

## Effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction in Higher Education



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**ABSTRACT:** The main purpose of differentiated learning is to provide opportunities for continuous development to any learner and relies on the existence of significant differences between learners. Teaching environment and instruction strategies created according to readiness, learning style, age and interests increase the learner's motivation, involvement, the degree of achievement of the result, which lies in the formation of knowledge, skills and attitudes according to individual ability.

The differentiation theory is employed in two different formats, the first based on teaching activities designed to take into account all learners' modalities, when the student achieves maximum understanding of the issue with the activity corresponding to his/her dominant modality, and the second format is designed to form groups according to the learning modality and to select appropriate assignments for them; the weakness of the latter is the recognition of the student's modality by the teacher. According to studies, the desired result is given by the mixed use of both formats.

**KEYWORDS:** Differentiated learning; Developmental assessment; Learning modality; Readiness; Learning style; Interests; Motivation; Learning format.

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The goal of differentiated learning is to create equal learning conditions for all learners (students, pupils, adults) and to achieve their maximal involvement in the learning process.

In the teaching process, the lecturer / teacher / trainer should constantly change differentiated instruction strategies and often test the effectiveness of the strategies used through a variety of developmental assessment methods.

The main purpose of differentiated learning is for any learner to have:

- possibility of continuous development – regardless of his/her age, initial knowledge and skills;
- lifelong learning, which is a long-term goal of personal development.

The theory of teaching differentiation is based on the conclusion that there are significant differences between learners. Teaching environment and applied instruction strategies created according to readiness, learning style, age and interests increase the learner's motivation, involvement, quality of achievement and enable the learner to develop high level of thinking skills (analysis, critical, creative and reflexive) in addition to the in-depth factual knowledge.

By differentiating the instruction, it is possible to provide equal assistance to all learners in the process of acquiring knowledge and to achieve appropriate success. The key is to use the individual approach correctly, which means identifying students' needs in a timely manner and offering them appropriate learning strategies.

There is no ideal way for a teacher to deal with every student's problem. The theory of differentiation, which recognizes the existence of significant differences between students, helps us to solve the problem.

Differentiated instruction strategies are already successfully introduced in the educational institutions, which mostly means building scaffolding according to the individual learning needs of students and ensuring "transition" from the current student development zone to the nearest development zone (Vygotski).

Teaching activities are often used when working with students with academic difficulties: re-instruction of any given issue using a different method and creating opportunities for students to work and assist with classmates while completing an assignment.

As mentioned above, differentiated teaching methods should be tailored to the needs of learners – readiness, interests and learning style.

Readiness is conditioned by the learner's prior knowledge and experience. Interests depend on the topics that arouse curiosity in them. Learning style is different for everyone – creating an appropriate learning environment and properly planning the learning process have great importance.

Observations and studies conducted in general education institutions have shown the effectiveness of the use of differentiated teaching strategies. Conducted research has found that when planning a differentiated learning process, the teacher

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considers the above factors (readiness, interests and learning style) and differentiates according to one of them. This (differentiation) theory offers strategies that help the instructor to create special conditions for each student for the purpose better managing the learning process and achieving high level of results; to this end, the instructor uses a variety of learning materials, different assignments and practices.

Studies have shown that in the practical application of the theory of differentiation, the teacher is guided by the general principles of class / group / audience facilitation, which take into account the individual needs of each student. Therefore, the activities carried out during the instruction process are constantly changing according to the readiness, interests and learning style of the students.

The study of the differentiated instruction process revealed the factors to be considered by teachers when planning the instruction process:

outlining the main concepts of a particular topic;

- identification of differences between learners;
- establishment of a link between instruction and developmental assessment;
- constant monitoring and regulation of content, process and outcome;
- setting as the main goal individual success of learners and their constant growth;
- constant maneuvering and appropriate adjustment at all stages of the learning process – planning, teaching, assessment.

Studies have also shown that in the practical application of the theory of differentiation in the classroom / auditorium, the teacher modifies the teaching material, learning resource and learning environment for the following purposes:

- all learners are given the opportunity to study;
- learner's motivation is enhanced;
- instruction effectiveness is increased.

All goals are related to the learner's readiness, interest and learning style.

When planning a differentiated learning process, the teacher often uses information about students' learning modalities to achieve the outcomes relevant to the learning objective. Through the activities planned by the teacher, the student is provided with the learning material in the appropriate modality and all activities are related to the student's readiness, interest and learning style.

The theory of differentiation is applied in a variety of formats:

1. Learning materials and activities are designed for students of all modalities;
2. Groups are formed in the class / auditorium according to the learning modality, and for each group, a corresponding exercise / task is created.

When using the first format, the learner learns in all modalities, however, one of them is dominant. While learning in this format, the learner will achieve maximum understanding of the issue through activities corresponding to the dominant modality. The basis for the success of instruction in the first format is the correct selection of activities by the teacher for the students of all three modalities.

The second format assumes that a learner learns in a dominant modality. Instruction using this format is successful if the teacher accurately recognizes the modality of the learner. However, according to the results of studies, cases of errors in determining the modality of students by the teacher were often reported.

Available research suggest that the desired result is achieved by the mixed use of both formats.

## USED LITERATURE

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