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Abstract

Our aim in this research is to investigate why some students' level in English is still low, how students could cope with the changes that happened in education during the last five years and their point of view about how to improve their abilities in learning English as **instruction language** and teachers' way of meeting students' needs in a mixed-ability classroom.

Through interviews with a number of teachers of English and a questionnaire to a sample of students (**20** male students and **20** female students) with different learning styles and backgrounds, analyzed their different ways of approaching mixed-ability classrooms. We interviewed **3** male teachers from Doha Independent Secondary School for Boys and **3** female teachers in Amina Bent-Wahib Independent Secondary School for Girls.

A representative sample (40 students) from both schools was chosen by chance. Our findings showed that varied instruction is the best way to meet all students' needs and that it is necessary to have extra materials for both advanced and less able students.

Our interviews with teachers showed the importance of on-going assessment, regular feedback, and different tasks to students of different levels.

Once again, the findings showed that a variety of strategies that can be put into practice in order to meet all students' needs, is a great help, but no "magic method" guarantees every student's development at the same pace with other students.

1. Introduction

English is one of the most popular languages to learn throughout the world. It is also a subject of interest for many of those who travel abroad as a world language which is used by authors to write their books or scientists to submit their researches in English. Many people use Internet for personal or business purposes, and want to generally enrich their lives by enlarging their ability to communicate in more than their own language. Many schools offer English language programmes and design their courses to teach learners who are interested in learning English for personal reasons as well as students in mixed-ability classroom.

Yet, teachers always complain that some students are off task as soon as they start their classes. As a research team in Doha Independent Secondary School for Boys under the supervision of teachers of English, Dr. Saleh Abu Nahlah and Mr. Faisal A. Romdhani, we took the initiative to deal with this problem for many reasons. After formulating our tools of study, interviews and a questionnaire for a sample of male and female students in grade 12, we will look into the problem in general. We aim at developing a sound research study Which **sheds some light on** why some students have not benefited from the big change taking place in the field of education .

1.1 Background

Doha Independent Secondary School for Boys (DISS) is one of the most prestigious schools. It is **classified cohort 2** in the classification category in Supreme Education Council (SEC). Its mission is to provide the community with the opportunity for higher education and to be one of the best schools in Qatar. They have a strong belief in education for new era as a way to improve students' learning with the goal of producing global citizens. Activating students is a choice in DISS to help students with the latest methods and equipment. It tends to expand the resources needed for carrying out its mission making use of the general support from the state. DISS offers comprehensive English programmes for Students to upgrade their abilities and enhance their capabilities in English. Making use of the available resources to introduce its programmes that go hand in hand with the Curriculum Standards, taught by teachers who are professionally trained.

1.2 The Problem

Although Independent schools are trying to offer first-class teaching programs, students, in many of them, are still facing difficulties to catch up with the educational reform. This course of study highlights students and teachers views on what is being done and what should be done to the national curriculum standards. The great majority of classrooms are made up of mixed-ability students. In every class students have different needs and learning styles including those who want to improve their English to join a college or a university as it has become a prerequisite of attending a college or a university or to find a job. It also includes those who want to expand their professional horizon by becoming bilingual, those who simply want to enrich their lives through the daily use of English, those who can hardly understand basic information and those who fall somewhere between the two groups.

This critical situation is a challenge to both teachers and student. Therefore, as a team of young researchers in the school, we decided to investigate this case.

We had more than 5 meetings with Dr. Saleh and Mr. Faisal Ali Romdhani who helped us a lot in coping with research steps, first stating the problem, then choosing the method, next building an appropriate questionnaire and getting ready for interviews, and finally analyzing data and reaching a conclusion.

We think it is of great importance to learn by research how experienced teachers deal with this learning environment and students beliefs about how their needs can be met. We decided to work out this research to take part in the efforts made by the school staff and administration and repay our due debt for this prestigious school.

1.4 Purpose and Research Questions

As a team of young researchers, we were eager to know the causes of difficulties faced by students in mixed-ability classroom. as our target was to investigate the view point of these struggling students and

the image they have of themselves and finally how English teachers deal with these difficulties. So, we thought to do research in female and male schools. We formulated the questions of the interview after checking with our teachers. This will enable us to know the strategies teachers use

1. **How do teachers try to meet the needs of all students?**
2. **What kind of strategies do teachers use to integrate learners into the large group and get top achievers involved?**
3. **What do teachers do to assess students' communicative skills?**
4. **What are the weaknesses the students highlight during the investigation?**
5. **What do they suggest for improvement?**

And picked up the questions of the questionnaire from the internet. They will help us to know the learning habits of the students and their suggestions to make learning better.

2. Literature Review

Once we became aware of how to investigate certain educational processes, we aimed at shedding some light on the steps of research and a corner stone is reviewing the literature. Of course this part of the research is very difficult because it involves talking about the language, which requires a high understanding of theories and strategies. So we had to rely a lot on the experience of Dr. Saleh and Mr. Faisal in dealing with this part of the research.

They pointed out that it is important to take some factors into consideration, e.g. motivation, ability, attitude, learning styles / types of intelligence and differentiation. These learner factors are at the heart of the teaching process. They may help teachers to adopt new strategies that can help them to gain students' attention during teaching/learning process. All these things need to be taken into account while teaching mixed-ability classes.

2.1 Learners Factors

As a team of work, Dr. Saleh asked us to look for strategies which are most useful and helpful for students learning development. Spada (2000) points out that the age of learner is one of the most important factors that determine that way student approaches a foreign language. He says that the capacity to learn a language is always before 12 years. He, also, says that there is time in human development when the brain succeeds in language learning. So, to make students in their language development, it is necessary to create the basic foundations at an early age to attract and keep students' interest in the language.

2.2 Motivation and Attitudes

Motivation and positive attitude are very important factors as Spada (2002) states. He considers them as major factors in language learning. I think if the students are motivated, they are successful and if they are successful, they are motivated. Therefore, we as a team group, we ask our teachers to motivate the whole class at the early beginning of the class through games, brainstorming, and short debate. Gardner (1972) says there are two types of motivation:

- Integrative Motivation which is linked to personal development.
- Instrumental Motivation which is involved in learning for practical reasons. Spada, 2002. p 56) Students who have high score are often the most motivated ones and are very interested in keeping their good results.
- Environment Motivation, that is, if students' attitudes are positive towards the speakers of the language, they will wish more chances to communicate and interact. So, our teachers must create a positive learning environment.

2.3 Learning Styles

From early beginning, every child learns in different manner or has different learning styles. Learning styles tend to refer to the way which students approach information. They describe how learners get, process and retain new facts and details. Learning styles are based on student's personality, but these styles are important tools for achieving success in learning language.

There are students who must have the information in front of them to learn: these students are called "visual" learners. Those who must add physical action into their learning are called "kinesthetic". Those who have the ability to just listen to information once or twice are "auditory" learners.

2.4 The Theory of Multiple Intelligences

Other factors that may be decisive for student's success language learning are Gardner's (1993) seven intelligences. He states that people use at least 7 intellectual competences that are involved in the learning process. These are:

1. **Linguistics Intelligence**: Students with this kind of intelligence take pleasure in Writing, Reading and Listening. (P.77)
2. **Logical Mathematical Intelligence**: These students are interested in structure, pattern and relationships with books and materials. They like arithmetic games. (p. 170)
3. **Kinesthetic intelligence**: These students have the ability to use one's body in highly skilled ways. (p 206)

4. **Spatial Intelligence**: Students think in images and symbols. They naturally recognize the transformation of the objects. (p. 174)
5. **Musical Intelligence**: They express themselves in music. They can distinguish different sounds. (p. 109)
6. **Interpersonal Intelligence**: Students have the ability to notice and can make distinction among other individuals. They are good at detecting others desires. (p. 239)
7. **Intrapersonal Intelligence**: Students have access to one's own feeling life. They have the ability to control their feelings. (p. 239)

2.5 Approaches

Most educators look at approaches as the real challenge in teaching mixed-ability classes. Those educators highlight many approaches that seem to be beneficial and helpful to meet all students' needs.

2.5.1 Differentiation

All educators highlighted this concept. When we checked the dictionary, we found that differentiation means "the division of unit into several parts". It is the opposite of integration which means to adapt instruction to respond to the different student's needs found in mixed-ability classroom.

Students differ in academic readiness, interests, and learning styles, so teacher needs to attempt to meet each student to encourage on-going development. Differentiated instruction seems to be a better solution for meeting the mixed-ability classroom. It offers a range of learning options according to the interest and readiness of the students.

According to Tomlinson (2001) a differentiated classroom has the following characteristics:

1. **Instruction is concept centered**: Lessons for all students should emphasize critical and creative thinking. (p. 20). All students have to discover and apply essential concepts of the subject of the study.
2. **Continuous assessment**: On-going assessment invites teacher to adjust his way of teaching based on current information. (P. 20). Here, teachers assess students' readiness, providing support and giving feedback.
3. **Flexible group**: Students work in many patterns; sometimes alone, sometimes in pairs and sometimes in groups.
4. **Whole-group**: instruction is used for introducing new ideas.
5. **Students are active explorers**: Instruction is student centered and the teacher is more of a guide than deliverer of information.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

Three male teachers and three female teachers were selected by chance from a group of eighteen teachers in the Doha Independent Secondary School for Boys and Amina Bent Wahib Independent Secondary School for Girls. The sample includes the three (3) grades teachers. The teaching experience ranged from 5 to 15 years. They were phoned to schedule an interview. The selected teachers covered the final sample.

A sample of forty (40) students, 20 female students and 20 male students from both schools, were selected by chance.

3.2 Procedures

A questionnaire of 20 questions was used (See Appendix 1). Both the questionnaire and the interview were collaboratively developed and adapted by the team work of the school under the supervision of Dr. Saleh and Mr. Faisal for final revision.

We explained to all participants that our main purpose is to understand and highlight the problem that students come across in learning English. We need to record these problems and find our solutions to raise the level of English language in our school.

We also need to know how girl schools deal with teaching English in mixed ability-classes. Our intention is to focus on overall findings rather than particular comments. The interviews are to identify teachers' responses to these issues. The questions are open-ended and we hope that teachers will provide more than one response to a particular question.

3.3 Data

Because all interviews were open-ended questions, the team gathered and checked data to make sure that the interviews and the questionnaires were taken seriously. No teacher's or student's response was counted more than once, so that we reflect the correct number of teachers and students.

3.4 Participants

Participants in this study are 40 students (20 male students from DISS and 20 female students from ABW). These two schools were taken as a representative sample and other students from both schools are the population of the study. A ready prepared questionnaire was adopted selectively from a website (http://prtl.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/COS/Self_Help_and_Handouts/STUDY_SKILLS_QUESTIONNAIRE) because we thought it will help to find out about students' needs in mixed-ability classroom context and how to meet them. **We utilized Likert (4 scale).** The survey comprised four factors: **Writing, Reading and selecting Main Idea, Study Aids, and Note Taking, Concentration and Memory Assessment.** The four factors comprise the basic elements that will shed light on students learning habits, that is:

- their way of dealing with the activities they have in class
- their way of covering the material they have
- their concentration level.

These factors are very important in mixed-ability context. The survey contains both positive and negative items. For positive items “Always”, “Usually”, and “Sometimes”. For negative items “Never”.

3.5 Findings:

The tables presented below summarize the analysis of survey result on each of the four factors of the survey. Table (1) summarizes the students’ responses for Factor One:

Table 1. Writing- Doha Independent Secondary School for Boys

	Always %	Usually %	Sometimes %	Never %
1. I find that I am able to express my thoughts well in writing	10	70	20	
2. I write drafts and spontaneously from notes.	10	40	50	
3. I review my writing for grammatical errors.	40	40	20	
4. I am comfortable using library sources for research.	5	40	50	
5. I allow sufficient time to collect information, organize material, and write the assignment.	30	50	20	

Table (1) shows that the using library sources for research had the **lowest score in the five variables** together with **writing from notes (item 2), which has a strong influence on the ability to express always thoughts very well in writing(item 1)**. Only 30% of students always allow sufficient time to collect information and organize material, which has a strong influence on the pace of learning.

Table 1. Writing- Amina Bint Waheb Independent Secondary School for Girls

	Always %	Usually %	Sometimes %	Never %
1. I find that I am able to express my thoughts well in writing	10	80	10	-
2. I write drafts and spontaneously from notes.	10	60	30	
3. I review my writing for grammatical errors.	50	10	40	10
4. I am comfortable using library sources for research.	-	50	45	5
5. I allow sufficient time to collect information, organize material, and write the assignment.	10	10	70	10

Table (1) shows that female students in ABW had very high score in ability of express their thoughts usually in writing of the five variables, slightly high score in the reviewing grammar of the four variables, and high scores in review my writing for grammatical errors. However, students have very low score in collecting

and organizing material and writing assignments. There should be more focus on item 4 and 5, which have a strong effect on the pace of the learning process.

Table 2. Reading and selecting Main Idea- Doha Independent Secondary School for Boys.

	Always %	Usually %	Sometimes %	Never %
1. I survey each chapter before I begin reading	45	45	10	
2. I follow the writer organization to increase meaning.	20	45	35	
3. I review reading material several times during a semester.	15	55	25	5
4. I look up parts I don't understand.	25	35	30	10
5. I focus on the main point while reading.	60	37	5	

Table (2) indicates that male students of DISS had low score in review materials several times during the **semester following writer organization**. They scored a little better in looking parts they do not know. These results indicate that DISS students need to work more on writing organization strategies and devote more time to review material several times and looking up parts they do not understand to meet their needs.

Table 2. Reading and selecting Main Idea- Amina Bint Waheb Independent Secondary School for Girls

	Always %	Usually %	Sometimes %	Never %
1. I survey each chapter before I begin reading	15	15	60	10
2. I follow the writer organization to increase meaning.	40	20	30	10
3. I review reading material several times during a semester.	5	40	50	5
4. I look up parts I don't understand.	35	25	30	10
5. I focus on the main while reading.	50	15	30	5

Table (2) indicates that female girls of ABW had very low scores in surveying chapter before beginning reading and in reviewing material several times during the semester. The results show how female students need to work more on these two levels to have a better understanding and improve their learning pace.

Table 3. Study Aids and Note Taking- Doha Independent Secondary School for Boys

	Always %	Usually %	Sometimes %	Never %
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1. While I am taking notes, I think about how I will use later.	30	45	20	5
2. Organize my notes in some meaningful manner (such as outline format)	10	40	40	10
3. I review and edit my notes systematically.	35	40	20	5
4. When reading, I make or underline part I think are important.	50	35	10	5
5. I write notes in the book while I read.	25	35	30	10

Table (3) indicates that very few male students from DISS organize notes in some meaningful manner (such as outline format), which makes their achievements lower and their learning pace slower. Only 25% write notes in the book while they read and 30% of students think about how to use the notes which they take later. It is very important to help students understand the importance of these habits.

Table 3. Study Aids and Note Taking- Amina Bint Waheb Independent Secondary School for Girls

	Always %	Usually %	Sometimes %	Never %
1. While I am taking notes, I think about how I will use later.	55	30	15	
2. Organize my notes in some meaningful manner (such as outline format)	30	10	50	10
3. I review and edit my notes systematically.	20	40	30	10
4. When reading, I make or underline part I think are important.	75	15	10	
5. I write notes in the book while I read.	35	30	25	10

Table (3) indicates that female students in ABW had low scores in organizing notes in a meaningful manner and reviewing and editing notes systematically. Teachers in ABW engage students in many different activities that tend to meet their needs. However, they need to check the students' writing regularly help them with advice on what they should do and why it is important to do that.

Table 4. Concentration and Memory Assessment- Doha Independent Secondary School for Boys.

	Always %	Usually %	Sometimes %	Never %
1. I have the “study-place” habit that is, merely being at a certain time means time to study.	10	45	30	15
2. I study in a place free from auditory and visual distractions.	40	35	15	10
3. I find I am able to concentrate / give undivided attention to a task for at least 20 minutes.	5	35	30	30
4. I have an accurate understanding of the material I wish to remember.	5	35	30	30
5. I learn with intention of remembering.	45	30	25	

Table (4) indicates that male students in DISS have low scores in study-place habits and concentration time which are closely related; they should work more on developing study-place habits in order to make

concentration period of time longer and improve learning environment and pace. They also scored low in understanding of the material they wish to remember. Students find it difficult to remember something they do not understand and they do not understand if they do not concentrate and they do not concentrate if they do not have study-place habits. Much work should be done on these areas.

Table 4. Concentration and Memory Assessment- Amina Bint Waheb Independent Secondary School for Girls.

	Always %	Usually %	Sometimes %	Never %
1. I have the “study-place” habit that is, merely being at a certain time means time to study.	40	35	30	
2. I study in a place free from auditory and visual distractions.	40	20	35	5
3. I find I am able to concentrate / give undivided attention to a task for at least 20 minutes.	20	55	25	
4. I have an accurate understanding of the material I wish to remember.	35	25	35	5
5. I learn with intention of remembering.	40	35	20	5

Table (4) indicates that female students in ABW had three high scores in concentration and memory assessment of the five variables that comprise Factor (4). These results show that ABW students have high scores in study-place habits and learning with intention to remember and these two factors helped them to have a good learning environment and a good understanding of the material they wish to remember.

3.6 Discussion

The purpose of this research was to determine why some students are still struggling in mixed ability classrooms. the approach of teaching in the context of mixed-ability classrooms has been adopted in Qatar male and female schools to help students to become eager to learn English and other subjects take active part in the global community.

The problem is not just a matter of teaching strategies; it is also a matter of learning strategies .

Teachers are key players in encouraging students’ engagement. They work directly with students and typically are the most influential in students’ educational experience. Creating a friendly classroom, developing interactive and relevant lessons and activities are very encouraging and supportive to students.

1. They should focus more on encouraging students to be achievers. In classrooms where learning is challenging, students feel more comfortable asking critical questions, completing a research, or a project.

When students feel challenged, they are less likely to be bored and will try to do their best.

2. Teachers should concentrate more on active learning like collaborative learning and experiential learning as well as designing accessible and relevant lessons, which will bring about a great increase in engagement in learning.

Examples of these strategies: 1. Group activities and productive assignment; 2. Long-term projects; 3. Hands-on activities; 4. Differentiated activities; 5. Lessons and activities that go hand in hand with students' background, interests, and academic level. Students learn more information when they actively participate in the learning process and they can relate to what is being thought. (Akey, 2006).

3. Teachers should offer more support and encouragement as students' engagement is positively correlated to teacher support. Students who felt that their teachers are supportive and care more about success are more likely to be engaged in classrooms and perform well academically. (Akey, 2006).

4. Another equally important area of discussion is students' attitudes and learning strategies which is the most important part of our findings. The Question to ask here is how can school help change students attitudes.

It is important to note that there are many environmental factors- poverty, neighborhood, violence, family record, social and cultural ideas that may make the students less disengaged. Much work is to be done by school and teachers to equip the students with strategies and values that help them surmount the difficulties encountered in learning. We can go as far as to suggest that a class should be devoted to helping equip the students with good learning strategies which will give the students more confidence and encourage them to be more engaged in the learning process. The role of the teacher should go as far as teaching the students how to learn and not just give him/her ready – made information. When the student learns how to learn, he/she can be an active partner in the classroom and not just a passive receiver.

3.7 The Interviewees: Teachers' comments and reaction:

We had the opportunity of interviewing six teachers of English. All of them are from DISS. All six teachers have long teaching experience varying from 10 to 37 years. For reasons of anonymity we have given them fictitious names.

- Ahmed has taught English for 25 years.

- Ali is a teacher of English. He has 20 years of teaching experience.
- Hamad has taught English for 18 years.
- Jassim is a teacher of English. He has 15 years of teaching experience.
- Abdullah has been teaching English for 15 years.
- Saad has been a teacher for 14 years and his subject is English.

3.8 Procedures

The interviewees took about 30 minutes. In order to increase their quality, the questions were written, formulated, and translated into English under the supervision of a group of teachers. In order to increase their quality, the interviewees had been given an information sheet (Appendix 2) which allows them to know what the research was going to be about, as well as a guarantee that the interviews will be treated anonymously. A number of open-ended questions were submitted and the interviewees were kindly asked to reflect over what they consider was the rightful answer. The interviews were carried on in a fatherly and friendly manner and without being disturbed.

Most of teachers agreed that:

Teaching to a mixed-ability classroom can be challenging and discouraging, especially when a teacher finds himself unprepared for it. Traditionally, teachers create their lesson plans as if all the students in their class were the same. We assume all students learn in the same manner and at the same pace. We assume that our assessment methods accurately measure the success or failure of our students. The reality is that by treating all of our students the same, we are doing more harm than good. Students neither learn in the same nor do they work at the same pace. I try to differentiate my strategies in the classroom to reach to their needs as possible.

One of the teachers commented:

One of the first approaches I would take to a mixed-ability classroom is to plan effectively. This means that I will be **flexible** in the methods I use to accomplish my goals (Carolan & Guinn, 2007). Essentially, I would start at the end and then move to the beginning when making my lesson plans. Once I have

established the objective of my lesson plan, I could then create varying methods of achieving that objective. The methods could all be designed to meet the varying needs of my students. Using this strategy, I could also make sure to have **contingency plans** (Copur, 2005) in place. Such plans can help to account for those who find the work easy and finish early.

Another teacher highlights the idea of group work:

I like the idea of using group work in my classroom and I use it as much as I can. Group work is an easy way to adjust my lesson plans to mixed-ability students. Groups can be created by ability level without students even being aware of it (Gates Foundation, 2006). The same assignment can be given to all students, such as reading and analyzing a primary source document. Documents can then be distributed to the groups based on reading ability and other factors. The high achieving student can help those in his/her group without drawing attention to their status as low achievers or those who struggle with a certain skill. At the same time, in order to ensure that student is sufficiently challenged, I would provide them with either additional readings or a different set of questions to answer.

Another teacher said:

I vary the methods I use to teach my students. Knowing that not all students learn the same means I have to try to accommodate for as many of these differences as I can. In presenting information to my class, I intend to employ as many methods as I can. This means using visual aids, such as power point slides and photographs, mixing lecture with class discussion and allowing for auditory options when available.

In addition, assessment methods should be varied so as to reflect the strengths of all students and provide them with the opportunity to be successful. **By differentiating the assessment methods, I can ensure that each student works from his strengths to achieve the ultimate goal of the assessment.**

Another teacher talked about his assessment policy:

In order to adequately address a mixed-ability classroom in terms of assessment, the approach used is varying types of assessments. In order to accommodate the mixed-abilities in my classroom, each student

would be given a list of option specifically tailored to their ability level (Anderson, 2007; The Gates Foundation, 2006). The exams would be tailored to the ability level of the students. Most likely, I will have to create three different types of exams: one for the high achievers, one for the low achievers and one for those who fall in between. From there, specific accommodations can be made for students with disabilities. Extra time can be given to those with learning disabilities.

Finally most teachers agreed that:

The basic idea is to remain flexible in both my teaching and assessment methods so that success can be ensured in teaching a class of mixed-ability students (Carolan & Guinn, 2007). If I establish what my objectives are for each lesson plan, unit plan and the year plan, it is much easier to see the various ways I can reach. Accommodating for mixed-ability students is a reality in today's classroom, so it is best to find ways to approach it from the very beginning rather than attempting to deal with it once the plans have been written.

4. Results

4.1 Extra Materials

When it comes to supporting learners and making them develop their knowledge of the English language, the answers were relatively similar in both schools. We obtained very concrete suggestions about encouraging students to enhance their abilities and participate inside the classroom bearing in mind how teachers can meet their needs.

A teacher explained that when he has a motivated topic, he always has group work activity. He always have extra materials to both "poor learners" and "top achievers" or "when choosing a material for them, you have to keep their language ability in mind" and "always keep their interest in the subject alive".

4.2 Silent/ Shy Students

Teachers agreed that these students represent two difficulties: on the one hand it is hard to encourage them to engage in discussions or verbal interaction. On the other hand it is not easy to assess their oral proficiency.

Teachers have to look for alternatives like listening to them while expressing themselves in smaller groups. Another approach is to give them assignments in pairs this is a good way of letting them communicate. It is also suggested to ask them questions are able to answer.

4.3 Slow and Advanced Learners

It is extremely important for teachers to vary their instruction and maintain students' interests and motivation. Some teachers explained that another way to challenge advanced learners ability, mostly for those who studied in schools where English is the target language or whose parents are English-speakers, is to let them participate in standardized English tests (TOFEL and IELTS) or let them work at and select materials and tasks they considered more interesting.

Some teachers said that it is good to minimize amount of tasks for weak students. What is important is not to do many tasks but to understand what you are doing; it is better do one that you understand than doing ten that you do not. Furthermore, to ease the burden of those who are lacking academic ability. As for advanced learners let them work with extra material of their own choice.

4.4 Reading and Writing Difficulties

Some students suffer from some kind of reading or writing disability. It is suggested, as a teacher pointed out, to have a diagnostic test at the early beginning of the academic year to identify those who have serious difficulties in reading or writing skills. Teachers should try to give them appropriate tasks while students are advised to join any educational institutes which have qualified special needs teachers for coaching lessons.

4.5 Assessment

Since assessment is an essential part of teaching, we brought up the question: how do you think assessment works in relation to differences of readiness that exist in a classroom?

Teachers said they assess students following the structure and cluster (Grade 12 only) that are suggested by SEC and measure their ability continuously. **Formative assessment** is not a product. It delivers

information during the instructional process, before **summative assessment**. Teachers use it make decisions about actions to take to promote further learning (Quizzes).

Summative assessment determines what grade a students will receive on class assignment and measures the level of student's success. (Unit Test).

4.6 Continuous (On-going) Assessment

Without exception, all teachers commented on the importance of on-going assessment. They put into practice what Brown (2004) calls formative assessment, they don't only measure the final outcome, but evaluate students in the process of "forming" their competencies and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process". (Brown ,2004).

We think it is a way where teachers can keep up-to-date information about every student's academic level. The information can be used as guidelines to prepare individual lessons of meeting everyone's needs and to adjust instruction inside the classroom. It is a good way to approach silent or shy students to assess and evaluate their progress as well.

4.7 Varying Instruction

All teachers stressed the importance of varying instruction inside the classroom. They understand that giving a varied set of activities tends to fit the different learning styles and to keep students motivated. Spada p. 57 2002 "varying the activities, tasks, and materials can help to avoid boredom and increase students' interest level." For Tomlinson p. 4 2001"the teacher assumes that different learners have different needs". Therefore, teachers have to come to meet all the students' needs.

As we see, teachers must vary instruction. Students may get bored and distracted as a result of the same monotonous routines. By choosing life-like situations or topics students like to get involved in them because they are related to their everyday lives, and not just irrelevant topics that belong to school curriculum.

4.8 Implications for Research and Practice

Behind these findings lie more significant implications for research and practice. At this historic point in Qatar and the application of new education for new era, to implement all strategies and techniques can be in hand if there is a strong will from students and teachers. Participation in all school activities from the part of teachers provides a basis for creative learning. Teacher training especially school-based should be on-going to update teachers abilities and capabilities. Friendly classroom environment should be enhanced. One great performer in a class does not make everyone a good performer. To trust a learner is to honor a learner. Once a learner is honored, he/she may have unlimited potential for learning.

Finally, students and teachers of English should be given more time to do research. If they are made to become teaching machines, they will have no time left to look for alternative teaching strategies.

This research brings together two prominent teaching methodologies to give our researchers, scholars and students an idea on which way leads to effective learning.

4.9 Conclusion

The aim of our research was to investigate teachers' thoughts on how to meet students' needs in mixed-ability classroom context as well as students' analysis of their own weaknesses. For students, classroom represents not only a formal learning place, but also a place they can interact and communicate in. However, we decided to examine some of the topics that are relevant to students' needs and how to activate them inside the classroom.

Deliberately, what we have shed light on is the struggle of students through a mixed-ability classroom context and how teachers deal with that. To succeed in meeting all the needs of all students, teachers need to be aware of different learning factors, such as aptitudes, motivations, and attitude. They should not forget that students have different learning styles to acquire and process information.

The reviewed literature reviewed showed a variety approaches to deal with teaching mixed-ability groups like differentiation and individualization. **We choose quantitative and qualitative research approaches.** They give us opportunity to study in details the answers we obtained from interviewing teachers of English as well as the students in both schools. The questionnaire we have done gave us a number of findings we have analyzed and came up with the results we have presented in tables.

We came to a conclusion that there is no “magic answer”, but the combination of strategies need to put into practice if teachers want to succeed in creating a cozy classroom environment leading to the generating of lifelong learners. **Finally we recommend that more importance should be given to learning strategies as an effective way to bridge the gap between the high standards the students are expected to reach and the level of the struggling students who are trying to make their upward journey.**

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Abbreviations

Teaching English as a foreign language	TEFL
Doha Independent Secondary School for Boys	DISS
Amina Bent Wahib Secondary School for Girls	ABW
Education Supreme Council	SEC

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ورقة النشاط # 2

التخطيط للمقابلات الأخلاقية

المعلومات التي سوف أعطيها بخصوص ماهية مشروع بحثي هي :

المعلومات التي سوف أعطيها بخصوص سرية المشاركين وإخفاء هوياتهم :

المعلومات التي سوف أعطيها بخصوص ما سأفعله ببيانات المقابلة :

معلومات عن الأشخاص الذين سأشارك معهم ببيانات المقابلة :

تفاصيل عن المقابلة (كم مدتها؟ هل سيتم تسجيلها؟ أين ستكون؟)

معلومات عن كيفية اعتنائي ببيانات المقابلة التي قمت بجمعها:

طلب الموافقة:

INTERVIEW PLAN

Mission:

Our aim in this research is to investigate why some students' level in English is still low, how students could cope with the changes that happened during the last five years in methods, class management, their point of view about how to improve their abilities in learning English as instruction language and teachers' perception on how they meet students' needs. in a mixed-ability classroom.

1- Interview questions

1.How do teachers try to meet the needs of all students?

2. What kind of strategies do teachers use to integrate learners into the large group and get top achievers involved?

3. What do teachers do to assess students' communicative skills?

4. What are the weaknesses the students highlighted during the investigation in the 4 skills?

5. What do they suggest for improvement?

2 - Other

Question 1 : Do you think that research is helpful to solve problems.

Questionnaire

- Read the questions carefully and tick (✓) the appropriate box

<i>Writing</i>	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1. I find that I am able to express my thoughts well in writing				
2. I write drafts and spontaneously from notes.				
3. I review my writing for grammatical errors.				
4. I am comfortable using library sources for research.				
5. I allow sufficient time to collect information, organize material, and write the assignment.				
<i>Reading and selecting Main Idea</i>	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1. I survey each chapter before I begin reading				
2. I follow the writer organization to increase meaning.				
3. I review reading material several times during a semester.				
4. I look up parts I don't understand.				

5. I focus on the main while reading.				
<i>Study Aids and Note Taking</i>	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1. While I am taking notes, I think about how I will use later.				
2. Organize my notes in some meaningful manner (such as outline format)				
3. I review and edit my notes systematically.				
4. When reading, I make or underline part I think are important.				
5. I write notes in the book while I read.				
<i>Concentration and Memory Assessment</i>	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1. I have the “study-place” habit that is, merely being at a certain time means time to study.				
2. I study in a place free from auditory and visual distractions.				
3. I find I am able to concentrate / give undivided attention to a task for at least 20 minutes.				
4. I have an accurate understanding of the material I wish to remember.				
5. I learn with intention of remembering.				