonhlanhla viewed differentiation from a different perspective by emphasising the importance of pairing or grouping learners according to their levels of achievement.

This is how Nonhlanhla explained her point of view: *"By arranging my learners in pair or in groups so that I can identify them, those that are high achievers, middle achievers, and low achievers, encourage them to participate, to familiarize themselves with the surroundings, meaning with other learners and gives them a space to be comfortable when they have questions."*

Nonhlanhla uses a comprehensive strategy for individualized instruction that incorporates a variety of instructional modalities to foster an inclusive learning environment in the classroom. She demonstrates a dedication to fostering an inclusive and productive learning environment by actively engaging kinaesthetic, auditory, and visual learners. This method demonstrates the value of adaptability and responsiveness in instruction.

Grouping strategies are a defining feature of Nonhlanhla's DI approach. They enable her to discern the different levels of achievement of her learners and adjust her

instructional methods accordingly, allowing for targeted support and peer collaboration. Participation is encouraged among her learners, which is essential for promoting active engagement and a sense of community in the classroom. She helps her learners become more familiar with their peers and her as their teacher.

While Nonhlanhla's approach to DI emphasises the importance of creating a safe and supportive learning environment for learners, I think Hlengiwe's approach is both insightful and practical, highlighting the importance of flexibility and responsiveness in teaching. She believes in creating a space for open communication and interaction, fostering a classroom culture that supports risk-taking and collaboration.

The ways in which Nonhlanhla organised her learners into groups, invited them to participate, and created a welcoming atmosphere for learning show that she has a thorough understanding of how to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners in her Grade 10 first additional language classroom. This kind of teaching not only improves learner performance academically but also fosters a community of support where all learners can flourish.

In contrast to what Nonhlanhla said, the foundation of Hlengiwe's differentiated education strategy is her ability to identify and address the range of skills among her learners. She uses many learning techniques and approaches, grouping learners into kinaesthetic, visual, and auditory modalities. While auditory learners need spoken explanations and vocal emphasis, Hlengiwe supports visual learners with charts and visual aids. Hands-on activities help kinaesthetic learners interact with the material.

Nonhlanhla's DI approach aligns with the observed lesson, but there are some areas where they diverge. Nonhlanhla emphasised group dynamics, active participation strategies, and inclusivity in learning. Both strategies encourage learners to discuss themes, settings, and characterizations, promoting cooperative learning and engagement. However, the observed lesson lacked visual aids and limited movement space, which could hinder the effectiveness of DI. Nonhlanhla's framework suggests varied assessments tailored to individual learner needs, while the observed lesson employed a common informal assessment for all learners. Additionally, Nonhlanhla emphasised adaptability in instructional strategies based on learner needs, while the observed lesson appeared more rigid in its structure. This data generated through

observation support diversified curriculum, which promotes multiple learning requirements through adaptable teaching practices, as recommended by the CAPS document. It appears that more work needs to be done to provide a completely differentiated learning experience because the course does not include visual aids or consistent assessment methods.

While the lesson plan uses informal assessments without differentiation, which may limit accurate assessment of individual learner understanding, and the interview emphasises a learner-centred approach and a focus on key literary elements. Nonhlanhla's philosophy is clearly present in both the lesson plan and the interview.

Nonhlanhla's philosophy emphasises DI and adaptability in teaching practices to meet diverse learner needs. She advocates for varied assessments tailored to individual needs, aligning with the principles of the CAPS document. Nonhlanhla's approach aligns with the CAPS document, promoting a diversified curriculum and integrating various assessment methods to create an inclusive learning environment. This approach reflects a commitment to addressing the diverse capabilities and needs of all learners.

Additionally, while the classroom environment is emphasised, the interview lacks specific strategies for enhancing it, such as visual aids or flexible seating arrangements. Despite these differences, adjustments are necessary to fully implement the principles of DI.

During the interview Buhle said, *“Learners are not the same and cannot teach them with the same method. So, I teach in a way that meets their different needs and interests using varied activities and assessments. I take into cognizance that other learners are more visual, some are more touching and some like listening only.”*

Buhle recognises that learners are not the same and cannot be taught with the same method. This understanding is fundamental to differentiated education, which emphasises the requirement of customizing instructional tactics to meet the varied learning styles and capacities of learners. She creates the conditions for a more individualised learning experience by acknowledging that every learner has different needs.

Teaching in a way that meets the different needs and interests of learners is how she shows her dedication to her learners' learning into words. This strategy is in line with DI's tenets, which include using a variety of tasks and evaluations to successfully engage learners. Her understanding of the many modalities — auditory, tactile, and visual — shows that she intends to develop a multifaceted learning environment that accommodates these various learning preferences.

Buhle also spoke about the use of "varied activities and assessments," which is essential for addressing the various ways in which learners learn. By combining a variety of instructional strategies, she guarantees that every learner can interact with the content in a way that speaks to them. This improves understanding and stimulates motivation and interest in the subject matter.

Looking at Buhle's response, I think her description of DI is both practical and insightful. She emphasises individual differences and adapts instruction accordingly, which shows a thorough understanding of the principles of differentiation. Buhle uses a variety of activities and assessments to meet the needs of her learners in a way that is both inclusive and supportive of their growth.

Buhle's commitment to DI is evident in her lesson plans, which incorporate activities tailored to different learning styles, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. She employs a mix of group discussions, partner work, and individual reflections to engage learners and allow them to interact with the material in ways that suit their learning preferences. Her teaching strategies include multiple assessment methods, such as group discussions and written reflections, to ensure that all learners can showcase their learning effectively.

Buhle's teaching practices align with the principles outlined in the CAPS document regarding differentiated curriculum. As stated in the CAPS document, "flexibility in content, process differentiation, and product differentiation" are fundamental elements of successful instruction (South Africa. Department of Education, 2011:8). The goal of this emphasis on flexibility is to meet the various needs of learners inside the classroom. By adapting content based on learner readiness and interests, she ensures accessibility for all learners. She also varies how concepts are taught, using different modalities to cater to diverse learning styles.

Buhle's interview statements align with the principles of DI, as observed in her lesson practices. She aims to create a more individualised learning experience by acknowledging the diverse needs of her learners. However, the observed lesson showed limited differentiation in practice, with all learners given the same activity without options for varying levels of difficulty or choice in how they expressed their understanding. Buhle's understanding of different learning modalities (auditory, tactile, and visual) was evident in her intent to create a multifaceted learning environment. The CAPS document emphasises several key aspects of DI, including flexibility in content delivery, process differentiation, and product differentiation. The observed lesson did not demonstrate significant flexibility in content delivery, as all learners engaged with the same material without adaptations based on readiness or interest.

4.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Effective application

This theme focused on how teachers effectively apply DI in EFAL classes. Below are their responses.

Regarding effective application of DI, Helen said, *“have audio input and visual input because some learn auditory, and some are more visual. Have facilities available. If we do not have a monitor projector in the class, it is difficult. You have the technology available, so in the absence of that, make the possible plan under the circumstances.”*

Helen stresses the value of using both audio and visual inputs in her lessons. She acknowledges that learners have different learning styles — some are visual learners, while others are auditory learners. This recognition is important in DI because it enables her to accommodate the different ways in which learners process information. By striving to provide a variety of auditory and visual resources, she improves the curriculum's accessibility for all learners. Helen also highlights the challenge presented by the availability of technology, namely the need for facilities like monitors or projectors.

In order to accommodate learners with varying learning preferences, Helen stresses the value of including both visual and auditory elements in her classes. The goal of this method to customized education is to improve curricular engagement and accessibility. She has trouble making sure that technology is available, especially projectors and monitors. Cooperative learning, inquiry-based learning, and direct

instruction are some of Helen's teaching strategies. She does not specifically address technology use in her remarks, which could lead to discrepancies. Despite these challenges, Helen's teaching practices reflect her beliefs about DI and the importance of various learning inputs. By addressing this discrepancy, she could enhance her teaching methods and guarantee that every learner receives the assistance they require.

Helen advocates for making lessons accessible through practical applications, incorporating real-life scenarios. The inclusion of peer feedback in the lesson plan fosters a supportive classroom atmosphere, demonstrating her commitment to effective teaching practices. Overall, the lesson plan supports Helen's assertions about diverse learning styles and effective teaching practices. It includes audio and visual inputs, acknowledges the importance of technology in education, and uses a projector and speakers to present materials. It also offers DI through group activities and role-playing exercises, enhancing understanding and retention.

This brings up a critical feature of DI: the requirement for appropriate resources to implement varied teaching methods successfully. When these materials are not available, she shows that she is prepared to modify her plans as needed, exhibiting adaptability and creativity in her method of instruction.

Helen's approach to teaching is seen in her statement that you just have to make the possible plan under the circumstances. With differentiated education, this flexibility is crucial because teachers are frequently required to adjust their methods in response to the resources available and the unique requirements of their learners. She demonstrates her dedication to making sure all kids receive the assistance they require to achieve by coming up with backup plans when the ideal circumstances are not realised.

The way she integrates diverse educational inputs and adjusts when faced with resource constraints shows that she has a thorough understanding of the fundamentals of diversified instruction. Helen creates a welcoming and inclusive learning atmosphere in her classroom by making an effort to address the different needs of her learners.

Hlengiwe's insight into the necessity of employing multiple teaching strategies

underscores this adaptability: *“Our learners do not know English as in their mother tongue hence we say so now it’s there to help them because now if we say we going to focus on one strategy of teaching it would not materialise and I think we use the different strategies, different instructions that would help the learners.”*

As a crucial component of her approach to DI, Hlengiwe starts by acknowledging that learners do not speak English as their first language. This admission emphasises how important it is to develop solutions that are specifically designed to address the difficulties that come with learning a new language for learners. English is framed by her as a "additional language," which emphasises the significance of fostering an atmosphere that encourages language learning.

She makes it clear that her learners would not benefit from concentrating on just one teaching method. This is in line with the tenets of DI, which support the application of several approaches to meet the various requirements of learners. Hlengiwe's dedication to using a variety of techniques and guidance points to a knowledge that varied learning modalities need to be accommodated in order to improve comprehension and engagement. The importance of using a variety of strategies to address the particular difficulties faced by English learners is emphasised in Hlengiwe's teaching methodology. Among the many strategies she employs are summaries of previous chapters, interactive reading, cooperative learning, DI, and unofficial assessments. These teaching techniques support diverse learning styles and encourage active engagement by assisting learners in comprehending the story, characters, themes, and settings. Based on DI principles, Hlengiwe's teaching practices demonstrate her dedication to meeting the diverse needs of her learners. In addition to fostering language learning, her method fosters an inclusive learning environment where all learners can succeed academically and socially.

She goes on to clarify that her objective is to give learners the tools they need to become more proficient in the English language. Differentiated education must place a strong emphasis on skill development in order to guarantee that learners have the support and resources they require to succeed. Her method shows that she is dedicated to helping her learners become confident and proficient in language.

Her acknowledgement of the particular difficulties encountered by EFAL learners and

her dedication to utilising a variety of teaching techniques, in my opinion, demonstrate a thorough comprehension of differentiation. Hlengiwe exhibits a commitment to fostering an inclusive and productive learning environment by emphasising the acquisition of fundamental language skills by learners through a variety of instructional techniques.

In order to implement a varied curriculum in her EFAL lessons, Hlengiwe places a strong emphasis on being flexible and sensitive to the needs of her learners. Her methods not only improve language learning but also create a nurturing environment that supports learning, giving her learners the tools they need to overcome the challenges of learning English as a second language.

According to Nonhlanhla, *“I assign open-ended task to learners. I also allow my learners to choose assignments. I provide them different types of learning materials.”*

Nonhlanhla mentions that she gives learners open-ended assignments while discussing how she successfully implements a varied curriculum in EFAL classrooms. Because it enables learners to investigate subjects in a way that fits with their interests and skills, this tactic is important for DI. Open-ended assignments foster creativity and critical thinking while allowing learners to convey their knowledge in a variety of ways. By giving them these kinds of assignments, she encourages learners to interact with the content more deeply and to take responsibility for their own education.

Nonhlanhla highlights the need of granting learners the autonomy to select their tasks. Learners are given the ability to choose assignments that align with their interests and strengths, which makes choice an effective tool in customized instruction. Allowing learners to make their own decisions fosters intrinsic motivation, which can strengthen their dedication to learning, according to Nonhlanhla. By recognising the varied histories and inclinations of her learners, this approach enhances the relevance and significance of the educational process.

She also emphasises her approach of offering a variety of educational resources. This is essential for meeting her learners' diverse learning requirements and styles. By providing a variety of tools, including hands-on exercises, audio-visual materials, and texts, she makes sure that every learner may access the material in a way that best fits their unique learning style. In addition to promoting comprehension, this variety

keeps learners interested in and inspired to take part in their education.

Her use of DI strikes me as both intelligent and successful. Her use of open-ended projects, letting learners choose their own assignments, and offering a variety of learning resources shows a thorough comprehension of differentiation principles.

Nonhlanhla creates an inclusive classroom atmosphere that promotes active involvement and engagement by putting these methods into practice in addition to attending to the different needs of her learners. By fostering an environment that is both encouraging and stimulating, she enables learners to take ownership of their education and eventually improves their English as a second language ability. In addition to encouraging academic success, this all-encompassing method gives every learner a sense of confidence and belonging.

The CAPS document on differentiated curriculum, which stresses using a variety of teaching techniques to meet the needs of learners with varying learning styles, is in line with Nonhlanhla's method of instruction. However, the absence of visual aids and the small classroom space may make it more difficult for the teacher and learners to interact effectively. Objectives like plot and character development, topic and setting identification, and comprehension of figurative language are all supported by the lesson plan. The lack of instructional graphics could take away from experiences with differentiated learning. Notwithstanding these obstacles, Nonhlanhla's methods are somewhat in line with the concepts of DI; nonetheless, there are differences in the classroom environment and resource availability that may have an impact on the effectiveness of differentiation.

4.4.3 Sub-theme 3: Training

Regarding the areas of DI whether the need for training is required, the participants responded in the following ways:

Helen's perspective on the necessity of continuous learning and openness to new knowledge highlights the value of seeking input from others: *"I think any one of us need as much input as we can get. I for sure don't know everything. I know a fair amount, but I am always open for more and more. I love learning and expanding on my knowledge."*

In contrast, Hlengiwe expresses a sense of confidence in her current abilities, suggesting that while she acknowledges the potential need for assistance in the future, she feels content with her progress at this moment: *“No, I don’t think at this moment because I think so far things are going alright but if maybe at a later stage, I will need some assistance I think that’s when I can consult maybe for more development but so far, I think everything it’s okay.”*

“I definitely don’t know everything,” said Helen, demonstrating her obvious openness to learning. A growth mentality, which is crucial for teachers who want to improve their teaching methods, is evident in this admission. She exhibits a dedication to professional and personal development, which is essential in the ever changing area of education, by admitting that there is always more to learn.

“I know a fair amount, but I am always open for more and more,” is how Helen describes her awareness of her own knowledge gaps about individualized training. Being self-aware is essential to teaching effectively because it enables teachers to pinpoint particular areas in which they might require more support or resources. Helen places herself in a position to look for chances for development and progress since she is conscious of her limitations.

Helen, a teacher, embodies a growth mindset and is open to learning. She uses a structured approach, involving learners in understanding the narrative essay and writing process. She uses inquiry-based learning and a colourful classroom environment, promoting continuous improvement. However, her lesson plan may not fully embrace individualised training. All learners are given the same task, suggesting a potential gap between her ideals of differentiation and actual practice. This highlights the challenge in education where teachers may express a desire for growth but struggle to consistently implement these principles. Helen acknowledges her knowledge gaps, but her classroom practices raise questions about her ability to effectively translate her openness into DI.

Her desire to learn more highlights the importance of taking a proactive approach to professional growth. Given her passion for learning, it is likely that Helen will value continuing education and training to improve the effectiveness of her teaching. In diversified education, when fulfilling the many needs of children requires a grasp of

unique learning demands and tactics, this motivation for ongoing improvement is crucial.

After reading through Helen's response, I believe that her viewpoint on the necessity of training in DI is both perceptive and representative of best practices in education. She also recognises the value of ongoing professional development for teachers, and by actively looking for ways to deepen her understanding of the subject, Helen shows that she is committed to improving her teaching methods and, ultimately, improving learner outcomes.

Hlengiwe, on the other hand, states unequivocally in the opening of her reply to say *"No, I don't think right now."* This declaration shows how confident she is in her present comprehension and use of differentiated teaching. Her confidence in her ability to meet the various needs of her learners at this time and her sense that "things are going alright" implies that she feels competent in her teaching strategies.

Hlengiwe notes that although she does not currently perceive the need for training, she may in the future need help: *"if maybe at a later stage I will need some assistance."* This conditional viewpoint illustrates a practical strategy for career advancement. She understands that she might want more training or assistance when her teaching environment changes or when new difficulties appear. For teachers, this kind of foresight is crucial because it shows that they recognize the importance of ongoing improvement as a component of good instruction. Hlengiwe seems receptive to professional development based on his comment of consulting for additional development in the future.

Even though she feels more self-assured now, her readiness to ask for help when needed demonstrates a proactive approach to her own education. In the sector of education, where teaching methods and learner demands are subject to change over time, this transparency is essential.

Hlengiwe's acknowledgment of the possibility of future support needs while maintaining confidence in her current abilities reflects a balanced approach to professional development. This perspective aligns with Nonhlanhla's emphasis on the importance of inclusive education, *"Yes, especially inclusive education. Since we deal with learners who are having different needs, so yes."*

A number of significant ideas emerge from Nonhlanhla's response to a question about the areas of DI in which she feels she needs more training, particularly in the context of inclusive education. These themes show that she is aware of the difficulties involved in instructing diverse learners. The first thing Nonhlanhla says in answer is, "Yes, *especially inclusive education*." This comment demonstrates her understanding of the variety of needs her learners have and how important it is to have the resources needed to successfully meet those needs.

Her focus on the necessity of inclusive education training highlights the importance of this field when it comes to DI. In order to guarantee that all learners, regardless of their unique differences, have equitable access to learning opportunities, inclusive education entails modifying teaching strategies and materials. Nonhlanhla's recognition of this requirement demonstrates her dedication to improving her abilities in order to assist her learners more effectively and foster a more diverse the educational atmosphere.

Nonhlanhla has a proactive approach to professional development by exhibiting a desire for training. This openness to pursuing new information and abilities is indicative of a development mentality, which is crucial for teachers who want to continuously enhance their work. Her emphasis on inclusive education suggests that she wants to prepare for problems in her teaching career as well as satisfy the needs of her current learners.

She recognises the need for training in inclusive education, which emphasises the significance of providing teachers with the tools and strategies they need to effectively support diverse learners. Her viewpoint on mandatory training in DI strikes me as both insightful and representative of best practices in education. This proactive approach to professional development is crucial for creating an inclusive classroom environment where all learners can thrive.

In contrary, Buhle said, "*I would probably want training on how to unleash the potential of other low-lying fruits or learners, learners at risk in my classes because I can't really come about to help them unleash their fullest potential.*"

Several significant concepts come out of Buhle's response when it comes to the areas of DI where she feels she needs more training, especially when it comes to helping

"low-lying fruits" or at-risk learners. These themes demonstrate her awareness of the difficulties and complexities associated with working with diverse learner populations.

In response, she made it apparent that she wanted to fully realize the potential of low-hanging fruit or learners who were in danger. This statement shows that she is aware that some of the learners in her class might not be able to realize their full potential because of a variety of obstacles. She exhibits her dedication to identifying and meeting the special needs of kids who might struggle academically or socially by identifying these learners. In addition, she made it clear that *"I can't really come about to help them unleash their fullest potential"*, indicating that she was aware of a weakness in her present repertoire. This admission shows that the awareness that particular tactics and strategies designed to assist at-risk learners are necessary for effective differentiation. Her interest for this kind of training shows that she is proactive about her professional development and is looking for ways to improve the resources she has available to her in order to help her learners.

Her focus on at-risk learners emphasises how critical it is to attend to the needs of these groups of learners in the classroom. This emphasis is essential to DI because it forces teachers to modify their approaches in order to give every learner, especially those who are struggling, fair access to educational opportunities. She shows her dedication to creating an inclusive environment where every learner has the opportunity to achieve by pursuing training in this field.

Her viewpoint on mandatory training in DI strikes me as very perceptive. Her acknowledgment of the need for specialised training to assist learners who are at risk emphasises how crucial it is to provide teachers with the tools they need to successfully meet a variety of requirements. To create an inclusive classroom where all kids can thrive, this proactive approach to professional development is crucial.

Bophela's explanation is that, *"The issue of cultural diversity in our school society, our learners come from diverse ethnic groups, the Sothos and Zulus - their mother tongues have impact on us"*.

Bophela brings up concerns about cultural diversity in the classroom, pointing out that learners' varied ethnic backgrounds can have an impact on their learning, especially when it comes to language acquisition. He proposes that cultural diversity-focused

training could improve English language learners' outcomes and teaching methodologies. In order to fulfil a variety of educational demands, he also notes the necessity of training in managing packed classrooms and filling in curriculum gaps for advanced learners. This suggests that a thorough approach to professional development is crucial. These findings demonstrate how teachers as a whole are realising how critical it is to provide continual training in order to execute differentiated education in a variety of classroom contexts.

Both Bophela's interview responses and the lesson observations highlight the need for tailored approaches to address the unique challenges faced by learners from different cultural backgrounds. However, the lesson observations reveal a more uniform approach to instruction, with some learners hesitant to engage with the material, indicating a potential disconnect between the ideal of culturally responsive teaching and actual implementation. Bophela's concerns about cultural diversity in the classroom are reflected in the lesson observations, which emphasise the impact of learners' diverse ethnic backgrounds on language acquisition.

4.4.4 Sub-theme 4: Assessment and evaluation

This sub-theme shares the responses of Helen, Nonhlanhla, Hlengiwe, Bophela, and Buhle on their perspectives on how they assess and evaluate the learners in a differentiated classroom.

Helen emphasises the importance of adhering to established cognitive levels set by the Education Department. She outlines these levels as follows: "We're fortunate because the Education Department is strict on cognitive levels. We use baroques and it is level one, which is just memorisation, level two is comprehension. Level three is inferences, and level four is analysis and five is synthesising".

Helen acknowledges that the Education Department is strict when it comes to cognitive levels, which shows that she is aware of the regulatory framework that guides her teaching practices. By emphasizing the significance of cognitive levels, Helen demonstrates an understanding of how assessment should align with educational standards and expectations. This alignment is crucial for ensuring that assessments are valid and reliable, providing a clear measure of learner progress. Helen's response regarding her assessment and evaluation practices in a differentiated classroom

instruction situation highlights several key themes that reflect her understanding of cognitive levels and the structured approach to assessment.

Helen describes an organised system for evaluation, using baroques to group items into discrete cognitive levels: Level 1: Knowledge: rote memorisation, recognition, or recall of facts; Level 2: Comprehension; Level 3: Application; and Levels 4: Analysis and 5: Synthesis (Block, 2023). This methodical approach to cognitive levels demonstrates her dedication to tailoring evaluations according to task complexity. Through this kind of assessment classification, Helen may adjust her methods of assessment to the different skill levels of her learners, making sure that each learner is challenged in a way that is appropriate for their level of cognitive development.

She is committed to assessment differentiation, which is seen in her emphasis on various cognitive levels. She can evaluate learners on their abilities to analyse, synthesise, and apply knowledge in addition to their recall skills by using different levels of cognitive load. This method is critical to the success of tailored instruction because it provides a more thorough grasp of each learner's development and areas for growth.

In my analysis of Helen's response as the researcher, I find that she offers a thoughtful and educationally sound viewpoint on assessment and evaluation in the context of DI. Her grasp of cognitive stages and methodical evaluation shows that she is dedicated to establishing a welcoming classroom where every learner can succeed. Helen guarantees the equity and efficacy of her evaluation procedures by following educational standards and distinguishing evaluations according to cognitive difficulty.

Helen embodies a growth mindset and is open to learning. She uses a structured approach, involving learners in understanding the narrative essay and writing process. He uses inquiry-based learning and a colourful classroom environment, promoting continuous improvement. However, her lesson plan may not fully embrace individualised training. All learners are given the same task, suggesting a potential gap between her ideals of differentiation and actual practice. This highlights the challenge in education where teachers may express a desire for growth but struggle to consistently implement these principles. Helen acknowledges her knowledge gaps, but her classroom practices raise questions about her ability to effectively translate

her openness into DI.

In my analysis of Helen's response as the researcher, I believe that her method of assessment and evaluation in a differentiated classroom is both creative and successful. Her focus on group marking, peer assessment, and self-assessment shows a thorough awareness of how to involve learners in the evaluation process. These instructional tactics not only improve learners' comprehension of the subject matter but also help them develop vital abilities like self-reflection, critical thinking, and teamwork.

Nohlanhla's response differed from that of Hlengiwe. She mentioned that, "By giving them daily class-works and homework and then we also do the weekly informal test. In that way I'm able to assess their progress."

Nonhlanhla started by mentioning the importance of daily classwork and homework as tools for assessment. This consistent practice allows her to gather ongoing data about each learner's understanding and progress. By incorporating daily assignments, she can monitor learners' grasp of the material in real-time, making it easier to identify those who may need additional support. This approach aligns with the principles of DI, as it provides multiple opportunities for learners to demonstrate their learning.

In addition to daily assignments, Nonhlanhla highlights the use of weekly informal tests as a method of evaluation. These assessments serve as a regular check-in on learner progress and understanding. By utilizing informal tests, she can gauge learners' comprehension in a low-stakes environment, which can reduce anxiety and encourage more honest responses from learners. This strategy allows her to adjust her instruction based on the results, ensuring that she meets the diverse needs of her learners effectively.

As the researcher, analysing Nonhlanhla's response, I find her approach to assessment and evaluation in a differentiated classroom to be both practical and effective. Her emphasis on daily classwork and informal weekly tests demonstrates a commitment to ongoing assessment, which is crucial for understanding and supporting learner learning. This structured approach not only facilitates timely feedback but also empowers her to make informed instructional decisions that cater to the diverse needs of her learners.

Nohlanhla's approach to education is based on daily classwork and homework as tools for assessment, allowing her to track learner progress and understanding. This aligns with the principles of DI, which provides multiple opportunities for learners to demonstrate their learning. Observations show that her approach is consistent with ongoing assessment, with the teacher reciting consonant and vowel rules and explaining phonetics. However, there are significant divergences in curriculum alignment and individualised instruction. The lesson topic observed did not align with the annual teaching plan requirements for term 2, week 7, which should focus on figurative language and rhetorical devices. Additionally, the uniformity of tasks may not fully address the diverse needs of learners, contrasting with her ideals of DI.

4.4.5 Sub-theme 5: Impact of varied instruction

This theme was aimed to find out the impact that varied instruction has on learner's progress.

Hlengiwe emphasises that the primary goal of providing varied instructions is to ensure the success of learners. She contends that, *"If we give different instructions our main purpose is to see the success of our learners, so now if we stick to one instruction that not going to help, so now if we use different instruction, we are trying to do what, remember the plan here is to improve the learners."*

Hlengiwe continues, *"If we give different instructions our main purpose is to see the success of our learners."* Her dedication to establishing an educational setting that puts learners' needs first is demonstrated by her emphasis on learner success. She emphasises the significance of modifying teaching strategies to fit the various needs of her learners by realising that diversified instruction is necessary to achieve positive results.

She further explains that sticking to one instruction will not help. This acknowledgment of the limitations of a uniform approach is critical in DI. Hlengiwe's recognition that a single method may not effectively engage all learners demonstrates her understanding that learners come from diverse backgrounds and possess varying levels of language proficiency. This insight is vital for creating an inclusive classroom where all learners can thrive.

She emphasises that varied instruction is designed to assist learners in their ability to learn and develop in the subject. This focus on improving learners' skills and knowledge highlights the transformative potential of DI. By employing diverse teaching strategies, Hlengiwe aims to create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment that encourages active participation and fosters deeper understanding of the subject matter.

I find her perspective on the impact of varied instruction on learner engagement to be both insightful and aligned with best practices in education. Her emphasis on learner success, the limitations of a uniform approach, and the importance of addressing diverse backgrounds reflect a comprehensive understanding of the principles of DI. By employing varied instructional strategies, Hlengiwe not only enhances learner engagement but also promotes a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

In order to guarantee that learners, succeed, Hlengiwe highlights the significance of offering a variety of instructions. She feels that in order to achieve the desired outcomes, she must adapt her teaching tactics to meet the varied requirements of her learners. Lesson observations, however, show a more consistent style of teaching, with the teacher emphasising spelling standards and distinguishing between short and long vowels. There may be a disconnect between Hlengiwe's principles of diverse instruction and actual classroom practice because, in spite of cooperative learning, all learners were assigned the identical assignments without any form of variety. In general, Hlengiwe's DI vision might not entirely align with her instructional practices.

According to Helen, *"I let them read and I let them role play, so everybody takes part in the lesson, I have everybody in one row, is learner A, next row is learner B. So, then I say to them, A, what excuse have you made lately because you did not do your homework? Tell B. And then B must tell A."*

Helen talks about how she encourages learner participation. She brings up the interactive tactics that include learners actively participating in the course, such as letting them read and role-play. She guarantees that every learner may participate by utilising a variety of teaching techniques, which is crucial for sustaining learner engagement in a differentiated classroom. Because it accommodates varying learning styles and preferences, this emphasis on involvement is consistent with the ideas of

diversified instruction.

In order to guide learners through increasingly complex thinking while ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to contribute, she categorized questions into three levels: level one, level two, and level three. She also highlights her use of structured questioning to encourage learner discussion. The specific example she gives, in which she asks learners to share reasons why they have not completed their homework, exemplifies her strategy of using low-level questions to build confidence and encourage dialogue.

Her emphasis on participation, structured questioning, and confidence-building demonstrate a thorough understanding of how varied instructional strategies can enhance engagement in EFAL classes. She also expressed a thoughtful approach to managing learner dynamics, stating that she is careful not to categorise learners based on their abilities. This awareness reflects her commitment to fostering an inclusive classroom environment where all learners feel valued and capable. In addition, by arranging learners in alternating rows (A and B), she promotes peer interaction and collaboration, reinforcing a sense of community within the classroom.

Nonhlanhla emphasizes the importance of providing tasks to learners as a means of obtaining feedback. She says, *"they write a task given to them so that they can get feedback and then in doing so they will know where to improve themselves for the next time or for the upcoming task or informal activity."*

The value of feedback and its function in the learning process were stressed by Nonhlanhla. She adds, *"They write a task given to them so that they can get feedback."* This suggests that she recognises the importance of giving learners timely, helpful feedback in order to support their development. In order to increase learners' engagement with the topic, feedback is an essential tool in diversified education. It helps learners identify their areas of strength and growth.

She goes on to say that the feedback process helps learners see where they may improve for future tasks or informal activities. This emphasis on self-improvement emphasises the necessity of cultivating a growth mentality among learners. Nonhlanhla fosters an active learning environment in which learners take responsibility for their educational journey by encouraging them to reflect on their performance and

identify specific areas for improvement. This reflective technique is critical for learner involvement because it allows them to set personal objectives and work toward ongoing development.

Nonhlanhla's method of providing varied instruction is seen in her emphasis on various tasks and activities that allow for a variety of assessment methods. She may cater to varied learning styles and preferences by adjusting the types of assignments assigned, resulting in enhanced learner interest and participation. This variety not only keeps learners interested, but also provides several opportunities for them to demonstrate their knowledge and talents.

The focus on self-awareness, feedback, and ongoing development is indicative of a thorough comprehension of how different teaching philosophies can improve learner involvement in EFAL programs. Because learners are encouraged to reflect on their learning and receive constructive feedback, this approach promotes a culture of growth and involvement. Expanding on this concept, Buhle emphasises the powerful transformational influence of peer contact, saying that learners *“can learn to engage with one another with confidence”* which inspires them to be receptive to their teachers as well as their peers. This relationship between peer involvement and feedback shows how much more learner participation and motivation may be increased in a supportive learning environment.

Buhle states at the outset that learners can interact with one another in a confident manner. This finding emphasises how crucial diversified instruction is to creating a cooperative learning environment. Different teaching strategies, like group projects, conversations, and interactive exercises, encourage learners to participate and express their opinions. In addition to developing social skills, this increased peer contact fosters a sense of community in the classroom, which is crucial for language acquisition.

She goes on to say that when learners develop their own understanding of the subject, they grow more motivated. A vital component of diversified education is customisation of learning, which enables learners to relate the material to their own interests and experiences. Learners are more likely to be involved in and committed to their education when they recognise the relevance of the material they are studying. As it

pushes learners to take chances and engage fully in their education, this intrinsic motivation is essential for language learning.

She continues by emphasising that children respond more readily to teachers and other learners as they grow in motivation and self-assurance. This response points to a change in the dynamics of the classroom, as learners now actively participate in the learning process rather than just being passive consumers of knowledge. By encouraging learners to collaborate with their classmates, offer criticism, and ask questions, varied education helps to foster this kind of engagement. Since it gives them the chance to practice speaking in a safe setting, this active participation is crucial for language skill development.

Her focus on improved motivation, responsiveness, and peer interaction shows a thorough awareness of how a variety of instructional tactics can produce a more dynamic and engaging learning environment. Through the encouragement of self-assurance and drive, Buhle facilitates learners' language growth and enhances their overall educational experience.

It was discovered via observation that varied instruction enhances motivation through personal comprehension, builds a feeling of community, encourages active engagement, and builds confidence in peer interaction. Teachers also underscored the significance of personalisation in diversified learning, employing tactics such as adaptable grouping and diverse information delivery. Additionally, there was a focus on intrinsic motivation and taking risks, with exercises like "Think-Pair-Share" encouraging introspection and greater participation. It was discovered that self-evaluation and personalised feedback were useful tactics for raising learner motivation. According to the study's findings, diverse instruction is essential to establishing a welcoming and stimulating learning environment.

4.5 Theme 2: Alignment with Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements guidelines

4.5.1 Sub-theme 1: instructional strategies

The data from the semi-structured interviews with Helen, Hlengiwe, Nonhlanhla, Bophela and Buhle provide rich insights into the instructional strategies they employ

to differentiate learning experiences for their learners.

Hlengiwe says, *“We use learner- centred. We give homework, when they are at home that will be a problem now that they must do the work alone. We often say, okay this is part that I as a teacher will play, for example 80% of the work will be done by the learners.”*

The importance of group work is reflected in Hlengiwe's teaching philosophy. She is a supporter of learner-centred instruction, which encourages learners to assume responsibility for their own education. She hopes to foster an atmosphere where learners can interact with one another and improve their learning through teamwork by encouraging group and peer projects.

Hlengiwe's teaching philosophy emphasises learner-centred instruction, empowering learners to take responsibility for their education. She believes in group work, focusing on active participation, cooperative learning, and physical arrangement. In a lesson, she effectively implemented group work, involving recapping the novel *Finder's Keeper*, active participation, cooperative learning, and a common informal assessment. This approach was successful in engaging learners, fostering a sense of community, and practicing higher-order thinking skills. The lesson effectively prepared learners for independent thinking, demonstrating the importance of group work in her educational philosophy.

Hlengiwe focuses on how important it is for learners to become independent learners. She emphasises her dedication to helping learners become self-sufficient by saying that 80% of the work should be completed by the learners. This is especially crucial when the learners are expected to finish tasks on their own at home.

Rather than acting as conventionally authoritative individuals in the classroom, both teachers understand their positions as facilitators. By reducing reliance on teacher-led education, Hlengiwe's emphasis on learner-centred instruction strengthens Helen's approach of asking open-ended questions, which promotes learner engagement and critical thinking.

Both teachers emphasise learner independence, but they also recognise that teachers must be involved in helping learners navigate their educational journeys. Hlengiwe

makes it clear that in order to properly help learners, teachers must participate actively in group activities.

Helen's ability to get to know her learners over time is a testament to her dedication to comprehending the unique needs of each learner, which is necessary for efficient differentiation. She agrees that developing a rapport with learners is essential to customising instructional tactics to accommodate a range of learning preferences. On the other hand, Hlengiwe notes that some learners learn better through tactile encounters ("learn by touching"), demonstrating the need to adjust teaching strategies to accommodate a variety of learning styles.

From my perspective, Hlengiwe and Helen are dedicated to using varied teaching methods that meet the requirements of a wide range of learners. Their methods emphasise the value of encouraging learner participation while also taking into account each learner's unique learning preferences and styles. The lesson plan in Hlengiwe's class encourages group projects and learner-centred teaching. It promotes cooperative learning, and active engagement, giving learners a sense of control over their education. The idea that education is a social endeavour is reinforced by grouping learners to explore themes and settings. Group presentations are a low-key evaluation method that helps learners become more independent and ready for more independent work. The way the class is structured encourages learners to be self-sufficient, with them completing 80% of the assignment. In addition to fostering critical thinking abilities, the talks and presentations get learners ready for autonomous work environments. Overall, the lesson plan aligns with Hlengiwe's attitude of helping learners become independent thinkers who can handle challenging concepts.

The focus on peer interaction and group dynamics improves academic success while also helping learners develop critical social skills. Moreover, their contemplations regarding class size and teacher participation highlight the challenges teachers encounter while executing successful differentiation in authentic learning environments.

According to Nonhlanhla, *"grouping of learners allows them to learn new concepts and then they also apply previously learned concepts. It also differentiates homework, helps them with learners' cognitive levels to match individual learners."*

Nonhlanhla's semi-structured interview insights demonstrate a deliberate approach to differentiated education, with a focus on the importance of assigning homework that is customised to each learner's cognitive ability and grouping learners accordingly. She goes on to emphasise the need of grouping learners as the main teaching technique. She provides opportunity for learners to apply previously taught information and learn new concepts in a collaborative manner by fostering peer interactions. This method not only promotes learner participation but also a feeling of community inside the classroom. Learners can benefit from varied viewpoints and cooperative problem-solving when they are grouped, which can improve their comprehension and recall of newly learned material.

The emphasis on scaffolding learning experiences is indicated by the reference of applying previously learned concepts. It appears, from Nonhlanhla's approach, that she understands the value of building on past information, which is essential for cognitive development. By assisting learners in drawing connections between previously learned material and new information, this approach strengthens their learning.

Furthermore, one of the most important components of Nonhlanhla's teaching style is the way she differentiates homework assignments. She guarantees that each learner receives an appropriate degree of challenge without feeling overburdened by matching homework assignments to specific cognitive capacities. Effective learning requires that learners interact with the information at their own pace and comprehension level, which is made possible by this individualized method. Nonhlanhla's emphasis on assigning homework based on each learner's cognitive ability demonstrates a thorough awareness of each learner's particular demands. Her ability to construct learning experiences that are both relevant and accessible to all learners is made possible by this understanding, which is essential for effective differentiation.

Responsive teaching techniques are characterized by the capacity to modify lesson plans in response to the demands of the learners. Nonhlanhla's emphasis on varied homework and grouping demonstrates her dedication to fostering an inclusive learning environment in the classroom where all learners can succeed.

It is evident, from examining Nonhlanhla's interview data, that she has a deep grasp

of differentiation principles at the core of her instructional tactics. Her emphasis on group-based collaborative learning improves academic performance while simultaneously developing learners' social skills and creating a welcoming learning environment. Her dedication to addressing the unique needs of each learner is demonstrated by the purposeful differentiation of her homework assignments, which is crucial for advancing educational equity. Nonhlanhla shows that she is aware of the range of skills in her classroom by designing projects that correspond with learners' cognitive levels. This way, she makes sure that every learner has access to engaging learning opportunities.

The insights shared by Bophela are that, *“we adjust the content, give learners to do some role plays to improve their linguistic. Also on the process, we have to adjust also on how they're going to allow this to process the information. I provide multiple activities as they enhance a learner performance on their individual instructions.”*

The significance of offering textbooks with both written and visual content was emphasized by Bophela. This multimodal method helps learners who are visual learners by providing images in addition to text, which improves their understanding and interest in the subject matter. He provides a more engaging learning environment that caters to a variety of learning styles by including graphics in reading assignments. He further proves his dedication to supporting various learning methods by including audiobooks for auditory learners.

He offers an alternate mode of content access for learners by letting them listen to stories, which can be especially helpful for those who might find it difficult to read using more conventional techniques. This approach helps auditory learners connect with the content in a meaningful way while also reinforcing learning.

Part of Bophela's diversified training is his emphasis on kinaesthetic activities, such role-playing stories. He meets the requirements of kinaesthetic learners—learners who learn best through hands-on experiences—by introducing movement and physical engagement into learning tasks. Through active engagement, this method not only increases learner enjoyment during the learning process but also strengthens comprehension. The idea that some learners act out stories while others read suggests that peer engagement and teamwork are valued. Through the use of one

another's viewpoints and strengths, learners can benefit from each other's social skills and teamwork.

I think that Bophela's teaching methods are firmly based in his knowledge of differentiated learning concepts. In order to ensure that every learner may participate meaningfully with the curriculum, he has demonstrated an understanding of the varied needs present in his classroom through his commitment to offering multimodal materials.

By enabling learners to physically embody concepts, the inclusion of kinaesthetic exercises not only improves deeper learning but also increases learner engagement. This strategy is consistent with recent research in education, which highlights the value of active learning in fostering comprehension and retention.

4.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Learning materials

This sub-theme aimed at discovering to what extent do EFAL teachers incorporate diverse learning materials to meet CAPS guidelines. Hlengiwe, Helen and Nonhlanhla's assertions are quoted below.

Hlengiwe: *"Using the board only cannot help, we sometimes have classes online on Microsoft teams. Sometimes we bring the worksheets in the classroom, we bring live material that we can use while we are busy with the lesson, so those are the things we can use as a diversified teaching."*

Hlengiwe emphasises the importance of using multiple teaching aids beyond traditional methods, such as the chalkboard. She mentions leveraging online platforms like Teams for lessons, which reflects a commitment to integrating technology into her teaching practice. This approach aligns with CAPS guidelines that advocate for varied instructional methods to cater to diverse learning needs, thereby enhancing learner engagement and understanding. By bringing worksheets into the classroom, she provides tangible resources that can reinforce learning concepts and facilitate hands-on activities. The use of live materials suggests an effort to connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications, which is crucial for language acquisition in context. This strategy not only meets CAPS requirements but also addresses different learning styles among learners.

In my point of view, Hlengiwe's comments reflect a strong commitment to meeting CAPS guidelines through her diverse instructional practices. Her proactive approach in utilising various materials demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum's expectations while striving to enhance learner learning outcomes. This commitment underscores the importance of teachers being well-versed in curriculum requirements and adapting their methods accordingly to ensure educational parity for all learners.

Sub-theme 4: Language proficiency levels

The intention of this theme was to discover how the participants address the language proficiency levels in their differentiated classrooms.

According to Hlengiwe's differentiated classroom language proficiency can be catered for, *"When we assess after every lesson, when you have explained something, obviously you give them exercise to do and if they manage that, we can move on, if there are mistakes, then I will give them two or three more, however it takes time."*

Hlengiwe's interview response highlights her commitment to DI, focusing on assessing learners' understanding after each lesson and providing additional exercises for those struggling. The lesson plan incorporates inquiry-based learning, cooperative learning, and understanding the writing process. Both interview and the lesson plan emphasise the importance of guiding learners through each stage while accommodating individual needs. However, the observed lesson assigns the same task without differentiating based on proficiency levels, potentially limiting opportunities for individualised support. To fully embrace DI, future lessons could benefit from incorporating varied assignments tailored to learners' specific needs while maintaining collaborative learning opportunities. Overall, the interview highlights the alignment between Hlengiwe's emphasis on DI and the observed lesson plan.

The lesson plan highlights Hlengiwe's language proficiency development strategies, which include spelling, dictation, and peer checking. These activities help learners improve their language skills through active participation and collaboration. Hlengiwe's idea of peer checking is supported by the use of peer discussions, which help learners improve their language proficiency through social interaction. Additionally, the lesson plan includes an explanation of the writing process, which is essential for language proficiency development.

The observed session, on the other hand, focuses mostly on writing narrative essays without addressing fundamental language abilities, and it does not specifically integrate any language tasks. Hlengiwe's technique may be less effective due to the consistent task assignment, which may limit chances for certain learners, and the lack of continuing assessment tools. Future classes might include explicit language skill-building activities in addition to group writing assignments to further support her concept and guarantee that every learner receives a thorough education in language.

On the other hand, Bophela states that, *"In order to develop language proficiency in learners, activities such as spelling, dictation passages, and peer checking are used. These activities help learners improve their language skills and eventually, they can speak the desired language. By incorporating activities like spelling and peer checking, learners can develop their language proficiency and ultimately, speak the desired language."*

4.6 Theme 3: Challenges

This theme focuses on the challenges teachers face in implementing differentiation policy in Grade 10 EFAL classrooms.

4.6.1 Sub-theme 1: Differentiation policy

Differentiating the curriculum is an essential tactic in educational policy to meet the various demands of learners. The CAPS, the Universal Design for Learning White Paper, the Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity, the Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support, and an inclusive education framework are important policy documents. These texts stress how important it is to adapt content, assessment tactics, and teaching methods according to learners' backgrounds, interests, and levels of functioning. Active classroom engagement and equitable access to the curriculum are key components of inclusive education. The Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support strategy places a strong emphasis on adaptable teaching strategies to increase learning accessibility. According to the White Paper for Post-School Education Framework, educational institutions must modify their programs to meet the needs of the community while maintaining high standards of instruction.

When the participants were asked about how do they implement the differentiation policy in their classrooms, Hlengiwe said, *“First challenge, the problem of speaking the language. What happens is that our learners only speak the language at school, when they get home it’s their mother tongue. Even before they can write, speaking is just the problem. When we use such activities as spelling, as dictation improves their problem.”*

Hlengiwe emphasises that learners' language barriers present a major obstacle to the implementation of differentiation programmes. She notes that it is challenging for learners to become proficient in the language of instruction at school as they speak their mother tongue most of the time at home. Understanding learner obstacles and the need for diverse responses is largely dependent on the subject of language as a barrier to learning.

This subject emphasises how learners' inability to fully participate in their education is caused by linguistic barriers, which calls for a customized approach in instructional tactics. This highlights the fact that deliberate activities targeted at improving learners' speaking and writing abilities are necessary for effective differentiation.

Her observations highlight important factors to take into account when putting differentiation policies into practice in educational settings. The substantial language barrier that learners experience calls for a targeted strategy that consists of recognising that learners may experience difficulties with the language of instruction due to their diverse linguistic backgrounds.

However, Buhle’s assertions are that, *“Lessons are tailored in such a way that meet individual needs of learners because learning is not a one size fits all approach. I try by all means that activities also include the five senses. If one can understand, they can see and if they cannot feel, maybe they can touch or even speak.”*

Buhle's philosophy of tailored lessons focuses on individual needs and engaging activities that stimulate the five senses. The observed lesson, while not explicitly mentioning differentiation, aims to develop comprehension skills essential for all learners. Both approaches promote active participation and sensory engagement. However, the observed lesson lacks sensory engagement, with no mention of tactile or auditory elements that could enhance comprehension through sensory

experiences. Buhle assigns all learners the same task of reading and answering comprehension questions without differentiation based on their individual learning styles. The teaching methodology appears more traditional, focusing on direct instruction and individual work rather than varied instructional strategies or collaborative learning opportunities. While there are some similarities between the two, significant contrasts exist regarding the lack of sensory activities and uniform task assignments. To better support Buhle's philosophy, future lessons could incorporate multisensory strategies and differentiated tasks that cater to diverse learning preferences, enhancing overall learner engagement and understanding.

4.6.2 Sub-theme 2: Unique challenges

When attempting to utilise differentiation strategies in EFAL classes, participants commented on the unique challenges that they face.

According to Helen, *"Number one, technology. Number two, material. You can take, as a teacher the workbooks, they are not always strictly according to Bloom's or Barrett's taxonomies, so I have to make sure that I adjust the questions."*

Helen's perspective on technology integration, material adaptation, and alignment with educational frameworks is explored in relation to classroom observations and lesson plans. She emphasises the importance of technology in enhancing teaching practices and enables teachers to engage learners more effectively. However, the classroom environment was not explicitly noted in the observations, indicating potential areas for improvement in facilitating diverse learning styles. Material adaptation is crucial for ensuring all learners can access content at appropriate levels. The lesson plan focused on teaching narrative writing included structured steps such as planning, drafting, editing, and presenting, but it may not fully account for the varied readiness levels of learners unless materials are differentiated accordingly.

Aligning educational practices with established frameworks to promote higher-order thinking skills is essential. The lesson plan aimed at understanding the writing process aligns with these taxonomies by encouraging learners to engage in various cognitive tasks. However, if the materials do not adhere to these frameworks, it may limit learners' opportunities for deeper learning. Engagement through technology is also essential, but classroom observations did not highlight its use during lessons.

Integrating technology could enhance learner engagement by providing multimedia resources that align with different preferences.

Cognitive development frameworks are essential for guiding learners through essential writing processes. However, if materials do not adhere to these frameworks, learners may miss opportunities for critical engagement. Helen's perspective on technology integration, material adaptation, and alignment with educational frameworks reveals essential themes that resonate with classroom practices and lesson plans.

On the other hand, Nohlanhla says, *"Learners asking questions as to why other learners are giving a different instruction to them. It's like others are given different activities from theirs, so it's really not fair. They feel it's not fair"*.

Nonhlanhla's concern about fairness among learners suggests a lack of perceived equity in DI. Learners questioning why their peers receive different tasks indicate a struggle with understanding the rationale behind differentiation. Observations revealed that while learners engaged in cooperative learning and discussions, the sharing of resources may have contributed to feelings of inequity. This scarcity can exacerbate perceptions of unfairness when some learners receive more challenging or varied tasks than others.

Nonhlanhla's perspective underscores the inherent challenges in implementing DI effectively, including managing diverse learner needs and addressing emotional responses. The lesson plan aimed at engaging all learners through cooperative learning and discussions about themes, settings, and characterisation, but if learners perceive they are receiving unequal opportunities, it may undermine these efforts.

The observations also noted that learners were sharing desks with limited space for the teacher, which may hinder effective differentiation and contribute to feelings of inequity among learners. The absence of visual aids or clear instructional materials might have limited understanding and acceptance of differentiated activities.

4.7 Theme 4: Implementing differentiated instruction

4.7.1 Sub-theme 1: Unique needs

Participants were asked on how differentiated teaching can be used to successfully assess and react to the unique needs of EFAL classes and this is how they responded:

Helen has this to say: *“In every paper, there are visual elements, cartoons, bar graph or a chart. You have comprehension that you have to read and then there is visual literacy that is part of it. So if we listen to CAPS, I think CAPS actually gives a lot of differentiation opportunities to us.”*

Helen emphasises the importance of visual elements in educational materials, as they enhance comprehension and engagement. The classroom environment, colourful and featuring charts, supports diverse learning styles and aids in understanding complex information. Helen believes that the CAPS provides opportunities for differentiation, allowing teachers to cater to learners with diverse learning preferences. The lesson plan for writing a narrative essay included structured steps but also allowed for autonomy in choosing how to work, either independently or collaboratively. This flexibility aligns with Helen's perspective on using differentiation effectively.

The lesson plan included cooperative learning strategies, allowing learners to discuss topics with peers, enhancing their understanding generatively. However, the lack of varied resources or tasks tailored to different readiness levels may limit the effectiveness of differentiation. Helen suggests that differentiation can be achieved through varied instructional methods provided by CAPS, and the lesson plan supported this idea by allowing learners autonomy in their work preferences.

Nonhlanhla suggest that, *“By involving learners, I work hand in hand with them, make them to understand that at the end it is for their own good”*

Nonhlanhla emphasises the importance of involving learners in the educational process, as it fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among learners. The lesson plan, which included cooperative learning elements, aligns with Nonhlanhla's emphasis on collaboration, as it allows learners to share ideas and clarify understanding through peer interactions. The lesson plan's focus on engaging learners with the narrative writing process promotes comprehension and critical

thinking skills. However, the teacher's strategy of pausing after reading to ask questions about the story did not ensure equal participation among all learners.

The lesson plan aimed to develop comprehension skills through collaborative inquiry, focusing on discussing themes and settings. However, if some learners feel excluded or disengaged, it may undermine the overall objective of enhancing their educational experience. Addressing challenges regarding equal participation among all learners is essential for fostering an inclusive environment where every learner feels empowered to take ownership of their learning journey. By addressing these issues, teachers can create a supportive environment conducive to learning and personal growth.

4.7.2 Sub-theme 2: Uncertainties

Participants were asked if they have any uncertainties in adopting differentiated teaching in their EFAL classes. Helen said, "I do not really have a specific challenge because I have learned how to use what I have got, because I know what I have to achieve or what the goal is, so I just chop and change what I have."

Helen's teaching style is characterised by adaptability, goal orientation, and resourcefulness. She can modify her teaching strategies based on the needs of her learners, which is crucial in diverse classrooms with varying learning styles and abilities. This approach enhances learner engagement and fosters a more inclusive learning environment. Helen's goal-oriented mindset provides direction and purpose, leading to structured and purposeful lessons. Resourcefulness is essential in limited educational resources, as it allows teachers to creatively leverage existing materials to engage learners.

Her lesson plan focuses on the writing process, outlining steps such as planning, drafting, editing, proofreading, and presenting. Learners actively engage in these processes, demonstrating increased confidence and skill development. The inquiry-based learning component fosters critical thinking and allows learners to contribute their ideas. Learners feel more invested in their learning when given autonomy to discuss topics with peers.

The lesson plan allows for cooperative learning, allowing learners to work independently or collaboratively. Collaborative tasks enhance engagement and

understanding, supporting Helen's resourceful teaching style. The teacher's use of visual aids and examples from textbooks aligns with resourcefulness, catering to different learning styles. Helen's teaching practices highlight key themes of adaptability, goal orientation, and resourcefulness essential for effective education. Integrating these principles can significantly enhance learner participation and achievement in language acquisition contexts.

In contrast, Nonhlanhla's perspective is that, "Some learners do not want to adapt to differentiated others so it becomes so difficult to implement it without offending others."

Nonhlanhla's perspective highlights the challenges of implementing DI, which can be influenced by learner resistance, classroom dynamics, and the complexities of differentiation practices. Observations show that while cooperative learning is effective, some learners remain passive or reluctant to participate in discussions. The social environment also plays a crucial role in influencing learners' willingness to engage with differentiated strategies. The lesson plan, which included an inquiry-based approach, encouraged engagement but also highlighted discomfort among those who preferred more structured approaches.

The lesson plan also allowed for autonomy, but some learners felt more comfortable working alone. The lesson plan focused on teaching the writing process through cooperative learning and inquiry-based discussions, but some learners struggled with adapting to group work. The classroom environment was designed to be colourful and engaging, but Nonhlanhla's perspective suggests that even a well-structured environment may not fully alleviate learner resistance if individuals are not ready or willing to adapt. Effective strategies can enhance engagement and support diverse learning needs, but they may also encounter resistance from learners who prefer traditional approaches. Understanding these dynamics is essential for teachers to create inclusive environments that foster adaptability among all learners.

4.8 Discussion of findings

4.8.1 Differentiated instruction: Meeting unique learner needs

Helen emphasises that learners are unique individuals with distinct needs and abilities, supporting the literature's assertion that DI must consider various learning styles,

interests, and readiness levels. According to Tomlinson and Jarvis (2023), effective differentiation requires teachers to modify content, processes, and products based on learners' individual characteristics. This aligns with Helen's perspective that teachers should adapt their instructional methods to meet the specific requirements of each learner. Helen's focus on flexibility in teaching approaches resonates with research indicating that effective differentiation necessitates ongoing assessment and adjustments based on real-time learner feedback. The literature suggests that teachers should continuously evaluate learner progress and adapt their strategies accordingly. Nonhlanhla's approach further illustrates this concept by employing various instructional modalities to engage different types of learners, thus fostering an inclusive environment. This is consistent with findings that highlight the need for varied teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning preferences.

Nonhlanhla's use of grouping strategies aligns with best practices in DI. Research shows that grouping allows teachers to tailor their instructional methods to different achievement levels, facilitating targeted support and peer collaboration. Her strategy encourages active participation among learners, which is essential for promoting engagement and a sense of community in the classroom — an idea echoed in the literature which emphasises the importance of collaborative learning environments (Kahu, Thomas and Heinrich, 2024; Cavinato, Hunter, Ott and Robinson, 2021). Both Nonhlanhla and Hlengiwe stress the importance of creating safe and supportive learning atmospheres. The literature supports this notion, indicating that a positive classroom culture enhances learner engagement and learning outcomes (Fisher, Perényi and Birdthistle, 2021).

Hlengiwe's emphasis on open communication and risk-taking further reflects research findings that suggest such environments are crucial for fostering learner collaboration and success (Henriksen, Henderson, Creely, Carvalho, Cernochova, Dash, Davis and Mishra, 2021). While both teachers demonstrate strong alignment with DI principles, there are noted discrepancies in the observed lesson's execution compared to Nonhlanhla's approach. The absence of visual aids and limited movement space in the observed lesson could hinder its effectiveness, as highlighted by research advocating for diverse instructional strategies that cater to all learners' needs (Phutane, Wright, Castro, Shi, Stern, Lawson and Azenkot, 2022). The need for varied

assessments tailored to individual learner requirements is also emphasised in the literature, contrasting with the observed lesson's uniform assessment approach (Tetzlaff, Hartmann, Dumont, Brod, 2022).

4.8.2 Embracing differentiated instruction: Nonhlanhla's educational philosophy

Nonhlanhla's philosophy is rooted in the principles of DI, which is well-supported in the literature. Effective differentiation, stated Suryati and Ratih (2024), entails adjusting education to fit the requirements, preferences, and readiness levels of each individual learner. Nonhlanhla advocates for varied assessments tailored to individual needs, which aligns with the CAPS document's emphasis on creating inclusive learning environments that cater to diverse learner capabilities. This approach reflects a commitment to addressing the unique needs of all learners, as highlighted in various studies (Suh, Hand, Ercan-Dursun, Sahin and Fulmer, 2024; Du Plessis, Küng and Du Plessis, 2024; Asfahani, El-Farra and Iqbal, 2024) that emphasize the importance of adaptability in teaching practices. The interview and lesson plan both highlight a learner-centred approach, which is a central theme in contemporary educational literature. Du Plessis (2020) describes learner-centred pedagogy as one that actively engages learners in their learning process, promoting collaboration and reflection. Nonhlanhla's focus on key literary elements while fostering a learner-centred environment aligns with this perspective, as it encourages learners to take ownership of their learning experiences. The literature suggests that such an approach enhances learner motivation and engagement, leading to better academic outcomes (Marín, 2022).

While Nonhlanhla emphasises the classroom environment, the lack of specific strategies for enhancing it — such as visual aids or flexible seating — highlights an area for improvement. Research indicates that effective learning environments incorporate diverse instructional strategies that foster engagement and accommodate different learning styles (El-Sabagh, 2021). The absence of these elements in the observed lesson may limit its effectiveness in fully implementing DI principles. The critique regarding informal assessments without differentiation points to a significant gap in aligning with best practices. Continuous assessment is crucial for understanding learner progress and informing instructional adjustments, as

emphasised by various educational frameworks. Nonhlanhla's philosophy suggests a need for varied assessments tailored to individual needs; however, the lesson plan's reliance on uniform assessments may hinder accurate evaluation of learner understanding.

4.8.3 Buhle's approach to differentiated instruction

Buhle's acknowledgment that learners are not the same and cannot be taught using a uniform method is a core principle of DI. According to Bushie (2020), effective differentiation requires teachers to recognize and respond to the diverse learning styles and capacities of their learners. This understanding is essential for creating personalised learning experiences that cater to each learner's unique needs. Buhle's focus on "varied activities and assessments" aligns with the findings of Chamberlin and Powers (2010), who assert that successful DI involves modifying instructional content, processes, and products based on learners' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. By employing a mix of instructional strategies, Buhle ensures that every learner can engage with the material in a manner that resonates with them, enhancing their motivation and understanding.

Buhle's practical application of DI through her lesson plans demonstrates a strong grasp of its principles. Heacox and Cash (2020) emphasise that DI should be rigorous, relevant, flexible, and varied. Buhle's incorporation of group discussions, partner work, and individual reflections exemplifies this approach, allowing learners to interact with content in ways that suit their learning preferences. This aligns with research indicating that such collaborative learning strategies promote learner engagement and achievement (Mastropieri et al., 2006).

Buhle's practices also reflect the principles outlined in the CAPS, which emphasises flexibility in content delivery, process differentiation, and product differentiation (South Africa. Department of Education, 2011). By adapting her teaching methods based on learner readiness and interests, Buhle ensures accessibility for all learners, which is crucial for fostering an inclusive educational environment.

Despite her strong philosophy on DI, the observed lesson revealed limitations in its practical application. The lack of differentiation — where all learners engaged with the same activity without options for varying levels of difficulty — contrasts with Buhle's

stated beliefs. As noted by Pham (2023), effective differentiation requires ongoing assessment and adjustments based on individual learner needs. The observed lesson's uniform approach may hinder accurate evaluation of learner understanding and engagement.

Buhle's approach to DI aligns well with established literature on the topic. Her recognition of individual learner differences, commitment to varied activities and assessments, practical application of differentiation principles, and alignment with CAPS all indicate a strong understanding of effective teaching strategies. However, the observed lesson highlights areas for improvement in consistent implementation. Continuous efforts to incorporate flexibility in content delivery and varied assessment methods will be essential for fully realizing the benefits of DI in Buhle's classroom.

4.8.4 Helen's implementation of differentiated instruction principles

The data regarding Helen's teaching practices aligns well with the literature on DI, particularly in recognising diverse learning styles and accommodating varying learner needs. Here's a detailed discussion of how her approach agrees with and, in some aspects, diverges from established educational theories.

Helen emphasizes the importance of using both audio and visual inputs in her lessons, acknowledging that learners have different learning styles — some are visual learners while others are auditory learners. This recognition is crucial in DI, as highlighted by Halvorsen et al. (2009), who assert that effective teaching must consider individual differences to enhance engagement and understanding. By providing varied resources, Helen improves curriculum accessibility for all learners, aligning with the literature's emphasis on accommodating diverse learning preferences. Helen employs cooperative learning, inquiry-based learning, and direct instruction as part of her teaching strategies. These methods are supported by research indicating their effectiveness in promoting learner engagement and collaboration (Mastropieri et al., 2006). The literature suggests that incorporating a mix of instructional strategies not only enhances understanding but also fosters a supportive classroom environment, which is evident in Helen's lesson plan.

Helen's approach to modifying her plans based on available resources demonstrates a key characteristic of effective DI. Shane Lockhart (2020) emphasises that

differentiation requires teachers to be flexible and responsive to learners' needs, adjusting content, process, or products accordingly. Helen's willingness to create backup plans when ideal circumstances are not met reflects her commitment to ensuring all learners receive the necessary support. Helen advocates for making lessons accessible through practical applications and real-life scenarios. This approach aligns with Bryant and Charmaz (2010), who argue that contextual learning enhances learner motivation and comprehension. By incorporating peer feedback and real-life contexts into her lessons, Helen fosters a supportive atmosphere that encourages learner interaction and collaboration.

While Helen acknowledges the importance of technology in education, she highlights challenges related to its availability, such as the need for monitors or projectors. This concern reflects a common issue noted in the literature; effective differentiation often requires appropriate resources (Lockhart, 2020). The lack of technology can hinder the implementation of varied teaching methods, which could limit the effectiveness of her instructional strategies. Helen does not specifically address how technology will be integrated into her lessons beyond acknowledging its importance. This lack of specificity may lead to discrepancies between her intentions and actual practice. According to Ollerton (2014), successful differentiation involves not only recognising diverse learning styles but also effectively integrating technology to enhance learning experiences. Addressing this gap could strengthen her teaching methods.

4.8.5 Insights into Hlengiwe and Nonhlanhla's differentiated instruction approaches

The data presented about Hlengiwe's and Nonhlanhla's approaches to DI aligns with various aspects of existing research while also highlighting some areas of divergence. Here is a detailed discussion of how Nonhlanhla's and Hlengiwe's practices agree with, and challenge, established literature.

Hlengiwe's acknowledgment that her learners do not speak English as their first language is a critical aspect of DI. Research by Fairbairn and Jones-Vo (2010) emphasises that effective differentiation must consider the unique challenges faced by English language learners. By framing English as an "additional language," she creates an environment conducive to language learning, which aligns with the

literature's focus on addressing the specific needs of.

Both Hlengiwe and Nonhlanhla employ a variety of teaching strategies, including cooperative learning, interactive reading, and open-ended assignments. This approach is supported by Echevarria et al. (2008), who argue that using multiple instructional strategies is essential for engaging diverse learners and facilitating comprehension. Hlengiwe's use of summaries, interactive reading, and cooperative learning not only supports different learning styles but also promotes active engagement, which is crucial for effective learning. Hlengiwe's focus on equipping learners with the skills necessary to become proficient in English aligns with the literature that stresses the importance of skill development in DI. According to Lockhart (2020), differentiation must prioritise skill acquisition to ensure that all learners have the support they need to succeed. This commitment is evident in Hlengiwe's methods, which aim to foster both academic and social success for her learners.

Nonhlanhla's strategy of providing open-ended assignments allows learners to explore topics aligned with their interests and skills, a practice supported by research indicating that learner choice enhances motivation and engagement (Tomlinson, 2005). By allowing learners to select their tasks, Nonhlanhla fosters intrinsic motivation, which is essential for effective DI. Both Nonhlanhla and Hlengiwe's methods align with the principles outlined in the CAPS, which advocates for using varied teaching techniques to meet diverse learning needs. The CAPS document emphasizes flexibility in content delivery and process differentiation, which both Hlengiwe and Nonhlanhla incorporate into their teaching practices.

While both teachers demonstrate a commitment to DI, they face challenges related to resource availability. Hlengiwe mentions the need for tailored solutions to address the difficulties faced by English language learners but does not elaborate on how these challenges might limit her instructional effectiveness. Similarly, Nonhlanhla notes the absence of visual aids and limited classroom space as factors that could hinder effective interaction. These concerns reflect findings in the literature indicating that insufficient resources can impede the implementation of effective differentiation strategies (Lockhart, 2020).

Although both teachers emphasise the importance of varied teaching strategies, there

may be discrepancies between their intentions and actual classroom practices. For instance, while Hlengiwe employs several strategies to support language learning, her reliance on traditional methods without explicit integration of technology may limit her effectiveness in fully engaging English language learners. Similarly, Nonhlanhla's mention of providing a variety of resources lacks specificity regarding how these resources are implemented in practice.

4.8.6 Perspectives on differentiated instruction

The data presented regarding the perspectives of Hlengiwe, Helen, Nonhlanhla, and Buhle on DI reveals both agreements and contradictions with existing literature. This analysis will explore how their views align with established educational theories while also highlighting areas of divergence. Hlengiwe's confidence in her current abilities, paired with her acknowledgment of potential future needs for assistance, reflects a balanced approach to professional development. This aligns with research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), which emphasises the importance of self-awareness and adaptability in teaching. By recognising her strengths while remaining open to future support, Hlengiwe demonstrates an understanding of the dynamic nature of teaching, which is crucial for effective differentiation.

Helen's admission that she does not know everything and her openness to learning exemplify a growth mindset, a concept supported by Dweck (2006). Her recognition of knowledge gaps and willingness to seek professional development are indicative of best practices in education. Research indicates that teachers with a growth mindset are more likely to engage in continuous learning and improve their instructional practices (Dweck, 2006). Helen's structured approach to teaching narrative essays and inquiry-based learning further aligns with literature advocating for active engagement strategies that promote learner understanding.

Nonhlanhla's focus on inclusive education resonates with the literature that underscores the importance of adapting teaching strategies to meet diverse learner needs. According to Florian and Linklater (2010), inclusive education requires teachers to modify their approaches to ensure equitable access for all learners. Nonhlanhla's proactive stance on seeking training in this area reflects an understanding of the complexities involved in teaching diverse populations, aligning

with best practices for fostering an inclusive classroom environment. Buhle's attention to the needs of "low-hanging fruit" or at-risk learners demonstrates an awareness of the challenges faced by vulnerable learner populations. This perspective is supported by research indicating that effective differentiation must include targeted strategies for supporting at-risk learners (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Buhle's commitment to seeking training in this area highlights her dedication to professional growth and improving outcomes for all learners.

While Hlengiwe expresses confidence in her current abilities, Helen's acknowledgment of her knowledge gaps raises questions about the consistency of this confidence among teachers. Literature suggests that self-efficacy can significantly impact teaching effectiveness (Bandura, 1997). The contrast between Hlengiwe's confidence and Helen's self-doubt could indicate differing levels of support or experience within their respective teaching environments. Helen's lesson plan, which assigns all learners the same task despite her ideals about differentiation, highlights a common challenge in education: the gap between theory and practice. Research by Strahan et al. (2012) indicates that many teachers struggle to implement DI consistently due to various constraints, such as time and resources. This discrepancy between Helen's intentions and actual classroom practices suggests that despite her growth mindset, she may face challenges in translating theory into practice effectively. Hlengiwe's assertion that she does not currently need training contrasts with Nonhlanhla's proactive approach towards professional development. While both teachers recognize the importance of ongoing improvement, their perspectives on immediate training needs differ significantly. This divergence may reflect varying levels of experience or institutional support for professional development within their contexts.

4.8.7 Perspectives on professional development in differentiated instruction

Buhle's focus on "low-hanging fruit" or at-risk learners aligns with literature emphasizing the importance of identifying and addressing the unique challenges faced by vulnerable learner populations. Research by Tomlinson et al. (2003) underscores the necessity of tailoring instructional strategies to meet the specific needs of at-risk learners. Buhle's acknowledgment of her limitations in helping these learners fully

realize their potential reflects a proactive approach to professional development, which is essential for effective differentiation.

Both Hlengiwe and Nonhlanhla demonstrate a commitment to ongoing professional growth, which is crucial in the ever-evolving field of education. Their recognition of the need for training — particularly in inclusive education — aligns with Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who argue that continuous professional development is vital for teachers to effectively support diverse learners. Nonhlanhla's emphasis on inclusive education training highlights her understanding of the complexities involved in teaching learners with varying needs, reinforcing the literature's call for targeted professional development in this area.

Helen's openness to learning and acknowledgment of her knowledge gaps exemplify a growth mindset, as described by Dweck (2006). Her willingness to seek further training in DI demonstrates an understanding that effective teaching requires continuous improvement. This aligns with best practices in education, where teachers are encouraged to reflect on their practices and pursue opportunities for growth. Hlengiwe's approach of encouraging learners to assess themselves and each other reflects a commitment to fostering self-awareness and collaborative learning. Research indicates that self-assessment can enhance critical thinking skills and promote learner ownership of learning (Boud and Falchikov, 2006). By allowing learners to evaluate their work and that of their peers, Hlengiwe helps them develop a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, which is crucial for their academic growth.

While Hlengiwe expresses confidence in her current abilities, her admission that she may need assistance in the future contrasts with Helen's more pronounced acknowledgment of her knowledge gaps. This discrepancy raises questions about how confidence levels among teachers can influence their perceptions of professional development needs. Literature suggests that self-efficacy can significantly impact teaching effectiveness (Bandura, 1997), indicating that differing confidence levels may affect how teachers approach their professional growth. Helen's lesson plan, which assigns all learners the same task despite her ideals about differentiation, highlights a common challenge in education: the gap between theory and practice. Strahan et al. (2012) indicate that many teachers struggle to implement DI consistently due to

various constraints such as time and resources. This disconnect between Helen's intentions and actual classroom practices suggests that despite her growth mindset, she may face challenges in translating theory into practice effectively.

Bophela's emphasis on cultural diversity in the classroom reflects an important aspect of DI that is often overlooked. While he proposes training focused on cultural diversity to improve outcomes for English language learners, the lesson observations reveal a more uniform approach to instruction that does not adequately address these concerns. This gap indicates a potential disconnect between the ideal of culturally responsive teaching and actual implementation, suggesting that teachers may need additional support to integrate cultural considerations into their instructional practices.

The data presented regarding the assessment methods and professional development perspectives of Hlengiwe, Nonhlanhla, Helen, and Buhle reveals both agreements and contradictions with existing literature on DI and effective teaching practices. This analysis will explore how their approaches align with established educational theories while also highlighting areas of divergence.

Hlengiwe's emphasis on peer assessment, where learners evaluate each other's assignments, aligns with research that highlights the benefits of collaborative learning. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), peer assessment fosters a supportive classroom environment and enhances learners' understanding by allowing them to learn from one another's mistakes. This method not only helps learners develop critical thinking skills but also encourages ownership of their learning, which is a key principle of DI (Tomlinson, 2001). Nonhlanhla's use of daily classwork and weekly informal tests as assessment tools reflects best practices in ongoing formative assessment. Research by Wiliam (2011) emphasises the importance of continuous assessment in understanding learner progress and tailoring instruction to meet diverse needs. By incorporating regular assessments, Nonhlanhla can monitor learner understanding in real-time, allowing for timely interventions and support for struggling learners.

Both Nonhlanhla and Buhle exhibit a proactive stance towards professional development, recognizing the need for training in inclusive education and strategies for supporting diverse learners. Research indicates that continuous professional development is crucial for teachers to effectively meet the needs of all learners

(Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Their willingness to seek additional training reflects an understanding of the complexities involved in teaching diverse populations. Buhle's commitment to addressing the needs of "low-hanging fruit" or at-risk learners aligns with literature emphasizing the importance of DI in supporting vulnerable learner populations. Tomlinson et al. (2003) highlight that effective differentiation requires identifying and addressing the unique challenges faced by at-risk learners. Buhle's acknowledgment of her limitations in helping these learners fully realise their potential demonstrates a proactive approach to professional development, which is essential for effective differentiation.

While Hlengiwe advocates for peer assessment, her approach may not fully address the individualised needs of all learners. The literature suggests that while collaborative methods are beneficial, they must be complemented by personalised strategies to ensure that each learner's unique needs are met (Tomlinson, 2001). If peer assessment is not carefully structured, some learners may dominate the process while others remain passive, potentially hindering their learning. Nonhlanhla's reliance on daily assignments and weekly informal tests may create a uniformity in assessment that does not fully align with the principles of DI. While these methods provide valuable data on learner progress, they may not account for the diverse ways in which learners demonstrate their understanding (Strahan et al., 2012). The absence of varied tasks tailored to individual learning preferences could limit opportunities for some learners to engage meaningfully with the material.

4.8.8 Confidence, professional development, and instructional alignment in teaching practices

Hlengiwe's confidence in her current abilities contrasts with Buhle's admission of needing more training to support at-risk learners. This divergence raises questions about how confidence levels among teachers can influence their perceptions of professional development needs. Literature suggests that self-efficacy can significantly impact teaching effectiveness (Bandura, 1997), indicating that differing confidence levels may affect how teachers approach their professional growth.

The observation that Nonhlanhla's lesson did not align with curriculum requirements highlights a significant gap between instructional practice and educational standards.

This misalignment could undermine the effectiveness of her teaching strategies and contradict literature advocating for adherence to curriculum frameworks as essential for effective differentiation (Tomlinson and Imbeau, 2010). Ensuring that lessons are aligned with curriculum goals is vital for providing a coherent educational experience.

The data presented regarding the teaching philosophies and practices of Hlengiwe, Helen, Nonhlanhla, and Buhle reveals both agreements and contradictions with existing literature on DI and effective teaching practices. This analysis will explore how their perspectives align with established educational theories while also highlighting areas of divergence.

Hlengiwe's assertion that varied instruction is essential for learner success aligns with the principles of DI, which emphasize the importance of tailoring teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners (Tomlinson, 2001). Her focus on customising learning to relate to learners' interests and experiences reflects research indicating that relevance enhances learner motivation and engagement (Schunk et al., 2014). By fostering an environment where learners actively participate in their education, she embodies a key tenet of learner-centred pedagogy.

The data highlights the significance of intrinsic motivation in language learning, which is supported by literature indicating that motivated learners are more likely to engage deeply with the material (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Buhle's emphasis on how motivation enhances responsiveness to teachers and peers aligns with findings that active participation fosters a sense of community and improves language acquisition outcomes (Vygotsky, 1978). Her approach encourages collaboration among learners, which is essential for developing language skills in a supportive environment.

Both Hlengiwe and Buhle recognise the value of peer interaction in fostering a collaborative learning environment. Research shows that cooperative learning strategies promote social skills and enhance academic achievement (Johnson and Johnson, 2009). By encouraging learners to work together, provide feedback, and engage in discussions, they create opportunities for learners to learn from one another, which is crucial for effective differentiation.

Nonhlanhla's emphasis on providing feedback as a means for learners to understand their strengths and areas for improvement aligns with literature that underscores the

importance of formative assessment in the learning process (Wiliam, 2011). By encouraging self-reflection and personal goal-setting, she cultivates a growth mindset among her learners. This approach is consistent with research indicating that feedback fosters a culture of continuous improvement and active engagement (Hattie and Timperley, 2007).

While Hlengiwe articulates a strong commitment to varied instruction, observations indicate that her teaching may not fully align with these ideals. The reliance on uniform assignments suggests a potential gap between her stated philosophy and actual classroom practice. Literature indicates that many teachers struggle to implement DI consistently due to various constraints (Strahan et al., 2012). This disconnect raises questions about how well teachers can translate their beliefs into effective teaching strategies.

Hlengiwe's confidence in her current abilities contrasts with Helen's acknowledgment of her knowledge gaps. This difference may reflect varying levels of self-efficacy among teachers. Bandura (1997) suggests that self-efficacy significantly impacts teaching effectiveness; therefore, differing confidence levels may influence how teachers perceive their professional development needs. While Hlengiwe feels competent in her approach, Helen's openness to learning indicates a more cautious stance regarding her instructional practices.

The observation that Nonhlanhla's lesson did not align with curriculum requirements presents a significant gap between instructional practice and educational standards. This misalignment could undermine the effectiveness of her teaching strategies and contradict literature advocating for adherence to curriculum frameworks as essential for effective differentiation (Tomlinson and Imbeau, 2010). Ensuring that lessons are aligned with curriculum goals is vital for providing a coherent educational experience.

4.9 Summary

This chapter presented data generated from five English teachers at five secondary schools located in the Thabo Mofutsanyana district of Harrismith, who participated in the study. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, and a discussion based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 followed. The themes presented in the data were developed from the four secondary research questions, and corresponding sub-

themes were identified. The data from the participants' interviews and focus group transcripts were used to address the four research questions. The findings provide answers to both the study's primary research question and its secondary questions.

The participants in the study emphasised the importance of flexible teaching methods, diverse instructional methods, and a positive learning atmosphere. They use grouping strategies to engage diverse learners, aligning with best practices in DI. However, they face challenges in lesson execution, such as lack of visual aids and adequate movement space. Participants' educational philosophies is centred on DI. Buhle and Helen also emphasise DI principles, but face challenges in resource availability.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the findings, as well as conclusions and recommendations on teachers' experiences in Grade 10 EFAL classes. Through thematic analysis of data obtained from semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis, I gained in-depth insights on experiences teachers have while implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL classes. This study explores teacher's experiences in implementing DI in Grade 10 EFAL in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District.

5.2 Summary of research findings

5.2.1 Stressing adaptability and teamwork in instructional strategies

Teachers Helen and Hlengiwe stress the value of adaptable teaching strategies, a variety of instructional approaches, and a supportive learning environment. Both of them follow best practices in DI by using grouping tactics to encourage active participation and engage diverse learners. Additionally, they stress the importance of fostering a pleasant classroom culture, which improves learner involvement and academic results. Hlengiwe's emphasis on risk-taking and candid communication is essential for teamwork and learner achievement. Nonetheless, there are differences in how the lessons are taught, such as the lack of sufficient space for movement and visual assistance. According to research (Munna & Kalam, 2021), different teaching approaches are necessary to meet the needs of every learner, and the observed lesson's consistent assessment methodology may reduce its efficacy.

5.2.2 Strengths and opportunities for development in differentiated instruction

Differentiated instruction, which stresses adjusting learning to each learner's needs and preferences, is at the heart of Nonhlanhla's educational philosophy. Her dedication to diverse evaluations is consistent with the CAPS document's emphasis

on inclusive classrooms. Learner-centred, Nonhlanhla's method actively involves learners in their education. Nevertheless, there are not many particular methods to improve the classroom atmosphere. Since continual evaluation is essential for comprehending learner progress and guiding instructional modifications, Nonhlanhla's informal assessments that lack differentiation point to a weakness in best practices. Her instructional plan's dependence on standard assessments could make it more difficult to accurately gauge learners' comprehension. There is room for improvement to increase the efficacy of her teaching tactics, even if she strongly adheres to the concepts of differentiated education.

5.2.3 Approaches to differentiated instruction

While Buhle's lesson plans were rigorous and practical, incorporating group discussions, partner work, and individual reflections, her practices did not align with the CAPS principles because they involved all learners participating in the same activity without options for varying difficulty levels. Buhle's teaching practices were in line with DI literature, particularly in recognising diverse learning styles, and she used audio and visual inputs to accommodate visual and auditory learners, in addition to using cooperative learning, inquiry-based learning, and direct instruction.

In addition to encouraging a supportive environment through peer feedback and real-life contexts, Helen promoted making lessons approachable through real-world examples and practical applications. The availability of technology presents difficulties for her, though, as appropriate resources are frequently needed for effective differentiation. Inconsistencies between her intentions and actual practice could result from her lack of specific strategies for incorporating technology into her lessons. Buhle and Helen showed a solid grasp of the concepts of DI, but they struggled to apply them consistently, which could reduce their efficacy. For their classrooms to fully benefit from DI, ongoing efforts to improve flexibility in content delivery and the integration of a variety of assessment techniques will be necessary.

5.2.4 Differentiated instruction practices

The approaches to differentiated education taken by Hlengiwe and Nonhlanhla show both significant differences and similarities with previous studies. By presenting English as an "additional language," Hlengiwe creates a welcoming atmosphere for

language learning while acknowledging the particular difficulties faced by English language learners. Both teachers used a variety of instructional techniques, including interactive reading and cooperative learning, which are in line with the idea that skill development is essential for academic achievement. Through the use of open-ended assignments, Nonhlanhla increased motivation by letting learners investigate subjects according to their interests.

However, the availability of resources presents difficulties for both teachers. Although Hlengiwe recognized the necessity for English language learners-specific solutions, she did not provide implementation details. Nonhlanhla pointed out that the classroom's small size and lack of visual aids made it more difficult for learners to interact effectively. Furthermore, Nonhlanhla's reference to a variety of resources was unclear in terms of its actual use, suggesting possible discrepancies between intention and classroom practice, while Hlengiwe's dependence on conventional techniques without incorporating technology may restrict participation. Although both teachers exhibited a strong commitment to the ideas of DI, their practices highlighted areas for growth in terms of how they used resources and how they implemented techniques to better meet the needs of various learners.

5.2.5 Perspectives on differentiated instruction

Hlengiwe's confidence in her abilities and future support needs aligned with the importance of self-awareness and adaptability for effective differentiation. Helen's growth mindset and structured teaching methods promoted active engagement, aligning with literature that advocated for such strategies. Nonhlanhla's focus on inclusive education aligned with the need to adapt teaching strategies for diverse learners, demonstrating an understanding of the complexities of teaching varied populations. Buhle's attention to at-risk learners was supported by Tomlinson et al. (2003), indicating a dedication to improving outcomes for all learners. However, the variability in confidence and support needs raised questions about the consistency of confidence among teachers. Helen's lesson plan, which assigned the same task to all learners, highlighted the gap between theory and practice, which many teachers struggled to implement consistently due to constraints like time and resources. Nonhlanhla's proactive approach to professional growth contrasted with Hlengiwe's claim that she did not then require training; this could have been due to different

experiences or institutional support for continuing education.

Buhle and Nonhlanhla showed a proactive approach to professional development by highlighting the significance of addressing the particular difficulties experienced by at-risk learners. Additionally, they exhibited a dedication to continuous professional growth, especially in the area of inclusive education, which was essential for efficiently assisting a varied learner body. By admitting her knowledge gaps and pursuing additional training in DI, Helen demonstrated a development mindset.

5.2.6 Teachers' views on differentiated instruction: consistencies and difficulties

Research shows that collaborative learning and peer assessment create a supportive classroom climate and improve comprehension, which is consistent with Hlengiwe's emphasis on these strategies. However, if peer assessment is not properly designed, it might not meet each learner's unique needs.

While observations point to a more uniform educational strategy that might fall short in addressing these issues, Bophela's emphasis on cultural variety still represents an important component of individualised training. Although Nonhlanhla's use of informal examinations and daily classwork as evaluation methods is in line with best practices in formative assessment, it might not adequately take into consideration the variety of learning preferences and styles.

5.2.7 Confidence and alignment in differentiated instruction

Hlengiwe, Buhle, Helen, and Nonhlanhla's teaching philosophies revealed both agreement and contradictions with existing literature on DI and effective teaching practices. The findings revealed that Hlengiwe's confidence in her abilities contrasted with Buhle's admission that she needed more training to support at-risk learners, highlighting the influence of varying confidence levels on teachers' perceptions of professional development needs.

The importance of modifying strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners was highlighted by Hlengiwe's emphasis on diversified education, which was in line with

concepts of DI. Additionally, included were peer interaction and teamwork, which both improved social skills and academic achievement, as well as intrinsic motivation in studying. The focus that Nonhlanhla placed on providing feedback aligned with studies that highlighted the importance of formative evaluation and fostering a growth mindset in learners. Hlengiwe's reliance on uniform assignments, however, could indicate a misalignment between her professed philosophy and her real actions, which was another way in which the study found a gap between theory and practice. This highlighted the necessity of teachers converting their beliefs into effective teaching techniques and coordinating their methods with academic norms.

5.3 Conclusions

Helen, Hlengiwe, Nonhlanhla, and Buhle's teaching practices provided important insights into their approaches to Differentiated Instruction (DI). They all stressed the value of flexible teaching methods and a variety of instructional strategies, which created a positive learning environment that aligned with best practices in DI. They also stressed the importance of building a positive classroom culture, with Hlengiwe's emphasis on risk-taking and open communication encouraging collaboration and learner success. However, both teachers exhibited differences in how they executed their lessons, such as the lack of visual aids and sufficient space for movement. Differentiated Instruction based on the requirements of each learner was emphasized in Nonhlanhla's concept; nonetheless, her dependence on standard tests and informal evaluations that lacked distinction exposed shortcomings in best practices.

In order to fulfill the different needs of learners and enhance the efficiency of instruction, Buhle's proactive approach to professional development was essential. It was unclear how self-efficacy affected teachers' perceptions of their professional development needs given the disparity in confidence between Hlengiwe and Helen. The frequently encountered difficulty of regularly conducting differentiated education was highlighted by the observed discrepancy between teachers' professed philosophy and actual classroom practices. Hlengiwe and Buhle both acknowledged the importance of collaborative learning as a crucial element that fostered social skills and improved academic performance. These results demonstrated how crucial a

supportive environment was to successful differentiation in the classroom.

Emphasizing the value of a variety of teaching approaches, Buhle and Helen were dedicated to the principles of DI. Personalized learning experiences were created by utilizing activities and assessments that were in line with the CAPS. Yet, they encountered difficulties in putting these ideas into practice, including failing to match lesson plans with CAPS principles and dealing with a lack of resources, especially when it came to incorporating technology. Through cooperative learning and interactive reading techniques, Hlengiwe created a positive learning atmosphere for English language learners. Her classroom space and visual aids were limited, and she lacked specific implementation strategies. Peer interaction was important for creating a collaborative learning environment, and both teachers understood this. The emphasis Nonhlanhla placed on feedback was in line with formative assessment best practices and promoted learners' self-reflection.

But there was a discrepancy between their professed beliefs and their actual methods of instruction, which could have been brought on by a lack of resources and time. Continuous professional development, better resource availability, and customized technology integration techniques were crucial for increasing their efficacy in fulfilling the varied demands of learners.

Hlengiwe, Helen, Nonhlanhla, Buhle, and Bophela's methods to differentiated education were examined in this study. Self-awareness and flexibility, a growth attitude in instruction, a focus on inclusive education, and attention to at-risk learners were among the main conclusions. However, because self-efficacy affected how people saw their need for professional development, there were differences between theory and practice. All learners were given the identical assignment in Hlengiwe's lesson plan, emphasizing the disconnect between academic concepts and real-world application.

The fact that Nonhlanhla's class did not fit the requirements of the curriculum indicated that there were large discrepancies between educational standards and instructional practice. Additionally, since both focused on tactics that encouraged learners to actively participate and collaborate, intrinsic motivation and engagement were emphasized.

Stressing the value of cultural diversity in the classroom, Bophela promoted instructional strategies that took into account the many cultural backgrounds of learners. He favored a multicultural approach that incorporated local circumstances, used collaborative learning techniques that promoted peer interaction and feedback, and incorporated a variety of cultural perspectives into lesson designs. In order to effectively manage diverse classrooms and address the particular difficulties faced by learners from various cultural backgrounds, he emphasized the necessity of teachers receiving training on cultural diversity and responsive teaching techniques.

There might have been discrepancies between his ideas and the actual classroom procedures, even with his dedication to ethnic diversity. Bophela's support of all learners demonstrated a deeper dedication to educational justice by highlighting how crucial it was to identify and meet each learner's unique needs as a basic component of good instruction.

5.4 Recommendations

This study offers five recommendations for enhancing the implementation of DI in EFAL classrooms in Grade 10. The recommendations include: transformative pathways, elevating DI in diverse classrooms, cultivating inclusive learning, innovative approaches to DI, techniques for improving instruction to assist diverse learners, improving professional growth for successful differentiated pedagogy, multimodal techniques to enhance education's DI, and empowering teachers: a holistic framework for transformative teaching practices.

5.4.1 Transformative pathways

Helen, Hlengiwe, Nonhlanhla, and Buhle's findings suggest several ways to improve differentiated education in schools. These include implementing continuous formative assessments, improving resource availability, offering professional development on differentiation strategies, fostering collaborative learning environments, using various instructional strategies, fostering a positive classroom culture, customising assessments to meet individual needs, integrating technology effectively, promoting learner autonomy, and reflecting on one's own practice. Regular formative assessments, such as quizzes and peer evaluations, can track progress and adjust instruction accordingly. Schools should purchase interactive whiteboards, manipulatives, and digital learning tools that cater to different learning styles. Teachers should receive professional development that emphasises inclusive teaching methods and successful differentiation techniques. Collaborative learning strategies, structured group activities, and various instructional modalities can promote learning environments. A positive classroom culture, open communication, risk-taking, and safety are essential. Teachers should reflect on their teaching methods and establish peer observation groups for constructive criticism.

5.4.2 Cultivating inclusive learning: innovative approaches to differentiated Instruction

The recommendations made by Nonhlanhla, Helen, Bophela, Nonhlanhla, and Buhle's approach to DI include: implementing a variety of assessment strategies; improving the classroom environment; offering opportunities for ongoing professional development; encouraging collaborative learning; successfully integrating technology; reflecting on instructional practices on a regular basis; cultivating a positive classroom culture; modifying instructional content and procedures; promoting learner autonomy and choice; and incorporating cultural responsiveness into teaching practices. To meet the requirements and preferences of each individual learner, teachers should use formative assessments that offer continuous feedback, such as projects, presentations, and portfolios. Through interactive learning areas, adjustable seating arrangements, and visual aids, they should also establish a dynamic and engaging learning environment in the classroom that supports various learning preferences. A diverse range of teaching approaches and an inclusive environment can be promoted

by investing in tools like posters, manipulatives, and technology.

It is imperative that teachers have access to ongoing professional development opportunities that emphasise inclusive education and DI best practices. Peer interaction and collaboration should be promoted through the use of scheduled group activities and collaborative learning strategies. Personalized learning experiences can be achieved through the use of technology to improve differentiated training. Additionally, teachers should assess their teaching methods on a regular basis to make sure they adhere to DI's principle. Creating a welcoming atmosphere that promotes candid communication, taking calculated risks, and respect between learners is essential to developing a positive classroom culture. Diverse learners' needs can be met by differentiating instructional materials and procedures, and giving learners a voice in their education can boost their self-esteem and comfort levels. By putting these suggestions into practice, teachers can improve DI methods, foster more welcoming classrooms, and better serve the varied needs of learners.

5.4.3 Techniques for improving instruction to assist diverse learners

In order to enhance teaching practices and support diverse learners, the following recommendations are suggested by the data gathered from Helen, Hlengiwe, and Nonhlanhla: utilising a variety of assessment methods, integrating technology effectively, establishing a flexible classroom environment, emphasising cooperative learning strategies, offering professional development opportunities, promoting open communication, encouraging learner autonomy and choice, putting scaffolding techniques into practice, routinely reflecting on instructional practices, and aligning instruction with curriculum standards.

Teachers should create plans for incorporating technology into their courses, such as leveraging platforms and educational tools that support individualised instruction, in order to improve learner learning. Additionally, they ought to use a variety of assessment techniques, such as project-based evaluations, self-assessments, and formative assessments. It is essential to have a flexible classroom setting with areas set aside for group projects, seating configurations, and visual aids. In addition to planned group activities like think-pair-share or literature groups that facilitate collaborative engagement with the material, cooperative learning strategies can foster

peer contact and collaboration. Workshops focusing on real-world implementations of differentiated teaching should be provided as professional development opportunities. It is important to encourage open communication and give learners the confidence to voice their needs and desires for their education. In order to offer different degrees of support according to learner preparedness, scaffolding approaches should be used in conjunction with encouraging learner autonomy and choice. It is also advised that teaching approaches be regularly reflected upon and aligned with curriculum standards. Teachers can preserve instructional coherence and better help different learners by putting these suggestions into practice.

5.4.4 Improving professional growth for successful differentiated pedagogy

Schools ought to establish a customised, cooperative learning environment that prioritises ongoing improvement in DI in order to support the professional development of teachers such as Hlengiwe, Helen, Nonhlanhla, and Buhle. Schools should create customised professional development plans that are in line with best practices and current educational standards, taking into account each teacher's areas of strength and growth. Assessments, focused training sessions, and the promotion of a culture of ongoing learning through frequent seminars, conferences, webinars, and collaborative learning communities can all help achieve this. Regular examination of teaching methods, mentorship programs, candid discussion of professional development requirements, and progress tracking via learner assessments are all ways to promote reflective practice. Through successful differentiation techniques, this all-encompassing strategy can increase learning results, learner engagement, and teachers' professional development. Schools can improve learning results and learner engagement by putting these techniques into practice.

5.4.5 Multimodal techniques to enhance education's differentiated instruction

Teachers like Buhle, Hlengiwe, Helen, and Nonhlanhla should embrace a holistic approach to professional development that prioritizes the ideas of varied instruction in order to successfully meet the various needs of learners. This entails developing individualised professional development programs that are based on the strengths and opportunities for growth of each teacher, with an emphasis on inclusive education

training and methods for assisting learners who are at risk. By offering frequent seminars, cooperative learning communities, and online resources that support successful differentiation tactics, schools may cultivate a culture of lifelong learning.

Additionally, by routinely assessing their teaching strategies and soliciting peer input, teachers should be encouraged to participate in reflective practice. Additionally, integrating technology into lesson plans should be prioritised, ensuring that teachers receive training on how to effectively integrate digital tools to enhance learning experiences; teachers should also emphasise the importance of open communication regarding professional development needs and create an environment where learners feel comfortable expressing their learning preferences; and teachers can better gauge learner understanding and engagement by implementing varied assessment methods that allow for learner choice and align with individual learning styles. These strategies can be assisted by mentorship programs that pair more seasoned teachers with less experienced teachers to facilitate knowledge sharing and support.

By implementing this multifaceted approach, schools can empower teachers to better meet the diverse needs of their learners, which will ultimately lead to improved educational outcomes and a more inclusive learning environment. Lastly, it is critical to track the effectiveness of DI practices through ongoing assessments and data analysis, enabling teachers to make informed adjustments to their teaching strategies.

5.4.6 Empowering teachers: a holistic framework for transformative teaching practices

A diversified strategy is required to increase the efficacy of teachers like Helen, Buhle, Nonhlanhla, and Hlengiwe. By offering professional development opportunities that are suited to each learner's strengths and areas for improvement, schools may promote a culture of self-efficacy. This can be accomplished through mentorship programs, which facilitate assistance and knowledge exchange. Gaps between teachers' ideas and actual classroom implementations should be found through routine evaluations of instructional techniques. To address the varied needs of learners, particularly those who are at risk, differentiated education techniques can be offered. Coherence in educational experiences and adherence to set standards are ensured when lesson plans are in line with curricular requirements. Teachers will be

more equipped to modify their methods in response to learner feedback and assessment results if they are encouraged to engage in reflective practice. Collaborative learning techniques can foster classroom cultures that increase learners' motivation and involvement. Teachers will be able to modify their methods in real time by using formative assessments to continuously monitor the success of their instruction, guaranteeing that every learner receives the assistance they require.

5.5 Final word

Even though teachers like Helen, Hlengiwe, Nonhlanhla, Bophela, and Buhle demonstrate a strong commitment to the principles of differentiation, there are still many barriers to turning these ideals into effective classroom practices, according to the findings of this study on the experiences of teachers implementing DI in EFAL Grade 10 classes. The findings highlight significant gaps, including the use of standardised examinations, a dearth of resources, and anomalies in the alignment of instructional practices with curriculum standards.

These differences demonstrate the need for ongoing professional development tailored to teachers' individual requirements, which increases their sense of self-efficacy and enhances their ability to meet a variety of learner needs. Additionally, creating a collaborative learning environment that emphasizes open communication and peer interaction is necessary to promote learner engagement and intrinsic motivation. Going forward, schools must give systematic support systems top priority in order to empower teachers through resource allocation and continuous learning opportunities. We can better prepare teachers to successfully use diverse instruction by addressing these gaps and fostering an environment that encourages reflective practice. In the end, closing the gap between theory and practice will ensure that each learner receives the customized instruction to which they are entitled, leading to improved learning outcomes and a more inclusive classroom.

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APPENDIX A: TITLE LETTER



7 November 2023

APPLICATION FOR TITLE REGISTRATION

Applicant: Gamede, NP
Student Number: 2013055013
Discipline: Curriculum Studies
Study Code: Masters (EDCI8900)

Dear Ms Gamede

Your registered title is as follows: *"Exploring teacher's experiences in implementing differentiated instruction in Grade 10 English as First Additional Language"*

All of the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Patrick Mafora
Chair: CTR committee

Ms CS Duvenhage
Secretary: CTR committee

205 Nelson Mandela Drive | Park West, Bloemfontein 9301 | South Africa
P.O. Box 339 | Bloemfontein 9300 | South Africa | www.ufs.ac.za



APPENDIX B:

PERMISSION LETTERS FROM FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango
Ref: Research Permission: N. P. Gamede
Tel. 051 404 8808
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



D 7046 Madadeni
Section 4
2951

Dear Ms. N. P. Gamede

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education within the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the University of the Free State are as follows:

Topic: Exploring teacher's experiences in implementing differentiated instruction in Grade 10 English as First Additional Language.

1. **List of schools involved:** Lerato Uthando Secondary School, Harrismith Secondary School and New Horizon College.
2. **Target Population:** Six educators teaching English FAL in grade 10 at the selected schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the second week of February 2024 until 30 September 2024. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
 - 4.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - 4.2 A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein or can be emailed to the above-mentioned email address.
 - 4.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - 4.4 The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 28/11/2023

RESEARCH APPLICATION BY N. P. GAMEDE. PERMISSION LETTER 28 NOVEMBER 2023. THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT
QASME, M&E and Strategic Planning Directorate Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein, 9300 - Thuto House, Room 101, 1st Floor, St Andrew Street, Bloemfontein

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango
Ref: Notification of research: N. P. Gamede
Tel. 051 404 8808
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



District Director
Thabo Mofutsanyana District

Dear Ms. Mabaso

NOTIFICATION OF RESEARCH: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that Ms. N. P. Gamede has been granted permission to conduct research in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District under the auspices of the University of the Free State. The details in relation to the research project are as follows:

Topic: Exploring teacher's experiences in implementing differentiated instruction in Grade 10 English as First Additional Language.

1. **List of schools involved:** Lerato Uthando Secondary School, Harrismith Secondary School and New Horizon College.
2. **Target Population:** Six educators teaching English FAL in grade 10 at the selected schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the second week of February 2024 until 30 September 2024. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. **Research benefits:** The challenge of teachers implementing differentiated instruction in EFAL Grades 10 has been given less interest, hence, insights from this study may possibly contribute to the body of knowledge on the influence of the differentiated instruction. Findings from this study may possibly inform education stakeholders about the current situation with regard the differentiated instruction and prompt review and debates on relevant policies. Differentiation can liberate learners from labels, presenting learners different opportunities to achieve their best.
5. The Sub-directorate of Research and policy will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the Department.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 28/11/2023

RESEARCH NOTIFICATION. N. P. GAMEDE. 28 NOVEMBER 2023. THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT
QASME, M&E and Strategic Planning Directorate Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein, 9300 - Thuto House, Room 101, 1st Floor, St Andrew Street, Bloemfontein

APPENDIC C: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Observation protocol

Observation protocol Study: Exploring teacher's experiences in implementing differentiated instruction in Grade 10 English as First Additional Language

Setting: Classroom

School code:

Type of observer: Non-participant

Class: 46

DATE:

Time:

Topic:

Teacher code: Nonhlanhla

Length of observation: 1 hour

Lesson Observation	Lesson Description
Lesson introduction	
Lesson objective What is it that the teacher wants the learners to achieved by the end of a lesson?	
Theme of a lesson Topic align with Annual teaching plan (ATP)	
Teaching strategies Visualization Inquiry based instruction Cooperative learning etc.	

Situation analysis Are the factors that may influence the implementation of the lesson plan well established?	
Learning strategies Cooperative learning, Buzz groups, Role play, etc.	
Learner activities Reading, Writing, Discussion, Presentation, Role-play	
Provision for Diversity (learner differences) and barriers to learning in this lesson? • Content: e.g., materials of varied readability and/or interest; multiple ways to access ideas/information; etc. • Process: e.g., tiering; contracts; compacting; readiness-based small-group instruction; different homework; choices about how to work (alone, pair, small group); tasks in multiple modes; variety of scaffolding; etc • Products: e.g., product assignments with multiple modes of expression; with choices about how to work (alone, pairs, small group); opportunity to connect learning with individual interests; variety of assessment tasks; variety of scaffolding;	

Learning media used Audio, video clips, charts, maps, pictures, drawings, models, projector, computers	
Any other observation?	

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Name of the researcher: Gamede N.P

Title: Exploring teacher's experiences and challenges in implementing differentiated instruction in Grade 10 English as First Additional Language

1. What are teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction in Grade 10 EFAL classes?

1.1 In the context of Grade 10 EFAL, how do you characterize differentiated instruction?

1.2 How do you think differentiated instruction can be effectively applied in EFAL classes?

1.3 Are there any areas of differentiated instruction in which you believe as a teacher you require more training?

1.4 In a differentiated classroom instruction situation, how do you assess and evaluate student progress?

1.5 How do you think varied instruction improves student engagement in EFAL classes?

1.6 Do you have any evidence or comments on the impact of tailored instruction on student learning outcomes?

1.6 Is there a specific success story or example of enhanced student performance that can be ascribed to individualized instruction?

2. How are EFAL teachers' instructional practices aligned with CAPS guidelines on differentiated instruction?

2.1 What specific differentiated instructional strategies do EFAL teachers employ?

2.2 To what extent do EFAL teachers incorporate diverse learning materials to meet CAPS guidelines?

2.3 How do EFAL teachers assess and adapt their instructional methods for diverse student needs?

2.4 In what ways do EFAL teachers address language proficiency levels within differentiated instruction?

3.What challenges are teachers facing in implementing differentiation policy in EFAL classes?

3.1 In EFAL classes, how do you implement the differentiation policy?

3.2 What are the unique challenges that you face when attempting to utilize strategies for differentiating in EFAL classes?

3.3 Do you have any training or assistance available to assist you in addressing issues connected to differentiation in EFAL classes?

4. How can the implementation of differentiated instruction be understood and explained in EFAL lessons?

4.1 What are the fundamental principles and practices of differentiated education in EFAL (English First Additional Language) lessons?

4.2 How can you use differentiated teaching to successfully assess and react to the unique needs of EFAL students?

[illegible]

4.3 What are the possible difficulties and uncertainties do you have in adopting differentiated teaching in EFAL?

[illegible]

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM

Title of the study *“Exploring teachers experiences in implementing differentiated instruction in Grade 10 English as First Additional Language”*.

Researcher: Gamede N.P

Name of the school

Surname and Initials of the principal

Contact details: cell number

: email address.....

- I hereby give informed consent, allowing teachers from the above school to take part in the above-mentioned study.
- I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and will remain confidential.
- I understand that there will be no incentives offered for participating in the study.
- Participating in this study will not affect teacher's job.

Signature

Date.....

APPENDIX F: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

26-Mar-2024

Dear Miss Nonkululeko Gamede

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Exploring teacher's experiences in implementing differentiated instruction in grade 10 English as First Additional Language

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2023/2226

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted via an Amendment on RIMS to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit a Final Report on RIMS for your study/research project to the ethics office once the project has concluded. Should you require more time than the allotted 12 months to complete this research, please apply for an extension by submitting a Continuation/Report on RIMS. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

Dr Adri
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APPENDIX G: TURNITIN REPORT

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APPENDIX H:

LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

Great Zimbabwe University
Department of Educational Foundations
& Curriculum Devt.
PO Box 1235
Masvingo
Zimbabwe

18 November 2024

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Re: Confirmation of Editing of NONKULULEKO P. GAMEDE'S Dissertation

This is to certify that I, **Prof. Rugare Mareva** (National Identity Number 22-101400K22), have, to the best of my ability, language-edited the above-mentioned student's thesis titled: **"Exploring teachers' experiences in implementing Differentiated Instruction in Grade 10 English as a First Additional Language"**, to be submitted to the University of the Free State (UFS). Any errors and omissions are inadvertent. I am a holder of a PhD (English) (University of Venda), M.Ed (English) (University of Zimbabwe), B.Ed (English) (University of Zimbabwe), and a Certificate in Education (English Major) (University of Zimbabwe).

Thank you.



Prof. Rugare Mareva (PhD)

Prof. Rugare Mareva (PhD), Language Editor: Policy Documents, Journal Articles, Book Chapters, Books, Reports, Honours Projects, Master's Dissertations and Doctoral Theses. Research Consultant. Curriculum Development, Masvingo, Zimbabwe.