Teachers' competence in curriculum adaptation for gifted children: Enhancing Mathematics achievement in inclusive learning settings in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria.

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Abstract
This study adopted a correlational design to assess teachers' competence in curriculum adaptation for gifted children as a means of improving Mathematics achievement in inclusive learning settings in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research questions were formulated and translated into two null hypotheses. A sample of 100 Senior Secondary School 1 (SS1) gifted students was selected using stratified and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using the Teachers' Competence in Curriculum Adaptation Questionnaire and a Mathematics Achievement Test, both validated by experts. Reliability coefficients of 0.86 and 0.88 were obtained for content delivery and evaluation techniques, respectively, while the Mathematics test yielded 0.87 using Kuder-Richardson (K-R20). Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used for hypothesis testing at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed significant relationships between teachers' content delivery, evaluation techniques, and Mathematics achievement of gifted children. The study recommends ongoing professional development for teachers on differentiated instruction and curriculum adaptation strategies to meet the needs of gifted students.

Keywords: Assessment, teachers' competence, curriculum adaptation, Mathematics achievement, inclusive learning settings, content delivery, evaluation techniques.

Introduction
Mathematics serves as a fundamental pillar in the education of gifted students, playing a critical role in nurturing their intellectual capabilities and enhancing their problem-solving skills. It encourages the exploration of patterns, relationships, and structures, which are essential cognitive processes that gifted students can leverage for deeper comprehension (Ibok et al., 2024). The effective education of gifted children, particularly in mathematics, requires appropriate pedagogical approaches tailored to their unique learning needs. Inclusive learning settings, where students of varying abilities are taught together, pose challenges in providing adequate academic stimulation for gifted students. One of the major factors influencing the academic achievement of gifted students in mathematics is teachers' competence in curriculum adaptation. The ability of teachers to modify instructional content, teaching strategies, and assessment methods to cater to gifted students is crucial. However, many educators lack the requisite training and expertise to implement differentiated instruction effectively (Gentry & Springer, 2016). This limitation often results in a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to challenge gifted students adequately. According to VanTassel-Baska and Brown (2017), inconsistent instructional practices in inclusive classrooms contribute to disparities in educational outcomes, particularly in mathematics. In such settings, teachers are often required to balance the diverse needs of both struggling and gifted learners, which may lead to insufficient attention to the latter.

Furthermore, technological advancements have introduced new opportunities for differentiated learning. However, many teachers are not well-equipped to integrate technology effectively into their instructional strategies for gifted learners (Tomlinson et al., 2020). The assessment of teachers' competencies in adapting curricula for gifted students remains an underexplored area, despite its importance in fostering better educational outcomes. McCoach and

Siegle (2018) emphasized the necessity of systematic evaluations to measure teachers' preparedness for differentiated instruction and to identify areas for professional development. Without structured assessment frameworks, it becomes challenging to address competency gaps and improve instructional practices.

Statement of the problem

Despite the recognized importance of curriculum adaptation in enhancing the mathematical achievement of gifted students, many teachers in inclusive learning environments lack the necessary competencies to implement effective differentiation strategies. This deficiency hinders the academic progress of gifted students, leading to disengagement, reduced motivation, and suboptimal learning outcomes (Gentry & Springer, 2016).

The absence of well-defined assessment mechanisms to evaluate teachers' competence in curriculum adaptation exacerbates this challenge. Without structured evaluation frameworks, it is difficult to identify weaknesses in instructional practices and implement targeted professional development programs (McCoach & Siegle, 2018). Moreover, inconsistent instructional methods and limited use of technology further impede the ability of gifted students to reach their full academic potential in mathematics (Tomlinson et al., 2020).

Given these challenges, there is a pressing need to assess teachers' competencies in adapting mathematics curricula for gifted students in inclusive learning environments. Addressing this gap will not only enhance instructional effectiveness but also contribute to improved academic outcomes for gifted learners. This study seeks to investigate the role of teacher competence in curriculum adaptation, explore assessment strategies for measuring instructional effectiveness, and examine the impact of differentiated instruction on the mathematical achievement of gifted students.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship exits on teachers' competence for curriculum adaptation for gifted children: A panacea for Mathematics achievement inclusive learning settings. Specifically, the study seeks to establish:

i) the relationship between teacher content delivery in curriculum adaptation and mathematics achievement of gifted children in inclusive learning settings

ii) the relationship between teacher evaluation techniques in curriculum adaptation and mathematics achievement of gifted children in inclusive learning settings

Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

i) There is no significant relationship between teacher content delivery in curriculum adaptation and mathematics achievement of gifted children in inclusive learning settings

ii) There is no significant relationship between teacher evaluation techniques in curriculum adaptation and mathematics achievement of gifted children in inclusive learning settings

Literature review

Mathematics plays a critical role in the cognitive and intellectual development of gifted students, enhancing their problem-solving and analytical abilities. The effective education of gifted

children, particularly in mathematics, requires teachers who possess the necessary competencies to adapt curricula to meet their unique learning needs. However, research has shown that many teachers lack adequate training in curriculum adaptation, leading to ineffective teaching strategies that hinder gifted students' academic achievement (Gentry & Springer, 2016). The absence of structured evaluations of teachers' abilities in implementing differentiated instruction for gifted learners further compounds this challenge. McCoach and Siegle (2018) emphasized the importance of assessing teachers' competencies in curriculum adaptation to ensure that they can effectively cater to the learning needs of gifted students. Without these assessments, gaps in teacher preparedness remain unidentified, leading to inconsistencies in instructional approaches (VanTassel-Baska & Brown, 2017).

Teacher content delivery and mathematics achievement of gifted children

Teacher content delivery in curriculum adaptation are significant factor in the mathematics achievement of gifted students in inclusive learning settings. Effective content delivery involves differentiated instruction, enriched curricula, and the integration of technology to provide engaging and challenging learning experiences (Masor, Ibok, & Etura, 2023). Tomlinson (2017) stated that teachers who adapt their content delivery strategies significantly improve engagement and academic outcomes for gifted learners. Differentiated instruction allows students to explore mathematical concepts in greater depth, enhancing their analytical and problem-solving skills. A study by Hattie (2018) revealed that the quality of instruction and teacher clarity are among the most critical factors influencing student achievement. For gifted learners, compelling and structured content delivery facilitates higher retention and comprehension levels.

Gentry and Springer (2016) found that curriculum compacting—where students bypass content they have already mastered—enhances academic performance in inclusive classrooms. Rogers (2015) argued that an enriched curriculum incorporating critical thinking and creativity benefits not only gifted students but also the entire classroom. Moon et al. (2020) examined the impact of differentiated instruction on the mathematics achievement of gifted learners and found that students exposed to well-structured and engaging instruction performed significantly better. Gonzalez and Garcia (2020) also explored the role of technology in content delivery, concluding that effective content delivery through digital tools significantly enhances learning outcomes for gifted students. Furthermore, VanTassel-Baska, Feng, and Brown (2016) highlighted that curriculum contexts incorporating advanced content and complexity result in improved mathematics achievement among gifted learners. Wang, Zhang, and Liu (2020) found that inclusive education strategies that balance challenging content for gifted students while supporting struggling learners create a more effective learning environment. Siegle and McCoach (2018) emphasized that adaptive teaching strategies aligned with appropriate content delivery significantly boost motivation and academic performance in mathematics. Effective teacher content delivery is therefore crucial for fostering the mathematical abilities of gifted students in inclusive learning settings.

Teacher evaluation techniques and mathematics achievement of gifted children

Teacher evaluation techniques are important in shaping instructional practices and curriculum adaptations for gifted students in inclusive learning environments. These techniques help assess various aspects of teaching, including instructional strategies, student engagement, and overall effectiveness in promoting learning outcomes (Ibok & Unoh, 2019). Effective teacher evaluations lead to improved teaching strategies tailored to the unique needs of gifted learners. Baker (2018) stated that formative assessments allow teachers to adjust their instructional

approaches in real time, significantly impacting the mathematics achievement of gifted students. Black and Wiliam (2018) found that formative assessments help teachers identify the strengths and weaknesses of gifted students, enabling timely curriculum adjustments to enhance their academic success. Gonzalez, Lee, and Smith (2021) demonstrated that collaborative evaluation techniques, where teachers share best practices and insights, contribute to more effective curriculum adaptations that support gifted learners. Sullivan, McDonough, and O'Neill (2020) explored the impact of teacher reflection on curriculum adaptation for gifted students and found that reflective evaluation practices led to improved instructional decisions and positive academic outcomes.

Danielson (2016) highlighted that continuous feedback helps teachers refine their instructional methods, making curriculum adaptations more effective. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) found that comprehensive evaluation systems incorporating peer reviews and student feedback significantly enhance teaching effectiveness, ultimately benefiting gifted children. Ibok and Unoh (2019) found that students' perceptions of teachers' evaluation techniques influence their academic achievement in mathematics. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2016) argued that teacher evaluations focusing on differentiation strategies lead to better curriculum adaptations and improved learning experiences for gifted students. Gentry et al. (2019) found that evaluations incorporating student performance data help teachers identify areas where gifted students excel or struggle, leading to targeted curriculum modifications. Siegle and McCoach (2018) revealed that evaluation techniques incorporating student self-assessments and reflections significantly increase motivation and achievement levels in mathematics. Moon et al. (2020) examined the impact of teacher evaluations on the academic performance of gifted students and found that schools with structured evaluation practices experienced improved achievement levels among gifted learners.

Research methods

Study area and research design

This study was conducted in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State, Nigeria, focusing on public senior secondary schools. The research adopted a correlational survey design to examine the relationship between teachers' competence in curriculum adaptation—specifically in terms of content delivery and evaluation techniques—and the mathematics achievement of gifted students. The correlational survey design was deemed appropriate as it enabled the researchers to determine the degree and direction of the relationship between the study variables in an inclusive learning environment.

Population and sampling techniques

The study population comprised all SS1 gifted students in public secondary schools within Calabar Metropolis. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed, incorporating stratified sampling, purposive sampling, and simple random sampling to ensure a representative sample. First, stratified sampling was used to categorize schools based on their Local Government Areas (LGAs), namely Calabar Municipal and Calabar South. This ensured equal representation of schools across the two LGAs. Purposive sampling was then applied to select schools that had identified gifted students using academic records and teacher recommendations. Lastly, from each selected school, simple random sampling was used to draw a total of 100 gifted students using the Mathematics achievement records and a Teacher Nomination Checklist as selection criteria.

Instruments for data collection

Two key instruments were used for data collection: the Teachers' Competence for Curriculum Adaptation Questionnaire (TCCAQ) and the Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT). The TCCAQ consisted of 14 items, with 7 items measuring teachers' competence in content delivery and 7 items assessing their evaluation techniques. The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). This instrument was designed to evaluate how well teachers adapted the curriculum to meet the needs of gifted students in mathematics. The MAT was a 60-item multiple-choice test, designed by the researchers with assistance from two Mathematics education experts. The test was based on the SS1 Mathematics syllabus and included four answer options (A, B, C, D) for each question. A correct response was awarded one mark, while an incorrect response attracted zero marks. This instrument was developed to assess the mathematics achievement of gifted students in an inclusive classroom setting.

Validity and reliability of instruments

The validity of the instruments was established through expert review. The TCCAQ and MAT were reviewed by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation, two Special Education experts, and two Mathematics Educators from the University of Calabar. Their feedback was used to modify and refine the instruments before final administration. Reliability was determined through statistical measures. The TCCAQ was tested for internal consistency using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.86 for content delivery and 0.88 for evaluation techniques. The MAT was subjected to the Kuder-Richardson formula (K-R20), which resulted in a reliability coefficient of 0.87. Since all reliability indices were above 0.70, the instruments were considered reliable for the study.

Data collection and analysis

The data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was employed to test the study's hypotheses and determine the strength and direction of relationships between variables. Specifically, the analysis examined the relationship between: Teachers' content delivery and the mathematics achievement of gifted students. Teachers' evaluation techniques and the mathematics achievement of gifted students. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance, ensuring statistical rigor in the study's findings.

Presentation of results

This section presents the results of the study in Tables 1 and 2. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between teachers' competence in curriculum adaptation and the mathematics achievement of gifted children in inclusive learning settings.

Hypothesis one

H_{o1}: There is no significant relationship between teacher content delivery in curriculum adaptation and the mathematics achievement of gifted children in inclusive learning settings.

In testing this hypothesis, the mean and standard deviation of teacher content delivery and students' mathematics achievement were computed and analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Pearson product-moment correlation of the relationship between teacher content delivery in curriculum adaptation and mathematics achievement of gifted children (N = 100)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value
Teacher Content Delivery	100	17.987	2.123	**.817**	**.000**
Mathematics Achievement	100	44.897	5.986		

Significant at the 0.05 level (df = 98).

The results in Table 1 indicate a strong positive correlation between teacher content delivery in curriculum adaptation and the mathematics achievement of gifted children (r = .817, p = .000). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This suggests that as teacher content delivery in curriculum adaptation improves, students' mathematics achievement tends to increase. Conversely, poor teacher content delivery is associated with lower mathematics achievement among gifted children in inclusive learning settings.

Hypothesis two

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between teacher evaluation techniques in curriculum adaptation and the mathematics achievement of gifted children in inclusive learning settings.

To test this hypothesis, the mean and standard deviation of teacher evaluation techniques and students' mathematics achievement were computed and analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of the Relationship Between Teacher Evaluation Techniques in Curriculum Adaptation and Mathematics Achievement of Gifted Children (N = 100)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value
Teacher Evaluation Techniques	100	18.165	2.871	**.785**	**.000**
Mathematics Achievement	100	44.897	5.986		

Significant at the 0.05 level (df = 98).

The results in Table 2 show a strong positive correlation between teacher evaluation techniques in curriculum adaptation and the mathematics achievement of gifted children (r = .785, p = .000). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This implies that effective teacher evaluation techniques contribute to improved mathematics achievement among gifted children. Conversely, when teacher evaluation techniques are ineffective, students' performance in mathematics tends to decline.

Summary of Findings

The results indicate that:

1. Teacher content delivery in curriculum adaptation has a strong positive relationship with the mathematics achievement of gifted children in inclusive learning settings.
2. Teacher evaluation techniques in curriculum adaptation also have a strong positive relationship with students' mathematics achievement.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study support the significant role of teacher content delivery and evaluation techniques in curriculum adaptation in improving the mathematics achievement of gifted children in inclusive learning settings. The results align with several previous studies that emphasize the importance of differentiated instruction, curriculum compacting, and continuous assessment in promoting gifted students' academic success.

Teacher content delivery and mathematics achievement

The results of the first hypothesis indicate a significant relationship between teacher content delivery in curriculum adaptation and the mathematics achievement of gifted children. This finding is consistent with Tomlinson (2017), who emphasized that differentiated instruction enhances engagement and achievement among gifted learners by allowing them to explore topics in greater depth. Similarly, Hattie (2018) found that the quality of instruction and teacher clarity are among the most influential factors affecting student achievement, reinforcing the importance of effective content delivery. Furthermore, Gentry and Springer (2016) highlighted that curriculum compacting, which enables students to skip content they have already mastered, leads to better academic outcomes in inclusive classrooms. This supports the present study's findings by demonstrating that curriculum adaptation strategies that consider students' prior knowledge can optimize learning for gifted children. Similarly, Rogers (2015) argued that an enriched curriculum benefits the entire classroom by fostering a more engaging learning environment. In addition, Moon et al. (2020) found that students who received tailored instruction performed significantly better than those in traditional classroom settings. This aligns with Siegle and McCoach (2018), who asserted that adaptive teaching strategies enhance motivation and achievement, particularly in mathematics. These studies collectively support the argument that effective teacher content delivery tailored to the needs of gifted children positively impacts their mathematics performance.

Teacher evaluation techniques and mathematics achievement

The second hypothesis revealed a significant relationship between teacher evaluation techniques in curriculum adaptation and the mathematics achievement of gifted children. Effective evaluation strategies provide teachers with valuable insights that enable them to refine their instructional methods to better meet the needs of gifted students. This finding is in agreement with Danielson (2016), who emphasized that regular feedback mechanisms help teachers adjust their instructional approaches, thereby enhancing curriculum adaptation for gifted students. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) found that comprehensive evaluation systems—including peer reviews and student feedback—promote professional growth among teachers, ultimately improving student learning outcomes.

Further supporting this study, Tomlinson and Imbeau (2016) argued that teacher evaluations focusing on differentiation strategies lead to better curriculum adaptations for gifted students. Likewise, Gentry et al. (2019) found that incorporating student performance data into evaluations allows teachers to identify areas of strength and difficulty, enabling more targeted curriculum modifications. Additionally, Siegle and McCoach (2018) found that when teachers utilized evaluation techniques that included student self-assessments and reflections, gifted students exhibited higher motivation and achievement levels in mathematics. In line with this, Moon et al. (2020) reported that schools with robust evaluation systems experienced improved academic performance among gifted learners, especially when evaluation results directly influenced instructional adjustments.

Comparative analysis and implications

The findings of this study are consistent with the broader literature on gifted education and curriculum adaptation. The strong positive correlation between teacher content delivery, evaluation techniques, and student achievement suggests that instructional strategies tailored to the abilities of gifted children play a crucial role in enhancing their academic performance. While previous studies such as Tomlinson (2017) and Gentry and Springer (2016) focus primarily on differentiated instruction, this study expands on their findings by emphasizing the dual role of teacher content delivery and evaluation techniques in shaping student achievement. Furthermore, this study aligns with Hattie (2018) and Siegle & McCoach (2018) in recognizing the importance of continuous assessment in sustaining student motivation and achievement. However, unlike Rogers (2015) and Moon et al. (2020), who focus on the benefits of curriculum enrichment, this study highlights the practical role of evaluation techniques in shaping instructional decisions. By integrating evaluation feedback into teaching strategies, educators can create a more responsive and effective learning environment for gifted children.

Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of teacher content delivery and evaluation techniques in enhancing the mathematics achievement of gifted children in inclusive learning settings. The findings emphasize that differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and technology integration are essential in adapting curricula to meet the diverse needs of gifted learners. Additionally, formative assessments, performance-based evaluations, and self-assessment strategies provide teachers with valuable feedback, ensuring that instruction remains responsive and effective. The study upholds that curriculum adaptation is not just a pedagogical necessity but a policy imperative for optimizing gifted students' academic potential. The findings suggest that systematic professional development, curriculum flexibility, and data-driven assessment techniques can significantly improve outcomes for gifted learners. Beyond the immediate educational context, these findings have broader implications for education policymakers, school administrators, and curriculum designers. Implementing scalable models of differentiated instruction and targeted assessment strategies can help bridge the gap between traditional classroom settings and the specialized needs of gifted students. Future research should explore long-term impacts of curriculum adaptation strategies, particularly in diverse educational environments, to refine best practices and enhance gifted education policies.

Recommendations

Based on the study’s findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. School administrators should invest in ongoing professional development programs focused on differentiated instruction and adaptive teaching strategies. Training should include practical workshops, peer learning sessions, and mentorship programs that equip teachers with evidence-based techniques for modifying curriculum content to meet the needs of gifted learners.

2. Educational policymakers should support the adoption of flexible curriculum frameworks that allow for curriculum compacting, enrichment programs, and subject acceleration.

3. Schools should integrate project-based learning, interdisciplinary studies, and advanced problem-solving tasks to challenge gifted students appropriately. Teachers should implement a variety of assessment methods, including formative, summative, and

performance-based evaluations, to accurately identify and support gifted students' strengths.

4. Schools should encourage self-assessment and reflective learning practices, empowering students to take ownership of their learning progress.
5. Government agencies and educational stakeholders should develop policy frameworks that mandate inclusive strategies for gifted education, ensuring that gifted students receive adequate academic and emotional support.

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