

PROCESSES OF INTERACTION BETWEEN STUDENTS IN SMALL GROUPS BASED ON A DIFFERENTIATED APPROACH

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Annotation: In the modern socio-economic conditions of our society, the main task of education is to educate and educate a competitive person and citizen who is able to think creatively and find non-standard solutions to various problems. The modern lesson has always been the subject of professional disputes. Carefully observing the students, the teacher sees that some of them have unstable attention, it is difficult for them to concentrate on the educational material, others strive for mechanical memorization of the rules, and others are slow in work.

Key words: memorization, special subjects, individual, classrooms, backgrounds, differentiated, flexibility.

We presented a number of instructional strategies that teachers can use to differentiate instruction. One of the most important strategies is a teacher working with a small group of students. With 6 or 8 students in close proximity the teacher can ask individual questions and ascertain where students are stuck or when they are ready to move ahead.

Learning stations are useful for differentiation. They are areas in the room where the students go to do specified work. Instructions at the station provide guidance on how to complete work appropriately, how to get help, where to put completed work and so on. Learning contracts are another helpful strategy. They allow teachers to design tasks targeted to particular student needs and also to give all students some in-common tasks. Typically, students have the same number of

tasks on their contracts and are all working on the same fundamental learning goals, but the work can emphasize a student's particular next steps toward those goals. Edwards and Pula discussed conferencing as a differentiated strategy to improve writing skills and ensure student success. Other differentiation strategies include "tiered activities," where the teacher keeps the concepts and skills the same for each student but provides "routes of access" that vary in complexity, abstractness, and open-endedness.

Teachers may also use interest centers and anchor activities, focusing on the diverse needs of the individual learners. But in spite of the many available strategies, Adami indicated that unfortunately many teachers still favor the whole-class teaching strategy rather than flexible grouping based on readiness, interests, or learning profile. Students' gender, culture, learning style, and intelligence preference can shape their learning profile.

Cusumano and Mueller reported on their elementary school's effort at implementing differentiated instruction to address their students' diverse learning needs. The school's API scores increased steadily and their AYP targets were met. Concurrently, there was a significant decline in student discipline referrals; teacher morale was higher; and there was remarkable improvement in students' reading, writing, and math performance levels. A key method used was fluid and flexible groupings through requisite assessment and continuous progress monitoring. In another study differentiated instruction based on

students' readiness, interests and learning profile led to enhanced achievement, study habits, social interaction,

cooperation, attitude toward school, self-worth, motivation and engagement.

Differentiated instruction can also demonstrate institutional effectiveness and equip students with diverse learning experiences to highly respond to increased challenges in the global society. In higher education teaching is becoming more challenging as student populations become more culturally, socially, and academically diverse and the notion of "one-size-fits-all" does not work effectively. Unfortunately, differentiated instruction is not readily implemented in college, despite evidence supporting learning gains and other benefits in grades kindergarten. This study included an extensive review of the literature to establish a theoretical basis for differentiated instruction, to conceptualize and refine the three basic areas of differentiated instruction, and to determine some key differentiated instructional strategies that have promise for success with students with varying learning styles and abilities. A further objective of the study was to develop a survey instrument and assess the learning characteristics of a select population to determine their interest, abilities, and learning styles to which recommendations could be made on how instruction might be differentiated to meet their academic needs.

After reviewing the literature, a survey instrument was developed and validated to assess the learning characteristics of students. The instrument was constructed around tenets of the theories of multiple intelligences and brain instruction. The five-component questionnaire, consisting of 25 items, was first presented to a graduate class in advanced assessment to validate its authenticity. Nine graduate students reviewed the draft and made comments for its improvement. Their comments were taken into consideration to formulate the final instrument, which was then administered to a class of undergraduate teacher education candidates. The subjects for the study were 30 undergraduate teacher education majors enrolled in a basic course in special education. Their majors included elementary education, special education, physical education, and speech pathology and they were of junior or senior classification. The descriptive information provided from the survey instrument was submitted to data analysis. The findings are presented in tabular form and key observations are discussed and implications are offered.

Findings To keep the study in perspective, the findings begin with key tenets of differentiated instruction as reported in the review of literature. Afterward, findings are reported from the administration of the survey instrument.

Key tenets of differentiated instructions Several core principles guide differentiated instruction. First, teachers should articulate what is essential for students to learn, which helps to link assessment to curriculum and instruction. Second, teachers should attend to student differences. Third, students must participate in meaningful work. Fourth, teachers and students must collaborate in learning.

Fifth, teachers should be flexible in their use of groups and whole class discussion. Sixth, differentiated instruction is proactive rather than reactive, addressing learner variance from the outset. And finally, space, time and materials should be used flexibly to suit the needs of various learners. In perspective, differentiated instruction is not synonymous with individualized instruction, which could be overwhelming too time-consuming; it is not to be used during every class, whole class instruction is still purposefully used; it does not result in

an unbalanced workload for students, they just work at suitable levels; and there is no one way to differentiate instruction, it is as varied as the needs of the students.

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