TOPIC 8: Differentiation, Individualisation, and Learner Autonomy – KEY

Before you read: Did you notice any differences in your school days between (you and) your classmates? If so, can you describe some? Take notes.

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

TASK: Read the texts and fill in the preparation sheet.

|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

1) Differentiation and individualisation

Differentiation is a pedagogical concept going back to the sixties. There are two types of differentiation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External differentiation</th>
<th>Internal differentiation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>→ is induced by school organisational structures and educational policy.</td>
<td>→ can be influenced by teachers, students, or parents.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Some researchers use differentiation and individualisation as synonyms whereas others consider the latter one as the maximum form of differentiation (e.g. Eisenmann) focussing on the individuality of each student. In order to be able to implement individualisation methodologically it requires scaffolding. The zone of proximal development (ZDP) refers to Lev Vygotsky’s constructivist learning theory of scaffolding. It can be implemented by flexible grouping and tiered assignments which consist of three different tasks:

| Modified tasks: (e.g.) for those who need more support or guidance |
| Core tasks: apply to most of the students, serve as reference for the other two tasks |
| Extended tasks: (e.g.) for students who need greater challenge, for faster/better ones |

2) Key principles of differentiation

Eisenmann identifies five key principles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variety of methods</th>
<th>using different methodological approaches and activities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holistic approach</td>
<td>multisensory learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open forms of teaching and learning</td>
<td>refers to activities that enhance learning opportunities or broaden them beyond formal education systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative learning</td>
<td>working together in teams, either in groups or pairs</td>
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</table>
Variety of materials and media | providing learners with a wide range of them which at best students choose their own

Those key principles are based on Carol Ann Tomlinson’s key principles of a differentiated classroom.

### 3) Fields of differentiation

Explain/name the following fields of differentiation:

- **Methods**: e.g. content is developed by using different approaches, e.g. analytical, cognitive, or creative methods and a selection of closed and open tasks
- **Quality**: tasks varying in their level of difficulty and complexity, e.g. for different language proficiencies
- **Products**: e.g. students choose their form of presentation, e.g. scenic, poster, or PowerPoint presentations or creating a film or podcast

Name three other fields of differentiation: ___________, _______________, _____________,
(selection from: learning objectives, contents, materials/media, participatory structures, quantity, homework, tools, cooperation/flexible grouping, evaluation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages of quantity</th>
<th>Problem areas of quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e.g.</td>
<td>e.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students can work in their own pace</td>
<td>• Might be seen as punishment/extra work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relatively easy to prepare for the teacher; not very time-consuming</td>
<td>• Consequence: faster students might work slower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• …</td>
<td>• …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4) Methods of differentiation

Steps of independent study:

Other methods of differentiation are weekly plan, learning at work stations, PBL, task based learning (TBL), extensive reading and keeping a reading log.

TBL has three steps:

- **Pretask**: E.g. any group/pair work with a lot of talking time for each student: e.g. speculate about the cover with TPS (think-pair-share), placemat, ...
- **During-task**: E.g. reading log, writing an alternative ending, design a poster/alternative cover, shoot a trailer for a film, hot seat, role plays, ...
- **Post-task**: E.g. reflecting on process and product, preparing a presentation, providing information and materials, working on a thematic focus, prividing information and materials, developing a work plan, finding a topic and group formation.

Think of differentiating activities for the following steps of TBL you could do when teaching literature:

**Pre-task**: E.g. any group/pair work with a lot of talking time for each student: e.g. speculate about the cover with TPS (think-pair-share), placemat, ...

**Post-task**: E.g. reading log, writing an alternative ending, design a poster/alternative cover, shoot a trailer for a film, hot seat, role plays, ...

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1) Learners as individuals

According to Surkamp/Viebrock learners differ according to their prior experience, social background, cognitive abilities, learning styles, known languages, motivation, strategies and interests.

Think of three other aspects not mentioned in the article in which students might differ:

- E.g. age
- E.g. gender

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**Literature**

→ e.g. cultural background/experiences

2) Differentiation

Differentiated and individualised learning means giving students choices regarding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tasks</th>
<th>topics</th>
<th>Social forms</th>
<th>materials</th>
<th>methods</th>
<th>Learning strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Differentiation on task level:

- **quantitative**
  - Reduction or expansion of activities/material
- **qualitative**
  - Variation of the level of difficulty or complexity of tasks

Surkamp/Viebrock: “The term differentiation describes the use of strategies and techniques to teach groups of learners with different abilities, interest and learning needs.

3) Learner autonomy

For promoting learner autonomy students need to be given responsibility for and control over their own learning. How can this be done?

→ Support of the use of learning strategies
→ learning environments that allow collaboration and reflection

Examples of learning strategies:

→ guessing meaning of unknown words from the context
→ using visual support for learning vocabulary
→ focusing on key information in a text

Holec (1981): “Learner autonomy focuses on the ability to plan, monitor and evaluate one’s learning process and is seen as a prerequisite for self-directed learning.”