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INDIVIDUALIZATION AND DIFFERENTIATION IN THE ORGANIZATION OF THE TEACHING-LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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Empiric researches have been carried out to prove the advantages of a differentiated and individualized education compared to the traditional education, which, in most of the cases, still remains a collective or frontal type of education. It is obvious that in the last decades important efforts have been made to orientate the teaching-learning activities towards differentiation and individualization. Approaches have been made for training the teachers who would possess the necessary skills for the good organization of the differentiated and individualized teaching, and great efforts have also been made for the learning institutions' modernization and endowment, so that they would meet the demands required by the differentiated and individualized teaching. Despite all these advantages and positive followings attached to the differentiated and individualized teaching, we should not bet on a single card and consider that the efficiency of the whole instructive-educative process can be obtained only by the obsessive promotion of the debated modalities.

Keywords: *Differentiation, education, potential, achievements, self-assessment, individualization.*

In today's diverse and ever-changing educational landscape, one size does not fit all. Students enter classrooms with unique needs, interests, and abilities that demand a more personalized approach to education. It is in this context that the concept of individualization has gained significant traction. Individualization in education emphasizes tailoring tea-

ching and learning experiences to meet the distinct requirements of each student, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment where every learner can thrive.

The modern school is where students must take a greater responsibility for acquiring knowledge, so the teacher becomes an organizer of the learning activity. Individual training requirements in modern school - for the permanent education, requires training and capacity building to teach him to learn, to train independently. Differentiating instruction techniques aimed a gradation of school tasks, according to the individual possibilities and own pace of development of each individual, so that the return is guaranteed for all. In this regard, we emphasize the crucial role of the teachers in generating confidence in the possibilities of the individual as to combat the inferiority complex that is lived by many who cannot achieve high performances and also to combat the uniform attitude conditions for learning and development of individuals capable of performing.

School is called to organize the teaching-learning-evaluation process so that it put the student as early as possible in possession of its own means of acquiring knowledge, to practice consistently and creatively. The "differentiated treatment" concept was approached from multiple perspectives: learning strategy optimization, dynamic process, fundamental instructional category, direction skills training teachers. As nature and human society are in progress through differentiation and not by levelling, the emphasis educators should not be placed on the operation of individual characteristics to extinction, but their respect, because through education and training, each individuality can be transformed into human personality, able to create new material and spiritual values. Differential treatment has the mission to identify the features that differentiate subjects, to establish the contribution of each other for defining of the behavior that leads to expected performance. For a differentiated treatment efficiency is required in-depth knowledge of the individual.

The content of education can be divided into basic and variable parts for the purpose of successful development of every student. The purpose of education differentiation meets the demands of humanization and humanitarization of education. It consists of creating comfortable con-

ditions in the single educational space of the country for the optimal development of the abilities, inclinations and personal qualities of an individual, for satisfying their cognitive and creative needs and interests in the process of mastering the content of education. The arguments for differentiated and individualized instruction are multiple, but all are reduced to a basic idea: the students are different among them from the „accommodation structures" point of view [6], both in terms of operational and cognitive structures. Thus, the students have different instruction needs, different reporting capabilities to the act of instruction and they outline their own instruction purposes. Differentiation as the basis for learning individualization is effective in the implementation of students' educational routes due to its "pronounced personality-oriented character" [9]. Differentiated instruction is a "complex of methodological, psychological, educational, organizational, and managerial measures" [7], providing subject specialization for various groups of students and taking into account their personal characteristics. "Differentiation allows organizing training based on the individual characteristics of a person, ensuring that all students learn the content of education" [9].

Differentiation and individualization play a crucial role in education and have several important benefits for both students and teachers. Here are some key reasons why they are important:

a) Students come to the classroom with a wide range of abilities, interests, learning styles, and prior knowledge. Differentiation helps teachers meet the individual needs of each student, ensuring that all learners can access the curriculum and make progress at their own pace.
b) When instruction is tailored to students' interests, readiness levels, and learning preferences, it increases their engagement and motivation. Differentiation and individualization allow students to connect with the content in meaningful ways and help create a positive learning environment where they feel valued and supported.
c) Differentiation and individualization recognize that students have different learning styles and preferences. By providing a variety of instructional strategies and materials, teachers can cater to visu-

al, auditory, kinesthetic, and other learning styles, enhancing students' understanding and retention of information.

d) Differentiation and individualization encourage personalized learning experiences and allows students to work at their optimal level of challenge. It enables struggling students to receive additional support and scaffolding, while high-achieving students can be provided with extension activities and opportunities for deeper exploration.
e) By tailoring instruction to individual students, differentiation and individualization can promote higher-order thinking skills. It allows students to engage in meaningful and relevant tasks that require them to analyze, evaluate, and apply their knowledge, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.
f) When students are actively engaged and challenged at their appropriate level, classroom management becomes more effective. Differentiation helps prevent boredom and disruptive behavior by providing students with tasks that are relevant, interesting, and appropriately challenging.

Implementing differentiation requires teachers to continuously assess and respond to student needs, which enhances their professional growth. Teachers develop a deeper understanding of their students, refine their instructional strategies, and become more skilled in adapting and modifying materials to support diverse learners.

Concerning the differentiation, "differentiated pedagogy followers know that each student learns in a different way, by different approaches and that at the same time each has specific skills and difficulties. In order to regulate and optimize the learning activity, they estimate that it is indispensable to try to know individual difficulties, in order to differentiate the pedagogic treatment, depending on the characteristics of each"[6]. Also, "differentiated pedagogy legitimates the collective character of the school, it allows schooling of all students, avoiding the 'standard' treatment [5] because piloting of instruction is individual. Without differentiation and individualization, the school is automatically elitist and selective and event new pedagogies create distances. Moreover, the absence of differentiation in learning determines differentiated school paths, it encourages schools to specialize undemocratically, involving students' social segregation" [2].

Referring to individualized activity [1] identifies the following advantages:

a) it facilitates the observance of working rhythms of the students which means that each one forwards into the tasks in the rhythm characterizing him. Individualized activities techniques allow everyone to follow his own path with his personal speed; those who go faster will have to perform complementary activities, too: more difficult exercises, additional reading opportunities, eventually help offered to the mates in difficulty;
b) it allows fast identification of errors made by students and also offering of exercises leading to their elimination and also the improvement of understanding processes of knowledge which students should acquire and in the situation of contemporary school this approach is facilitated by the use of computer, as it has real virtues in teaching streamlining;
c) it can better motivate students because in certain learning circumstances they can choose towards themes or tasks which are more calibrated on the opportunities they have and also which are consonant with the expectations students have in connection with this type of activity;
d) if better performing students work independently, the teacher can offer more assistance and more accentuated support to students experiencing difficulties or with special needs. In other words, in the situation of individualization it also becomes flexible the process of guiding the students so that some students beneficiate from a minimum guiding, other from a moderate one and finally those having problems can beneficiate from a maximum guiding.

By embracing individualization, teachers shift their focus from a "teach the class" approach to a "teach each student" mindset, placing the learner at the center of the educational process. At the heart of individualization lies the idea of customizing learning experiences to suit the needs of each student. This involves differentiating content, process, and products to ensure that all learners are appropriately challenged and supported. By offering a range of instructional materials, varied learning pathways, and flexible grouping strategies, teachers can create an envi-

ronment that accommodates diverse learning styles and paces. Individualization empowers students to take an active role in their learning journey. By providing opportunities for choice, autonomy, and self-directed learning, individualization fosters student agency. Students are encouraged to set goals, make decisions, and engage in critical thinking and problem-solving. This ownership over their learning enhances motivation, engagement, and a sense of responsibility, ultimately leading to improve learning outcomes.

To these advantages can be added that the individualization of the educational offer determines an active learning that, in its turn, it generates facilities in the correct significance of knowledge, in their long term better memorization, by their easier implementation.

Besides advantages, [1] identifies the following inconveniences:

- the difficulty of individualization and differentiation in very crowded classrooms where, many times, also lack learning means to support and facilitate necessary steps in this approach;
- the individualized activity poorly understood and poorly organized may, as Mialaret says, ”hide a non-activity and it may determine more catastrophic results than the ones obtained in frontal education (collective): finding of easy solutions, interest diverted to areas that do not have sufficient educational load, too indulgent self-evaluation, etc.

Teachers sometimes teach in masses sometimes in small groups and sometimes one-on-one. Each category of teaching has advantages and disadvantages. This to a larger extent depends on the learning ability and personality of students. They have been intrigued and challenged by this diversity but have not always adequately responded to student varied needs. Instead, we tend to rely on the teach to-the-middle or one-size-fits-all approach, expecting all students to do the same activity, work at the same pace, do the same homework, and take the same test.

Typically, the result is frustration on the part of many students—those who find the work unchallenging and therefore boring, those who find the work too challenging, and those whose learning styles or strengths are not engaged. And there is frustration on the part of teachers because they are not reaching every student. So, in their search to create genu-

inely challenging and engaging learning experiences for their students, many teachers have discovered that they can better meet the diverse needs of their students by differentiating instruction.

Differentiating instruction means that the teacher anticipates the differences in students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles and, as a result, creates different learning paths so that students have the opportunity to learn as much as they can as deeply as they can, without undue anxiety because the assignments are too taxing or boredom because they are not challenging enough [5].

If the same teacher teaches fifty students, why are all students not able to score well? Why are all students not able to speak up in class? The only answer is the different learning abilities of each student. Some students quickly grasp some students take time. Some students are confident, some are not. Individualized teaching is the solution to all of these. If your student is a quick grasper you can encourage them to set higher goals. If your student lacks interest in the study, you can adopt other methods to make the subject interesting to them. If your student takes time to understand, you can slow down your teaching speed. Each student has the ability to succeed, provided the teacher knows the learning ability of the student.

Individualized teaching helps to understand the student and their learning ability, recognize and respond to the unique learning styles, interests, and readiness levels of their students. They design and deliver instruction that is personalized, ensuring that each student is challenged and supported appropriately. Teachers assess students' strengths and weaknesses, and then adapt their teaching methods and materials to meet individual needs. Differentiation allows teachers to tap into the full potential of each student. By recognizing and building upon students' strengths and interests, teachers can foster engagement and motivation, leading to improved learning outcomes. They provide appropriate challenges for advanced learners while providing additional support and scaffolding for struggling students. Teachers in differentiated classrooms understand that students' social-emotional well-being is crucial for their academic success. They build strong relationships with their students, create a supportive classroom community, and provide opportunities for

collaboration and peer interaction. By recognizing and valuing students' individuality, teachers help foster positive self-esteem, self-efficacy, and a sense of belonging.

The ways through which will the differentiation and individualization be achieved, according to Nicola (2003) are:

- individualized action which takes place on the bases of frontal activities involving the whole class, all students benefit from individual treatment, subordinated to frontal activity;
- individualized actions suggested and imposed as part of the learning process, but which are done independently from it, those actions are no longer norm-oriented, but are based on deviations from the norm;
- the teacher has the chance of ensuring a complete evaluation of all the capabilities and individual experiences of each student; examples: differentiated homework, reading and additional bibliography, reports [3].

Differentiated instruction promotes higher-order thinking skills by challenging students to think critically, solve problems, and apply their knowledge in meaningful ways. Teachers in a differentiated classroom design activities and tasks that cater to different levels of complexity, allowing students to stretch their thinking and develop their analytical and creative skills. They provide timely and specific feedback that guides students' learning and helps them set goals for improvement. This individualized feedback loop supports students' growth and development.

It's important to note that the level of individualization and differentiation may vary depending on factors such as the grade level, subject area, and specific needs of the students. Teachers continually assess and adapt their instructional strategies to ensure that each student receives the appropriate level of individualized support and challenge. Here are different levels of individualization and differentiation in instructional activities:

- the content level involves providing students with different materials or resources that address their specific learning needs. This can include offering various reading materials, texts at different reading levels, or different assignments based on students' readi-

ness levels. For example, advanced students may be given more complex texts or additional research projects, while struggling students may receive simplified texts or extra practice exercises.

- the process level refers to providing students with different learning strategies, approaches, or activities to achieve the same learning objectives. This can involve offering various instructional methods such as small group discussions, hands-on experiments, multimedia presentations, or online simulations. By offering multiple pathways to learning, students with different learning styles and preferences can engage with the content in ways that are most meaningful to them.
- the product level focuses on the ways in which students demonstrate their understanding and mastery of the content. Instead of all students completing the same assessment or assignment, they are given choices and options to showcase their learning. This can include providing alternative assessments like presentations, videos, written reports, or creative projects. By allowing students to express their knowledge and skills in different ways, they can showcase their strengths and interests.
- the pace level acknowledges that students learn at different speeds. Some students may grasp concepts quickly and require additional challenges, while others may need more time and support to master the content. Teachers can provide opportunities for independent learning, self-paced activities, or additional enrichment or remediation activities to cater to the varying pace of students' learning.
- the grouping level involves organizing students into different groups based on their learning needs. This can include small group instruction, cooperative learning groups, or one-on-one teacher-student interactions. Grouping allows teachers to provide targeted instruction, support, and interventions to specific groups of students based on their abilities and needs.
- the teacher support involves providing individualized support and feedback to students. Teachers can offer one-on-one conferences, guided practice sessions, or additional resources to address spe-

cific areas of improvement or extend learning for advanced students. By providing personalized guidance and support, teachers help students progress according to their unique learning requirements.

The individualized instruction method is recommended not because it is superior to the traditional lecture and demonstration methods but because it teaches habits that will be useful for life long learning. It also encourages maximum utilization of available human resources. For example, a teacher who has developed instruction modules for a class will have time for remedial teaching while still having other students gainfully engaged in learning.

Ideally, more than one objective may be important in clothing construction and alteration, so there need to be a combination of teaching strategies experienced by students during the course of study of clothing construction and alteration to facilitate the achievement of varied objectives. Sometimes, teachers use different media, while at other times, they adopt different approaches to transmit new information. Individualized instruction can be used either on it's own or in combination with other methods because no single method can be said to be globally effective. Because of differences in learner preferences and interest, combining the individualized instruction method with other methods will increase the possibility that instructors will be reaching more students and helping them to develop their maximum capabilities [4].

Researches have proved again and again each student is different and has a different learning ability. Therefore, an individualized teaching method makes much more sense to ensure the growth of students. Learning should not be forced it should be interesting. Individualized teaching plays a huge role in making students love the matter and master the concept. To differentiate or to individualize instruction is to recognize students varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning, interests, and to react responsively. The intent of individualizing instruction is to maximize each student's growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is, and assisting in the learning process. It provides the opportunity for students to learn at their own pace, in their own way, and be successful.

Differentiated instruction allows creating the necessary pedagogical conditions for students' diverse personality development taking into account all their characteristics. Differentiation has proved its viability and importance in the process of forming the developing university environment, in educating students as future professionals with flexible, innovative thinking, high-level professional and creative abilities, and willingness to adapt to society and profession

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