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► **To cite this version:**

Akenji Cliford Fru-Ngongban. Eclectic Teaching Method: A Paradigm Shift in Contemporary Pedagogy for an Inclusive Classroom. Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies, 2023, 48 (1), pp.1-6. 10.9734/AJESS/2023/v48i11033 . hal-04173429

HAL Id: hal-04173429

<https://hal.science/hal-04173429>

Submitted on 29 Jul 2023

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Eclectic Teaching Method: A Paradigm Shift in Contemporary Pedagogy for an Inclusive Classroom

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/AJESS/2023/v48i11033

Open Peer Review History:

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/99979>

Review Article

Received: 17/05/2023
Accepted: 19/07/2023
Published: 28/07/2023

ABSTRACT

The constant search for teaching techniques and strategies that take into account the diversity of students in an inclusive classroom is one of the biggest difficulties facing instructors today. Before steps are taken to implement changes in the classroom, it is crucial to understand that learners' characteristics, particularly their social, economic, and cultural setting, since these aspects are very important in any classroom situation. Given the importance of inclusiveness, the eclectic approach enables teachers to examine learners from various perspectives. This technique allows the teacher to explain the material to the learners using various techniques, employs a variety of teaching resources in order to respond to the various ways of learning inherent among learners. This paper therefore examines the issue of the eclectic method in an inclusive classroom. It highlights some recommendations to teachers in an inclusive classroom. This is followed by a conclusion.

Keywords: Eclectic teaching method; inclusive classroom and pedagogy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The influence of social, cultural and technological development has greatly influenced the world today in recent times. This is reflected in our classroom which has led majority of educational stakeholders to consider teaching and learning methods and practices that can take into account all of these differences. Being aware of student's personal characteristics is the key to classroom management since students are from diverse backgrounds. The constant search for pedagogy and techniques to accommodate these differences among learners in an inclusive classroom is one of the biggest difficulties teachers face today. Ideas of inclusion make the assumption that every learner has equitable access to education and that learning is organized in schools in a way that accommodates the differences among learners. Simply put, inclusion is about changing schools to make them responsive to the needs of all children. Since the early 90s, educators have been developing the philosophical theory of the eclectic approach. The eclectic approach enables individuals to examine objects from several perspectives since it uses various ways. This method enables the teacher to use a variety of methods to explain the content to the students. Eclecticism makes learning more dynamic and enables teachers to discover common ground among many pedagogical approaches. This technique also supports the implementation of a personal strategy for education and resolving societal issues. Most importantly, it is based on the study of the interests and needs of the child. To answer all students' needs and solve all of the issues students face, teachers must know and apply more than one methodology. Teachers must be knowledgeable in several different methodologies in order to meet the needs of all pupils and resolve all of their problems since it is going to have a beneficial effect on regular schooling. Teachers who combine many teaching techniques and strategies can always present the subject matter in accordance with the preferences of the students. This has led to the emergence of the eclectic teaching approach which is claimed to be the suitable approach for teaching. According to Brown [1], the eclectic approach enables instructors to choose the resources that are most effective in their classrooms given the dynamic context. According to Gilliland et al. [2], eclecticism should be used because it does not rely on a particular teaching strategy or approach. The eclectic method has a wide range of theoretical

underpinnings including adaptable set of activities. Recent research on the eclectic approach by Biloon [3] shows that it is more effective at meeting the unique demands and learning preferences of students. Through the usage of the eclectic approach, learners are able to internalize, utilise, and recall the material given to them more quickly since the method is tailored to their unique learning requirements and styles, according to a series of skills assessments. Therefore, the place of the eclectic teaching method during teaching and learning especially in handling learners in an inclusive classroom cannot be over emphasized.

2. DEFINITIONS, MEANING, AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE ECLECTIC METHOD

The eclectic approach was developed as a result of the awareness that every teaching strategy had advantages and disadvantages and that no one strategy was adaptable to the changing classroom environment. Therefore, Brown [1] claimed that eclecticism offers the remedy based on the flaws of the approaches since the strategy enables the teacher to choose what functions within their own dynamic circumstances. According to Gilliland et al. [2], the justification for the eclectic approach is found in the shortcomings of the single approach since it is rigid due to its restricted theoretical underpinnings and range of activities. Eclecticism is context-sensitive, which makes learning enjoyable and creative for all types of students regardless of their socioeconomic background and learning preferences. Gao [4] asserts that the principles of the eclectic approach would put teachers under pressure to make decisions about classroom instruction and activities that are grounded in a holistic and thorough understanding of all teaching theories and pedagogies, taking into account the purpose and context of teaching and learning, the needs of the students, and the resources at their disposal. According to Gao [4], eclecticism is a teaching strategy that incorporates practice in the classroom together with all language skills (such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Additionally, he gives teachers advice on how to incorporate, benefit from, and stay clear of the drawbacks of all other teaching techniques. According to Wali [5], principled eclecticism should prioritize learners over procedures. Therefore, the methods and approaches used in the classroom are entirely up to the teachers' discretion, given that there is no specific or

perfect teaching strategy and that each teaching method has pros and cons of its own. Teachers can therefore select whatever helps students meet their learning goals. The eclectic teaching approach is characterized by keen flexibility since teachers can choose whatever works to achieve learning objectives [5]. It is crucial to remember that the eclectic approach is not rigid and that its components are mixed with those of other instructional strategies. In this regard, Li [6] highlights that it is hard to successfully teach all the skills or to cater for the particular needs of each student using a single technique. Ali [7] made the following attempts to outline the main traits and tenets of eclecticism:

- Regarding the instructional objectives, teachers are able to choose from a variety of teaching methods in the classroom to ensure the effectiveness of teaching.
- Teachers should select strategy or element that works best for them during teaching.
- Different teaching tools should be displayed to students to make lessons more dynamic and fascinating.
- It would enable teachers and students to get past any obstacles brought on by the textbook materials.

The presentation of learning activities can be done more quickly and efficiently using an eclectic approach. The eclectic approach is subjective since it is constructed by teachers according to the learning context. The teacher should carefully select the materials to suit the learning context and make the teaching process more motivating and interesting. Weideman [8] affirmed that good teachers spend much time in collecting attractive and interesting teaching materials to gladden their teaching. Teachers should not spare a thought in developing materials for the learners. In the eclectic approach, teachers can use computers, pictures, maps, music, film, radio, newspapers, magazines, textbooks, research articles, chats and realia in their teaching [9]. Like any other teaching method, the eclectic teaching approach has advantages and disadvantages. The eclectic approach is live, motivating, participatory, context-sensitive, and learner-centered and includes using a variety of classroom tasks and activities. In addition, the eclectic approach is flexible to the needs of the classroom during the lesson, it is correlative and objective since it addresses the learners' needs of diverse backgrounds (Kumar, 2013). The eclectic approach is said to have disadvantages that

include (1) discouraging teachers to reflect upon their teaching; (2) The adoption of the eclectic approach could be unsafe due to the methodological baggage that comes with it. Nonetheless, the eclectic approach is more advantageous than disadvantageous; most of the limitations of this approach are justifiable when teachers are poorly prepared for the classroom [8].

3. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The process of addressing and responding to learning participation and minimizing exclusion from and within education is known as inclusive education. Simply put, inclusion is about changing schools to make them responsive to the needs of all children. It is an ongoing process, a never-ending quest, aiming for increased participation in education for everyone involved. It involves changes in strategies, with a common vision that covers all children at the appropriate age range with the conviction, that is, the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children [10]. According to certain definitions, it stands for the inclusion and instruction of students with special needs and disabilities in regular or general education [11]. According to this perspective, having special needs is a requirement for inclusion, hence it falls under the purview of special needs education. According to those who support this notion, students' academic challenges are caused by their deficiencies or impairments. Thus, they rule out the possibility that students' difficulties are due to interpersonal failure, the fact that curricula and teaching and learning methods do not take diversity into account, or social pressures that families and communities bring to schools [12]. Others believe that variety, rather than the concept of disability, and how schools treat and cherish a broad collection of students, are where the evolution in defining inclusion comes from. Diversity can be defined as the variety of traits that lead to the perception of distinctions among people. Diversity is a natural characteristic of a school community, reflecting the larger community. Others' reactions to this perception of difference may be favorable or unfavorable to the person in question [13]. The goal of inclusion is to draw attention away from the injustices that are displayed by exclusion and discrimination against different groups, such as students' social and ethnic backgrounds, religions, genders, and abilities, as well as their families. As a result, inclusive education is a movement opposed to all forms of exclusion as

well as a reaction to social inequality and political segregation [14]. The objective of inclusion is to combat inequality and foster people's sense of belonging in both the classroom and in society. The goal of inclusive schools is to successfully teach every student.

4. RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT TEACHERS

- 1) **Creating and enforcing policies to meet the needs of trained teachers:** Given the significance of professional development for teachers, the Ministries of Higher, Secondary, and Basic Education must develop a policy on this matter that guarantees that our trained teachers at the primary, secondary, and even higher education levels can competently handle students with special needs given the growing need of diverse students in the class.
- 2) **Organization of pre-service and post-service training programs:** Given the nature of today's students, the centralized and decentralized services of the Ministries of Higher, Basic, and Secondary Education should organize seminars and workshops with the assistance of experts in these fields. Confessional and lay private schools ought to be included in this initiative.
- 3) **Organization of learning stations:** According to Good and Brophy [15] and Tomlinson [16], setting up learning stations is one way to create a classroom that reacts to instruction. The classroom is set up with learning stations that may be used by students of all ages studying a variety of subjects. The time frame, tasks, materials, and learning processes are differentiated to suit all students while taking into account their resources. Additionally, teachers use flexible grouping and schedule assignments according to student readiness. Each station's assignments may differ, and students may be allowed to submit themes and tasks. By establishing such learning stations, teachers will be able to develop and organize personalized assignments for each student, allowing them to work independently or toward independence.
- 4) **Use of cooperative learning:** Cooperative learning is a teaching and learning method in which teachers set up their students to collaborate in small groups. The teacher organizes the group work, assigns students diverse duties to be accountable for, creates

groups that are small enough for everyone to contribute, and clearly explains the tasks in order for the students to develop individual accountability or positive interdependence. Through the use of cooperative learning, students are given the chance to collaborate with others and hear a variety of opinions and replies. Additionally, the instructor allows students to contribute their opinions to the conversation and become familiar with other cultures (Gillies, 2007; Johnson & Johnson, 2003). It should be mentioned that this method of teaching and learning works effectively in inclusive classrooms with a varied student body.

- 5) **Utilizing Understanding by Design (UbD) and Differentiated Instruction (DI):** These two methodologies complement one another and can be utilized to take into account students' interests, talents, and abilities. Utilizing Understanding by Design (UbD) as a planning tool for curricula. It starts by determining the targeted learning outcomes and how learners will demonstrate their understanding of those outcomes [17]. As a result, instruction and learning activities are arranged in accordance with specific learning objectives that outline what students should be able to perform. However, differentiated education focuses on how objectives or information are organized with a variety of students in mind. As a result, there is inherent flexibility and variance in content (what is to be learned), procedures (how it is done), and learning outcomes (how learning is demonstrated) when organizing teaching (Tomlinson, 2003). This means that rather than the teacher making the decision for the students based on some pre-set profile of the students, the students can choose their learning approach and end product [18,19]. Together, these two strategies offer a comprehensive framework for planning curriculum, evaluation, and instruction based on principles of successful teaching and learning for a variety of students in our classroom.
- 6) **Collaboration and parental participation in education:** According to Friend et al. [20], collaboration refers to how practitioners and others interact and work together to complete a task or sequence of tasks in and for varied situations. In order to respond to students more effectively, this will allow instructors and others with a variety of talents and specialties to collaborate and solve problems [18, Meijer, 2003]. The

ability and disposition of staff members to collaborate was shown to be crucial for accommodating diverse groups of students, according to research on effective inclusive schools [21]. Additionally, cooperation works best when all members of the staff have something to offer, share same objectives, collaborate impromptu and evenly, and take ownership of decision-making and student accomplishment [20,22] suggested to be probable. The homeroom teacher's job is made easier in many ways by parents' active involvement in their child's growth. Mbipom [23] underlines the need of preserving relationships between parents of children with disabilities and schools. Teachers in the classroom benefit from this dialogue between parents and teachers by better understanding the cultural, familial, and social factors that affect children's learning and conduct. Therefore, addressing learners with differences in inclusive classrooms requires reaching out to parents and establishing and sustaining effective communication.

5. CONCLUSION

This review study sheds light on the research on the use of the eclectic method in an inclusive classroom in recent times in the domain of teaching and learning. Considering the complexity and diversity of learners in the regular classroom, it is important for teachers to use the eclectic teaching method since it will enable them to choose whatever works to achieve learning objectives. Therefore, classroom teachers play an important role in the effective realization and implementation of inclusive education in our society. The pedagogical implications of future studies would enhance the performance of students and bridge the gap between the eclectic teaching method and inclusive education among learners in the classroom.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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