

Enhancing Social Studies Delivery using Discussion Teaching Method at Selected Junior High Schools in Ghana



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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effective use of the discussion teaching method in social studies at selected Junior High Schools in the Oforikrom Municipality, Ghana. In Ghana, Oforikrom municipality in particular, there are limited studies on how student centered learning approach can aid in effective teaching and learning. The study involved a sample size of 160, with 130 students and 30 teachers selected randomly. Data was collected through questionnaires, with responses analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings indicated that students prefer active involvement in classroom activities to combat boredom. The discussion teaching method promotes an interactive learning environment, encouraging collaboration among students. This approach allows them to learn from each other's insights and experiences, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning. By actively engaging in knowledge construction, students transition from passive recipients of information to active participants in their educational journey. The study recommends that it is essential to enhance the level of engagement and active learning in junior high schools; teachers ought to regularly integrate the discussion pedagogical approach in learning.

Keywords: Academic Community, Discussion, Interactive Learning, Questionnaires, Student-Centered Approach

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INTRODUCTION

Education in schools is viewed as the end product for passing an exam, bringing out social identity in people and giving them security for their economic background.¹ According to Bidabadi et al., this is a result of factors such as the society in accordance with schools developing individuals in the technologically advanced world by learning how to read, write and use the digital platform, which highlights 'culture' or 'scholarly'.² Obanya supports this idea and refers to the ability to read, write and manipulate figures as literacy and numeracy and refutes the idea that education goes beyond literacy and numeracy, which simply helps in buying and selling.³

¹ S. C. B. Prins, "Student-Centered Instruction in a Theoretical Statistics Course," *Journal of Statistics Education* 17, no.3 (2009): 1–13.

² Nahid Shirani Bidabadi et al., "Effective Teaching Methods in Higher Education: Requirements and Barriers," *Journal of Advances in Medical Education & Professionalism* 4, no. 4 (2016): 170.

³ P. Obanya, "Quality (in Education) Is Perceptible, Visible, Qualitative and Beautiful," in *A Keynote Address at the 4th Conference on Educational Development* (Lagos State University, 2021).

On the other hand, Rogers also criticizes that knowledge in education becomes obsolete in the mind of the individual as there is progression in life.⁴ This part becomes robotic for the individual and invalidates curiosity and self-confidence in personnel. Paffard posits that this had become an indictment of current procedure in lecturing students, and some had taken this into consideration.⁵

There is a general consensus among the academic community that more student-centered learning approaches in the classroom can improve learning. However, in Ghana and Oforikrom municipality in particular, there are limited studies on how student centered learning approach can aid in effective teaching and learning.⁶ According to Janor et al., who worked more with students, case studies by students together with class or group discussions help enhance student-centered methods.⁷ Similar results were obtained by Prins, who indicated that “student-centered approach was a sufficient approach in helping students given material to learn, contribute and solve problems faster.⁸ This study sought to fill this gap in the literature since such studies are not replete in the context of teaching and learning approaches in the Ghanaian context. According to the literature, the application of teacher-centered approach stifles many skills and learning opportunities among students.

There are some arguments that it can stifle student engagement, critical thinking, and creativity. In a sense, students might play a more passive role, absorbing information without necessarily actively engaging with it or applying it to real-world contexts.⁹ This study, therefore, contributes to the literature by examining whether student centered approach can enhance teaching and learning in Ghana. Though several factors account for the choice of particular teaching methods in Ghana, the discussion teaching method of student-centered approach has not been extensively explored. This study seeks to find out how teaching styles, thus the discussion method, can improve teaching and learning in the classrooms at Oforikrom municipality in Ghana.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Discussion Method of Teaching

The discussion method is a dynamic and interactive way of teaching, and it includes active engagement rather than passive. It implies that learners are asked to provide their well-informed opinions on an issue or a problem after completing a detailed primary research.¹⁰ In this model, the teacher presents the topic, preconditioning the student response, as a result of which there is a collective investigation instead of the instruction of the student. Such an approach is not only disseminating knowledge, but also developing a deeper understanding, as Davis points out: when properly done, discussions allow discovering the main theme, fostering critical thinking, self-criticism, and celebrating diversity of informed opinions and behaviours.¹¹

The discussion process is not confined to the lone presentation of the teacher as opposed to the traditional lecture-based teaching. Sadker and Sadker highlight that the instructor controls but does not restrict the pace and gives the students the opportunity to share ideas in a flowing conversation where structure and freedom are both present.¹² According to Barkley, this inclusivity is especially useful in

⁴ C. Rogers, *Styles of Learning and Teaching* (Columbus, OH: Charles Merrill, 2018).

⁵ M. Paffard, *Inglorious Wordsworths: A Study of Some Transcendental Experiences in Childhood and Adolescence* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2022).

⁶ Jessica L Barrett, Craig R Denegar, and Stephanie M Mazerolle, “Challenges Facing New Educators: Expanding Teaching Strategies for Clinical Reasoning and Evidence-Based Medicine,” *Athletic Training Education Journal* 13, no. 4 (2018): 359–66.

⁷ Hawati Janor et al., “Integrating Student-Centered Learning in Finance Courses: The Case of a Malaysian Research University.,” *International Education Studies* 6, no. 6 (2013): 108–23.

⁸ Prins, “Student-Centered Instruction in a Theoretical Statistics Course.”

⁹ Sonal Upadhyay, “Exploring the Teacher-Centered Approach: Balancing Authority and Engagement in Education,” *Early Childhood Educator and ECA Member*, August 22, 2023; Ive Emaliana, “Teacher-Centered or Student-Centered Learning Approach to Promote Learning?,” *Jurnal Sosial Humaniora (JSH)* 10, no. 2 (2017): 59–70; H. Serin, “A Comparison of Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered Approaches in Educational Settings,” *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies* 5, no. 1 (2018): 164–67, <https://doi.org/10.23918/ijsses.v5i1p164>.

¹⁰ J. C. Aggarwal, *Teacher and Education in Rooms Are Not Sufficient; There Is a Good Environment for Developing Society* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 2006).

¹¹ E. Davis, “The Importance of Discourse in Developing Critical Thinking Skills,” *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 29, no. 3 (2017): 518–24.

¹² D. Sadker and M. Sadker, *Teachers, Schools, and Society: A Brief Introduction to Education* (McGraw-Hill, 2010).

attracting the introverted participants.¹³ Discussion through the promotion of voluntary contributions creates a fair classroom atmosphere where even the shy students feel included to participate, resulting in more meaningful aggregate knowledge. The two-sided process of teachers, students, and peers is an example of mutual engagement in the teaching- learning process. As Serin notes, students are engaged in exchanging ideas and strengthening and internalizing the ideas presented by tutors, which increases retention and application.¹⁴

Discussion in the context of higher education is central in the process of active learning. As King notes, this is one of the techniques that university lecturers often use to facilitate interaction to make passive listeners become active thinkers.¹⁵ Equally, Sybing considers discussions as an important channel of engaging students with the learning process in which they create meanings and confront assumptions together.¹⁶ Based on these views, it is clear that the discussion approach involves the presence of many people who share ideas on the major issues to meet the common educational objectives. It is important to note that by emphasising interaction, it not only imparts knowledge but also forms the necessary skills such as critical thinking, empathy and communication, and it is thus indispensable to the modern pedagogical practice. Finally, guided debates bring the theory and practice together, training the learners to deal with complexities in the outside world.

Importance of the Discussion Method of Teaching

The Socratic Method depicts how questions are posed to individuals to bring out their reflective, critical thinking and promote active participation from students asserted by Sadker and Sadker.¹⁷ Teachers can guide discussions by posing open-ended questions and encouraging students to explore ideas, analyze concepts, and defend their viewpoints. Flipped Classroom is designed to enable students to engage with course materials, such as lectures or readings, outside of class, and class time is reserved for interactive activities, discussions, and problem-solving with the guidance of the teacher.¹⁸

Students can be divided into smaller groups to discuss specific topics or questions related to the lesson. Teachers can circulate among groups, providing guidance, feedback, and clarification as needed. This approach encourages active participation and allows for more personalized interactions between teachers and students. Role-playing activities and simulations immerse students in real-world scenarios, encouraging them to apply their knowledge and skills in a dynamic setting. Teachers can facilitate discussions before, during, and after the activity to guide reflection, analyze outcomes, and provide feedback.¹⁹

Case-based learning presents students with real-life case studies or scenarios relevant to the subject matter. Encourage students to analyze the case, identify key issues, propose solutions, and engage in discussions guided by the teacher. This approach promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, and active participation.²⁰ By implementing these discussion-based teaching methods, teachers can create an interactive learning environment where students actively participate, collaborate, and engage with course content, fostering deeper understanding and meaningful interactions between teachers and students Barkley.²¹

Negative Effects of Using the Discussion Method of Teaching

When teaching using discussion, it is important to set clear guidelines on the theme to avoid derailing the discussion and to be sure that it is tied to the goals of education. Ground rules are principles that can

¹³ E. F. Barkley, *Student Engagement Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

¹⁴ Serin, "A Comparison of Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered Approaches in Educational Settings."

¹⁵ A. King, "Facilitating Elaborative Learning Conversations: The Effects of Having Disparate or Similar Knowledge on Understanding and Transfer," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 108, no. 2 (2016): 224–36.

¹⁶ R. Sybing, "Considerations for Discussion Activities for Beginner EFL Learners," *Journal of the Nanzan Academic Society* 98 (2015): 163–69.

¹⁷ Sadker and Sadker, *Teachers, Schools, and Society: A Brief Introduction to Education*.

¹⁸ Serin, "A Comparison of Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered Approaches in Educational Settings."

¹⁹ Obanya, "Quality (in Education) Is Perceptible, Visible, Qualitative and Beautiful."

²⁰ Jason M Carpenter, "Effective Teaching Methods for Large Classes," *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences Education* 24, no. 2 (2006).

²¹ Barkley, *Student Engagement Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*.

be used as guiding principles in whole group discussions, which foster focus, respect for each other and constructive conversation. Such directions may consist of not going off the subject, not talking over, and appreciating other opinions. Through these expectations established in the beginning, teachers establish a structured and yet adaptable environment that allows learning to be maximized. In the absence of such enforcement, the discussions can easily degenerate into disorder, with students either engaging in bantering outside the topic or engaging in distracting activities such as side conversations, or they can even engage in disrespectful exchanges, all of which undermine the effectiveness of the session. Not only does it waste the precious class time, but it also compromises the learning results, with the participants losing interest or becoming estranged.²² These rules should be followed to the letter, and facilitation or ensuring that the teacher is vigilant in moderating activities is the only way of reaping the maximum benefits of the method.

Even with its benefits, there are significant constraints in discussion-based teaching that a teacher has to overcome. A practical issue is when the students have difficulties in taking notes or have limited retentive memory; the fluid verbal quality of discussions may pose a challenge in being able to record and remember the important issues later, which may result in incomplete comprehension.²³ In addition, traditional lectures tend to be time-saving as compared to this method, which can take longer than the scheduled time during organic interactions. When the discussion goes off-topic, say, because of a compelling digression, it is tiresome to complete the entire curriculum in the time frame.²⁴ This is only aggravated by the absence of an inherent structure that enables unrelated ideas to be propagated without the guidance of a proper focus, which is what waters down the focus on core learning goals.²⁵

With bigger groups, there are imbalances in participation that make matters even more difficult. Powerful students can be able to hog airtime and talk endlessly, leaving the quiet student to be sidelined, which creates inequality and reduces the inclusive spirit of the approach. This imbalanced relationship is a killer to varied contributions and general learning among those merely onlookers. Overall, discussions are useful in enhancing critical thinking and collaboration; however, the success of these discussions depends on proactive rule-setting and effective facilitation to reduce these pitfalls to have fair and effective educational experiences.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study, which employed the socio-cultural theory, also identified as the cultural–historical activity theory, rooted in the work of Lev Vygotsky, highlights the role of social interactions and cultural context in shaping learning.²⁶ According to this perspective, learning is a socially mediated process, and teachers play a critical role in guiding students' participation in meaningful activities within their cultural communities.²⁷ Serin opined that in the world of social cultural perspective, human skills are not embedded in their own inventions and evolution but the environmentally situated in social interactions.²⁸ Vygotsky argued that the implementation and adoption of languages evolves the thinking of children. He indicated that the use of language and as a psychological tool (for structuring the processes and content of individual thought). This highlights the views between the students and the teachers; if this is utilized effectively, it can be a powerful force for the development of individuals and also depict an improvement in performance in academia. This research work supports the positive interaction between teachers and students to foster critical thinking and many other benefits, hence the use of the discussion teaching method, which is a student centered approach to teaching.

²² J. A. Smith and B. D. Jones, "The Use of Quantitative Research Methods in Educational Psychology: A Scoping Review," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 110, no. 2 (2018); Davis, "The Importance of Discourse in Developing Critical Thinking Skills."

²³ S. D. Brookfield and S. Preskill, *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* (John Wiley & Sons, 2012).

²⁴ B. Smith, "Enhancing Student Engagement through Group Work and Peer Feedback," *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice* 12, no. 1 (2015): 1–14.

²⁵ Davis, "The Importance of Discourse in Developing Critical Thinking Skills."

²⁶ L. S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978).

²⁷ J. V. Wertsch, *Voices of the Mind: A Sociocultural Approach to Mediated Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

²⁸ Serin, "A Comparison of Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered Approaches in Educational Settings."

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The study employed the quantitative research approach asserted by Smith and Jones.²⁹ This was to gather information using methods like questionnaires. Quantitative methods of research help the researcher also put phenomena into numerical form, enabling them to be statistically analyzed and generalized to larger populations. Also, quantitative research gave a systematic approach that allows researchers to test the hypothesis and determine the causality between the variables.

Sampling Method

In the research, the stratified random sampling was utilized, which is represented in Table 3. The selection of a specific population and the size of the sample depend on the practical limitations of the researchers, which are time, money, and geographic area.³⁰ Students were selected randomly, meaning that they had equal opportunities to be selected, and that would be representative of the strata (e.g., schools, teachers, and students).

Sample Size

The study sampled two Junior High Schools- Kwame Nkrumah and Weweso Junior High Schools (JHS), and teachers, as well as level 1 and 2 students. There were approximately 30 teachers and 130 students, respectively. The overall number of participants amounted to approximately 160. The sampled teachers were 30 out of 160 teachers (15 teachers in each school). The other 130 consisted of students with 70 and 60 in each school being sampled, respectively. This segregation gives a clean, modularized composition of the methodological elements of the study to ease analysis or to expand further.

Table 1: Accessible Population

Population for the study	SampleSize
Kwame Nkrumah JHS	
ST1 Teachers	7
ST2 Level 100 Students	35
Kwame Nkrumah JHS	
ST1 Teachers	8
ST2 Level 200 Students	35
Total Population	85

It was estimated that 50% of the total population (available) to represent relevant individuals for the study would be randomly selected for the study. Tables 1 and 2 show a diagram of the stratification of the existing population into 4 strata. The following table illustrates a schematic overview of the proportional stratification and sampling procedure used for a random sample of 160 respondents.

Table 2: Stratification of Accessible Population (Sampling)

Strata	Population for the study	Accessible
Weweso JHS		
ST1	Teachers	8
ST2	Level 100 Students	30
Weweso JHS		
ST1	Teachers	7
ST2	Level 100 Students	30
		75

²⁹ Smith and Jones, "The Use of Quantitative Research Methods in Educational Psychology: A Scoping Review."

³⁰ John W Creswell, *Research Desing: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, vol. 54 (United State of America: Sage Publications, 2014).

Data Collection Instruments

The questionnaire was the key instrument applied in this action research. The questionnaires were administered to provide the individuals the freedom to express themselves and provide the participants with a certain level of anonymity, which resulted in honest and candid responses, as it was not feared that the information would be judged and penalized.³¹ The questionnaires were divided into two distinct sections, one being teachers and the other being students, with the aim of achieving the objectives of the study. They were both open- and closed-ended questions, which made the respondents fill them out without the interference of the researcher. The researcher sent 160 questionnaires to the sample respondents (130 to the students and 30 to the teachers).

Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected during the research were subjected to analysis with the help of Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS), a tool of data analysis, specially built to analyze a quantitative data set. Tables were also created in order to present graphical illustrations of the data that allow interpretation and visualization of the results. This segregation brings out the practical and procedural attributes of the study, which focus on reliability in data collection, integrity in ethics, and rigor in analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The consent of the respondents was received, and they were informed about the actions and the elements of the research. The study participants were guaranteed the option of opting out at any point, as this guaranteed their volunteer participation and ensured that their privacy was respected.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section analyses data gathered from respondents in accordance with the set objectives. The objectives are to identify the teaching methods used by teachers in selected Junior High Schools in the Oforikrom Municipality, to examine when a teacher can deploy the discussion method in teaching and learning activities and to examine the effectiveness of deploying the discussion teaching method in teaching and learning.

Respondents from Teachers

Views from teachers and students were sought in two different schools. In all, 30 responses were received during the data collection on the part of teachers and 120 responses from students from two different schools: Weweso and KNUST Junior High Schools.

In cross tabulation, tables 3 and 4 indicate that the majority of the teachers have enrolled in an educational course, which is an indication that they are aware of other methods of teaching aside from the discussion, such as role play, project work, among others. Both schools have teachers who have pursued an educational course, so they are qualified teachers.

This shows that they are aware of other teaching methods other than the discussion method. That is the reason why majority of the teachers have taught for more than 15 years.

Table 3: Weweso JHS Teachers

		For how long have you been teaching?				Total
		7-9	10-12	13-15	Above 15	
Have you undertaken an educational course in Teaching?	YES	2	2	3	8	15
	NO	0	0	0	0	0
Total		2	2	3	8	15

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

³¹P. Reason and H. Bradbury, *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (Sage Publications, 2008).

Table 4: KNUST JHS Teachers

		For how long have you been teaching?				
		7-9	10-12	13-15	Above 15	Total
Have you undertaken an educational course in Teaching?	YES	2	2	3	8	15
	NO	0	0	0	0	0
Total		2	2	3	8	15

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

Table 5: Weweso JHS Teachers

About ending the lesson	3	20.0
Throughout the lesson	10	66.7
Total	15	100.0

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

Table 6: KNUST JHS Teachers

When do you adopt the discussion method in your teaching?	Frequency	Percent
At the beginning of a lesson	1	6.7
About ending the lesson	5	33.3
Throughout the lesson	9	60.0
Total	15	100.0

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

The above tables 5 and 6 show that out of the 30 teachers, 10 teachers at Weweso JHS use the discussion teaching method throughout their lessons, respectively, and 9 teachers at KNUST JHS use the discussion teaching method. This makes up 66.7% and 60% in the respective schools. 8 of the teachers, who make up 20% and 33.3% of the total in tables 5 and table 6, use the method when they are about to end their lesson, whereas only 3 teachers in the two schools, who make up 13.3% and 6.7% respectively in the diagrams above, use the discussion teaching method at the beginning of their lesson.

Table 7: Weweso JHS Teachers

How often do you use the discussion teaching method in class?	Frequency	Percent
Any time I teach	6	40.0
On specific occasion	9	60.0
Total	15	100.0

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

Table 8: KNUST JHS Teachers

How often do you use the discussion teaching method in class?	Frequency	Percent
Any time I teach	4	26.7
On a specific occasion	11	73.3
Total	15	100.0

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

When asked how often they use the teaching method, the diagrams above show that 10 teachers in table 7 and table 8, respectively, adopt the discussion teaching method anytime they teach, while 20 use the method on specific occasions.

Table 9: Weweso JHS Teachers

How often do you involve students during teaching?	Frequency	Percent
Very often	15	100.0

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

Table 10: KNUST JHS Teachers

How often do you involve students during teaching?	Frequency	Percent
Very often	15	100.0

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

Tables 9 and 10 indicate that there was a 100% response that teachers use the discussion method very often in their teaching.

Table 11: Weweso JHS Teachers

		What is the general attitude of students towards the use of discussion method of teaching?		
		co-operative	Lack of interest	Total
Do students readily contribute anytime you involve them in your teaching?	YES	14	1	15
	NO	0	0	0
Total		14	1	15

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

Table 12: KNUST Teachers

		What is the general attitude of students towards the use of the discussion method of teaching?		
		co-operative	Lack of interest	Total
Do students readily contribute anytime you involve them in your teaching?	YES	13	2	15
	NO	0	0	0
Total		13	0	15

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

From the tables above, majority of the teachers responded that students readily contribute anytime they are involved in their teaching. They make up 27 out of the 30 teachers from both Junior High Schools. As a result, the students are cooperative during the lesson, which is reflected in Tables 11 and 12, where 27 teachers were certain of this.

On the other hand, only 3 students from both schools in table 13 and table 14 responded ‘No’, and Lack of interest in the question ‘students readily contribute anytime they are involved in the teaching and learning process and the general attitudes of students towards the discussion teaching method.

Table 13: Response from Students

Would you like your teacher to involve you during teaching?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	48	90.0
No	2	10.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

Table 14: KNUST JHS Students

Would you like your teacher to involve you during teaching?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	69	98.0
No	1	2.0
Total	70	

Source: Field Survey (August, 20223)

The two diagrams above show how students would like to be involved or be part of the teaching and learning process. 48 students from Weweso JHS responded ‘Yes’ and 2 responded ‘No’, while 2% comprising 1 student from KNUST JHS responded ‘No’ and 98% comprising 69 students responded ‘Yes’. This shows how students disapprove of the teacher doing all the talking in class. So there is a need for the discussion teaching method in teaching. Tables 15 and 16 provide data to the fact that if students have some information about a topic, they become excited in contributing to the lesson.

Table 15: Weweso JHS Students

		How did you feel?		
		Excited	Confused	Total
Have you contributed so well to a topic that you know in class?	YES	48	1	49
	NO	1	0	1
Total		49	1	50

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

Table 16: KNUST JHS Students

		How did you feel?	
		Excited	Total
Have you contributed so well to a topic that you know in class?	YES	70	70
	NO	0	0
Total		70	70

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

Comparing the two tables above, 48 and 70 students from Weweso and KNUST JHS responded positively to contributing so well to a topic that they know about. This, in a way, makes teaching interesting, and the teacher’s work becomes easy. What the teacher needs to do is to make appropriate corrections to the contributions from the students and any assumptions made. Only 1 student was

‘confused’ as to how he/she feels when he/she contributes to a topic he/she knows in class, and 1 student also responded ‘No’ to how well he/she contributes to a topic he/she knows in class, all from Weweso JHS. On the whole, the students were excited to contribute so well to a topic they knew in class, which sums up to 118 students from both schools.

Table 17: Weweso JHS Students

How often does your teacher involve you in teaching?	Frequency	Percent
Throughout the lesson	38	76.0
About finishing the lesson	8	16.0
Not at all	4	8.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

Table 18: KNUST JHS Students

How often does your teacher involve you during teaching?	Frequency	Percent
Throughout the lesson	61	87.1
About finishing the lesson	5	7.1
Not at all	4	5.8
Total	70	100.0

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

When asked how often teachers involve the students in their teaching, the response from the above tables 17 and 18 shows that 38 and 61 students responded that their teachers involve them throughout the lesson, which makes up 76% and 87.1% respectively. This attests to their being qualified teachers. They know when to involve their students. 8 and 5 of the students in both schools also responded that their teachers involve them when they are about to end the lesson, which is less than 20 and 10 percent of the total student respondents, while 8 students from both schools said that their teachers do not involve them at all, and they also make up 13.8 percent of the sum.

Table 19: Weweso JHS Students

How would you like to be taught?	Frequency	Percent
The teacher is doing all the talking	3	6.0
Students working alone	2	4.0
Both teachers and students participate in class	45	90.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

Table 20: KNUST JHS Students

How would you like to be taught?	Frequency	Percent
The teacher is doing all the talking	3	4.29
Students working alone	2	2.86
Both teachers and students participate in class	65	92.9
Total	70	100.0

Source: Field Survey (August, 2023)

The above tables show that students do not like their teachers to do all the talking, but also want to contribute to the lesson. As a result, there were 90% and 92.9% respectively response for both teacher

and student participation in class. 6% and 4.29% in table 19 and table 20 responded that students should do all the talking, whereas 4% and 2.86% responded that students should work alone. This indicates that the difference is so great.

This is also the main feature which distinguishes the discussion method from other teacher-dominated procedures. In this method, the teacher becomes the initiator of interaction while students become creators rather than passive recipients of ideas. The components of the atmosphere which yield effective discussion are freedom of speech which is guided by relevance; respect for the views of other members; patience to wait for every member in the group who is making contribution to the discussion, each student refraining from dominating the discussion by trying to make speeches and the presence of the types of leadership qualities which facilitate the conduct of an organized discussion.

The findings of the study showed that both the teachers and students would like to adopt the discussion teaching method because the students could easily express their views, build their self-confidence and improve English language skills, understand the lesson very well and the method catches the attention of students. Again, it seeks to satisfy the goal of education by improving academic performance.

To the teachers, the method helps to create a good rapport between the teacher and the students, students to understand the lesson better, weaker students to participate in class, students to express their views and make the lesson exciting and lively.

DISCUSSION

The study depicts tables 3 and 4, which, according to Nacino-Brown et al., illustrate that the method of teaching has broader applications in arts and social science subjects, such as Social Studies, Literature, and History.³² However, it can also be used in Science and Mathematics when the goal is to apply previously learned knowledge or when relevant controversial issues are involved. Brookfield and Perskill posit that selected subjects can be appropriate for the discussion method in relation to students who have some prior experience and knowledge in the field of some subjects.³³ If the discussion method goes off track, the nature of discussion of the discussion will show how time-consuming it is. Precious time is wasted, and the focus of the theme of the subject is not attained by the students when the discussion veers off, and it moves entirely from the theme.³⁴ The fluidity of the learning process is disturbed, and the teacher loses control.

Tables 5 and 6 indicate the importance of the method in helping the qualified teachers achieve their goal of changing attitudes as well as improving students' English language skills. For instance, Barkley et al. assert that the discussion method of teaching is likely to get at deep feelings.³⁵ It can sometimes make real changes in attitudes and behavior that are too deep for other teaching techniques to influence. The main aim of the course is to develop critical thinking skills and also to develop them as individuals in an inclusive environment. As McKeachie and Svinicki initiate, this is an effective way to present the discussion when utilized by lecturers in institutions.³⁶

Discussions help the teacher to review the students' knowledge on what is taught, and allow them to express their views and other questions to be answered.³⁷ In furtherance, teachers were asked how the discussion teaching method has helped in their teaching. They responded that it has helped to create rapport between the teacher and the students, students to understand things better, weaker students to participate in class, students to express their views and make the lesson exciting and lively.

³² F. Nacino Brown, E. Oke, and D. P. Brown, *Curriculum and Instruction: An Introduction to Methods of Teaching* (Hong Kong: Macmillan, 2017).

³³ S. D. Brookfield and S. Perskill, *Discussion as a Way of Teaching. Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

³⁴ Davis, "The Importance of Discourse in Developing Critical Thinking Skills."

³⁵ E. K. Barkley, S. K. Amedahe, and E. T. Atta, *Principles and Methods of Teaching* (Accra: Black Mask Ltd., 2019).

³⁶ W. J. McKeachie and M. Svinicki, *McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 2006).

³⁷ M. Nystrand, "Research on the Role of Discussion as It Affects Reading Comprehension," *Research in the Teaching of English* 40, no. 4 (2006): 392-412.

They were also asked if they would recommend the method to other teachers, of which 30 respondents responded yes, with the reason being that it is interactive, it is not teacher centered, and there is full participation of students.

Tables 9 and 10 explain that the teachers take into consideration the fact that students will always be able to cope with the issue(s) they present. Also, for an effective discussion to take place, the students must have assimilated data from home, field trips, and reading assignments, among others. The teacher then allows students to do most of the thinking and talking as he provides riders and cues and guides the students to infer from what they have learnt,³⁸so students readily contribute to the lesson.

There is an unwillingness by students during discussions. Students will cooperate very well when assigned discussion questions or paired to work together. Teachers should give enough o students to write down in discussions, this helps them speak up on what is written down and share more ideas. Allowing this pre-discussion activity to go on, there will be more questions asked.³⁹

When further asked about why they want to be involved in teaching and learning, students from both schools gave responses like the ability to express his/her views, build his/her self-confidence and improve English language skills, understand the lesson very well, concentrate, remove boredom in class and improve academic performance.

From the students' responses, Whitehead has this to say in the book 'Curriculum and Instruction' that the discussion teaching method helps students not only to accumulate ideas, but also to dissect and evaluate them and find wider and more practical applications for them. He further said that, as a consequence, a better understanding is ensured, making learning more meaningful and more lasting. So it improves their English language skills. Sybing indicates that platforms are there for students to engage in the discussion process.⁴⁰ There is motivation for the students when the learning process is more fascinating or intriguing. Students are able to present their ideas accordingly when there is a good classroom discussion, and critical and reflective thinking are employed by students.⁴¹

RECOMMENDATION

To determine the gaps and overcome them, teachers have to evaluate the level of student preparation through formative assessments, such as quizzes or polls, to determine what students already know. This enables the use of adaptive instructions, like a scaffold or specific reviews, to provide fair preparation for all students. To enhance the level of engagement and active learning, teachers ought to regularly integrate the discussion pedagogical approach in learning. Replacement of lectures with interactive discussions, beginning with small group discussions and then proceeding to class-wide discussions, gives students the ability to develop ideas, express opinions and work in groups. Such a regular practice can not only allow evaluating understanding in real-time by participating in it, but also allows creating a diverse classroom atmosphere through its active engagement. It improves critical thinking, memory and motivation, nurturing relevant skills needed in the real-world discourse and turns passive learning into an empowering participatory experience.

CONCLUSION

In the study, the discussion method represents a significant shift from traditional teaching approaches that focus on rote memorization and recitation. Unlike conventional methods, where students merely reproduce previously studied material, the discussion method encourages students to articulate their understanding and engage more deeply with the content. This approach allows students to learn progressively, addressing any doubts or misconceptions they may have while benefiting from peer interactions, which often leads to a better understanding of the material compared to a teacher-centered lecture. In the context of Junior High Schools in the Oforikrom Municipality, teachers are trained in various teaching methods, including lectures and demonstrations. However, there is no universally

³⁸ Barkley, Amedahe, and Atta, *Principles and Methods of Teaching* .

³⁹ W. E. Cashin, "Effective Classroom Discussion," *IDEA Paper Number 49*, 2011.

⁴⁰ Sybing, "Considerations for Discussion Activities for Beginner EFL Learners."

⁴¹ D. U. Silverthorn, "Teaching and Learning in the Interactive Classroom," *Advances in Physiology Education* 30, no. 4 (December 2006): 135-40, <https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00087.2006>.

"best" teaching method; many researchers advocate for incorporating student-centered approaches to enhance learning outcomes. Solely relying on teacher-centered methods may overlook crucial skills and learning opportunities for students. The research concludes that the effectiveness of the discussion method hinges on students' readiness, prior knowledge, and maturity.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further studies could be conducted on the connection between discussion and learning, the emotions of students during the discussion method, and determining the learning outcome of passive and active learners during a discussion method being employed.

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