

DIFFERENTIATION: YOUR RESPONSIBILITY



**AN IN-SERVICE TRAINING PACK
FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

by

Tricia Barthorpe and John Visser

A NASEN PUBLICATION

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Master Sheets for OHP transparencies and handouts

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Introduction

Differentiation from Warnock to ERA

Over the last few years, the word differentiation has crept into the language of teachers and others concerned with education. Many use it without stopping to examine the precise meaning of the term (others might believe that it is something that they are already doing). Its full implications are not always understood and because of this, there is always a danger that, in common with other educational innovations, it will fall into disuse with teachers saying, 'Oh, I tried it but it didn't work', before passing on to the next bandwagon.

Differentiation is concerned with the delivery of the curriculum and its assessment. In attempting to define what differentiation is, it is necessary to state the underlying premise upon which it rests. It is also necessary to state from the outset that it is not a new name for mixed ability teaching. Good mixed ability teaching requires skilled differentiation on the part of teachers. It is necessary in order to give credence to a statement in the Warnock report:

"The purpose of education for all children is the same; the goals are the same. But the help that individual children need in progressing towards them will be different."

This is reinforced by the 1988 Education Act which provides a legal framework within which all children are entitled to a broad and balanced curriculum. It is now part of a 'standard' professional description of pupils' entitlement curriculum, that is, a broad balanced and differentiated curriculum relevant to their needs (NCC, 1989). If we are to educate all pupils effectively along the lines of a common curriculum, then we will need to find ways of responding to the individual characteristics of each pupil.

Differentiation is based on an understanding of individual differences, also the worth and value of each pupil's learning. Because of these fundamental precepts, teachers need to differentiate in their curriculum planning. In order to differentiate, all teachers will need:

- a clear understanding of the ways in which children learn;
- an analysis of the knowledge and skills which comprise a particular learning task;
- a heightened awareness of possible obstacles to successful learning, some of which might unwittingly be caused by teachers themselves;
- procedures for observing children on task in the learning situation;
- an understanding of the ways in which this data can be utilised in order to structure learning situations which will ensure success for pupils with special needs;
- to work closely with colleagues who have specialised knowledge and expertise in the area of special needs;
- knowledge of designing and implementing carefully structured programmes which enable learning to take place in successful steps.

All of these factors have implications for lesson planning and evaluation. These are not always as thoroughly completed as they might be, often for genuine reasons. But they are crucial to the process of differentiation.

Who is the Pack for?

The pack has been devised in order to help teachers lead staff development training sessions.

What is the aim of the Pack?

It aims to provide an introductory framework which will help schools to:

- formulate policies and practice for themselves;
- make the National Curriculum (NC) as differentiated and accessible as possible to the full range of children;
- assist in providing a mutual support network in a school or in a group of schools in order to develop good practice.

What is in the Pack?

Sections in this pack can be used separately and copied. As well as the Introduction, the pack comprises:

- a set of masters for making OHPs;
- a set of handout sheets for distribution;
- a list of practical hints for using the materials;
- a description of ways in which the materials have already been used successfully with various groups.

The masters for OHPs and handouts are:

- to summarise issues;
- to raise points for discussion and clarification;
- to pose questions;
- designed to help planning to meet pupils needs in the context of particular schools or clusters of schools.

How to make best use of the pack.

You are recommended to:

- read the hints for making a successful presentation;
- familiarise yourself thoroughly with the materials;
- have access to an overhead projector (OHP).

How is the material arranged?

It is arranged in three short sections:

Section 1 - Understanding of the 'term'.(OHPs 1 and 2)
Address the definition of the 'term'.

Section 2 - What pupils bring to their learning (OHP3) Handout-OHP3

Section 3 - Differentiation in the classroom. (OHP 4)
(OHP 5) Handout-OHP 5
(OHP 6) Handout-OHP 6
(OHP 7) Handout-OHP 7
(OHP 8) Handout-OHP 8

Suggestions for using the pack in staff development sessions

Successful Delivery

Successful delivery can be achieved by:

- Matching your objectives to the relevant sections, perhaps selecting only a few transparencies.
- Duplicating the relevant handout sheets for those OHP transparencies beforehand.
- Colouring parts of OHP transparency sheet to emphasise important or different points.
- Trying out the OHP sheets on the projector before the participants arrive. Check on focus and visibility.
- Help the audience to concentrate on one point at a time by using a piece of paper to mask the parts of the OHP sheets not at the moment being discussed.

Ways of using the staff development material

Example 1 - A non-contact day with secondary/high school and support service colleagues.

- Specific themes for the session were identified:
 - a. what pupils bring to their learning;
 - b. differentiation of the curriculum;
 - c. making differentiated materials.
- The OHP on *What Pupils Bring to Their Learning* (OHP 3) was selected.
- Participants moved into smaller groups to agree/disagree/add or delete points to the handouts.
- They were then asked to report back any major changes to the OHP using flip chart summaries.
- A discussion was held on how this knowledge would influence the approach to the curriculum through differentiated materials.
- Details of where this pack might be obtained were displayed.

Discussion Questions and Development Ideas

- What could teachers take away from the session which might influence their personal practice?
- How does their personal style of teaching or classroom management compare?
- Discuss how a suitable topic might be delivered to a group of pupils in such a way that there is differentiated learning. (A workshop approach to preparation of materials could prove very beneficial here.)
- A plenary session to reflect on the day's work and progress and to indicate what needs to be done might be arranged in order:
 - a. to complete the present task;
 - b. to target future staff development.

Example 2 - Staff development in a rural primary school (two 'twilight' staff meetings).

- *Differentiation* (OHP 1) was shown and the handout sheet distributed.
- A National Curriculum scheme of work that had already been attempted was used to identify areas of concern which had arisen during teaching.
- One at a time, the areas were matched on OHP 1 to those areas of concern related to planning and organisation.
- This led into work on differentiation (see OHP 1). Questions were raised as to how that work could have been better matched to various pupils' needs and attainments.
- Preparation of future work for next term was organised so that the scheme contained increased differentiation.
- Staff were informed of other aspects in the Development Pack.

Example 3 - A NARE branch meeting.

- The format of the pack for delivering INSET was introduced.
- The target audience was clarified: e.g. primary, secondary, INSET providers.
- The four areas from the *Differentiation: Your Responsibility* pack were highlighted:
 - a. Planning for Differentiation;
 - b. Organising for Differentiation;
 - c. Teaching Styles for Differentiation;
 - d. Pupils' Learning Styles.
- As an example, *Teaching Styles for Differentiation* (OHP 7) was taken and the audience was asked to define:
 - whole class;
 - group work;
 - paired work;
 - partnerships;
 - resource led;
 - individualised;
 - analysis of task.
- A flip chart/OHP list of definitions and examples was compiled and discussed.
- Negotiations to set up a network of local teachers (in school clusters etc.) were encouraged to facilitate discussion and mutual support on meeting needs and influencing colleagues in schools.
- Other OHP sheets proved useful for stimulating future network meetings.
- Details of where this pack could be obtained were displayed.

MASTERS FOR OHPs

Section 1: An understanding of the term

Section 2: What pupils bring to their learning

Section 3: Differentiation in the classroom

Differentiation: Your Responsibility

Section A: An understanding of the term

Teachers' understanding of the term *differentiation* appears to vary considerably. It is a complex notion related to the ways in which they provide for variations in the interests, aptitudes and abilities of children.

Some possible areas for consideration are:

1. matching work to the child's previous experience
2. valuing differences in outcome
3. their differing speeds in completing work
4. parts of a complete piece of work tackled by different children
5. a consideration of different forms of input
6. varying styles of teaching
7. available resources
8. the additional help needed by certain pupils in terms of skills/resources/materials
9. the amount of revision or reinforcement required by different groups of children
10. extension activities required for some groups/individuals
11. strategies to ensure understanding
12. matching curriculum to pupils' motivational levels

*(with acknowledgements to Vanessa Gordon,
Northamptonshire)*

Differentiation: Your Responsibility

1. Differentiation is necessary to identify and meet the needs of every individual pupil within the classroom setting.

2. There is a necessity for differentiated tasks appropriate to individual pupil's ability, aptitude and developmental stage. Meeting these needs is the major responsibility of all teachers.

Differentiation: Your Responsibility

Section 2: What Pupils Bring to Their Learning

All pupils are different and come to learning with the following:

- Differences in abilities**
- Interests**
- Feelings**
- First hand experiences**
- Environments**
- Resources**
- Expectations**
- Needs**
- Thoughts**

Account will need to be taken of the differences in:

- Intervention**
- Assessment**
- Time**
- Involvement**
- Outcome**
- Necessary support**

Differentiation: Your Responsibility

Differences in abilities

Children have different abilities. We need to utilise children's different abilities when devising teaching strategies. We need to ensure that there is equality of opportunity in order that each child can achieve his or her potential. Acknowledge children's differences, make allowances for them and build upon them in the learning situation. They are not all capable of doing everything equally well.

Interests

Pupils come to learning with a range of different interests. Capitalise upon pupils' different interests and utilise them to advantage in the learning situation. A topic or project developed around an individual's particular interest will have a considerable motivational effect. The interests that children have are wide and varied and should not be overlooked either in the planning or delivery of a piece of learning.

Feelings

Children who come to school feeling confident and with a positive self image will perform to the upper limits of their ability. The feeling of well-being is enhanced through meaningful learning experiences in the curriculum which ensure continued success. Teachers should reinforce this feeling of well-being by the provision of relevant and successful learning experiences.

An individual's personal feelings as a learner directly affects the way in which he or she performs and ultimately achieves.

There remain many children who come to school without confidence in themselves as learners. Schools need to assess the degree to which they might have contributed to such a situation. Also, teachers' personal feelings about pupils will affect their learning.

Firsthand experiences

The context in which learning takes place is very important in achieving successful learning. Children bring with them to the classroom experiences of successful learning. These are often not school-based and are certainly not solely school-based. They come from their daily experiences of living. Often, these experiences involve skills and abilities which are needed in school but, because the context of the learning is not familiar to the child or explained, the child fails to use them. Pupils often fail to make the conceptual links between the task as presented by the teacher and the task they solve in the real world. Knowledge relevant to the task in school sometimes fails to be utilised by the pupil because of teaching methods.

Differentiation: Your Responsibility

Environments

Teachers have long known that the environment from which a child comes has a crucial effect upon his or her functioning in school. This is so whether we are talking about deprivation in terms of housing conditions or home circumstances. Various studies in the 1960s and 1970s concentrated on these factors and showed high correlations between variables such as family size, social class, one parent families and the like, and failure at school. It is a pity that none of these studies examined why some children from these backgrounds succeeded in school. It is too easy, however debilitating the home environment, to blame it for the lack of progress made by children. As later studies have shown, teachers and schools can and have made a difference. It is possible to use the environment in a positive manner, valuing the child's circumstance without necessarily condoning it. All environments have their disadvantages. Our role as teachers should be to maximise and use positively the environment from which the child comes.

Resources

Children are very resourceful. In our teaching we need a variety of approaches which often require pieces of equipment and materials. Teachers often spend large amounts of time preparing these or obtaining them, even occasionally not doing something because "I've not got the right equipment". By involving children in the project or experiment, they have the opportunity to contribute, often being able to suggest alternative ways of achieving the same end, or of obtaining the equipment required.

Expectations

Have you ever wondered what children think about on their way to school each morning? Amongst the many things which crowd into their minds must be something about expectations. They come in with expectations that their teacher(s) will be there, wanting to teach them with an exhilaration and excitement born of wishing to see children learn. They come with an expectation that, before they go home that day, they will build upon previous learning to acquire new relevant knowledge and skills. If these statements ring hollow for us as teachers, we should at the very least ask ourselves why. Surely, these expectations are justifiable: why else should we ask children to sit in our classes? What expectations would you like your pupils to have of your lessons?

Differentiation: Your Responsibility

Needs

All learners, including teachers, have learning needs. Some of these are common, some are individual, some are long-term, some are short-term. All learners' needs need to be met as effectively as possible. It is important to recognise that some learners will require additional support in order to tackle more difficult tasks.

Thoughts

Children have very differing thoughts about both school work and teachers. They do not always regard what they learn in school as having any relevance to their own situation or future needs. Often it is very difficult for them to transfer their thoughts to other situations, or to identify the actual task being asked of them. Their own personal thoughts and knowledge are often an untapped resource, giving a different perspective on the task being undertaken. Teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions should generate a variety of learning situations to allow such personal thoughts to be shared.

Intervention

Flexibility and a range of alternative strategies are imperative in differentiating the amount of intervention given to pupils in the learning situation. Some children are actually restricted by too much intervention whilst others receive none at all, continuing with an imperfectly understood learning situation that could perhaps have been prevented. Often intervention is either too late or too soon. Experienced professionals allow for varying forms of intervention to be part of the overall classroom organisation. In both planning and delivery it is vitally important to be aware of intervention strategies e.g. when to listen, when to question, and when to facilitate through hardware or other aids.

Assessment (See *Assessment of Need* under *Planning for Differentiation*.)

Time

Time is a finite quantity and teachers will never have enough of it. However, do we as teachers always make the best use of time and are we effective managers of it? Careful planning of time allocation allows pupils to be set different tasks thus freeing the teacher to respond to individual needs. If clear goals are set and aimed for, time wasting and unnecessary repetition can be eliminated.

Differentiation: Your Responsibility

Involvement

Pupils need to be involved in their learning. Involvement related to their interests and first hand experiences should always be a major consideration in classroom preparation and planning. *'I listen and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand'* has enabled the majority of pupils to be involved in their learning. A negotiated curriculum between the teacher and learner is a far better means of motivation to pupils than an enforced one.

Outcome

Traditionally the written outcome of the learning task has often been viewed as the indicator of understanding and progress. That outcome has often been further compared to another pupil's performance and found to be deficient in either quality/presentation/length or other measurable criteria. A move towards an awareness of the process that the child has passed through, rather than the end product, has led to different outcomes being more acceptable than previously. Individual records/profiles of achievement etc. involving self assessment, along with differing forms of presentation greatly assist the pupils' feelings about the final production and outcome of their learning.

Necessary Support

In a warm and conducive learning environment, individual support can be given without stigma or loss of self image. The necessary expertise in terms of personnel, materials and hardware should be sought at as early a stage as possible. Support can be given through extra help, in-class support, parental involvement, withdrawal, outside agencies etc. and should always be coordinated and reviewed regularly.

Differentiation: Your Responsibility

Section 3 : Differentiation in the Classroom

Planning for differentiation:

- a. assessment of need
- b. prioritising the curriculum
- c. matching the needs and delivery
- d. ensuring access to all
- e. lesson evaluation
- f. record keeping

Organising for differentiation:

- a. classroom organisation
- b. support arrangements/utilisation of teachers' time
- c. management of on-task supervision
- d. assessment of materials

Teaching styles for differentiation:

- a. class teaching/whole group access
- b. small group work
- c. paired/shared work
- d. pupil-teacher partnerships
- e. resource-led learning
- f. individualised work
- g. careful analysis of learning tasks

Pupils learning styles:

- a. paired/shared learning experiences
- b. free choice of groupings
- c. full access through hardware and software
- d. successful learning
- e. feedback from learning
- f. celebrating success

Planning for Differentiation

Assessment

Priorities

Matching

Ensuring Access

Evaluation

Recording

Planning for Differentiation

Assessment of need

All teaching should begin from a child's current achievements. In this sense, differentiation is child-centred. It is necessary to start from the child's existing understanding. We need to know how he or she is going about the process of learning. Particular skills may need teaching and assessment of needs should look at the ways in which learning is achieved. In identifying the learning experiences of children, the teacher can then enable them to maximise the strategies which they employ. Whilst checklists do have a value in identifying those skills which pupils have or have not mastered, insightful observation of them tackling a particular learning task is more likely to yield precise knowledge of their individual learning styles.

Prioritisation within the curriculum

The curriculum has become very crowded. The traditional response of the teaching profession, as far as special needs children are concerned, has been to omit sections of the curriculum, thus producing an unbalanced and narrow diet. The results have sometimes led to courses which *purport* to give children basic skills, but actually give them a curriculum consisting of more of what they cannot do. Often it is the context of the curriculum in which pupils' failure persists.

Clearly defined objectives are required which the teacher can share with the child. These should be expressed in terms of what is to be achieved, why and how it is to be achieved. Targets should be set which are short-term and achievable. These require the teacher to be very clear about the knowledge, concepts and skills that are needed in any particular topic. Bear in mind the necessity for a broad and balanced curriculum. Here, the framework of the National Curriculum can help in checking just what the child has covered.

Matching the needs and delivery

The cutting edge of differentiation lies in matching the teacher's delivery to individual needs. In setting the child's cognitive activities, the teacher is providing learning opportunities for the child. These opportunities need to be perceived as relevant to the child. For the child to remain motivated, the mental activities which she or he is being asked to undertake need to be purposeful.

Ensuring access to the curriculum

To what extent are children's learning difficulties teacher-generated? Teachers generally put a high value on children assimilating the curriculum content. Whilst not underemphasising

its value, this is only one aspect of curriculum development. Rather than absorbing large numbers of facts, some of which will quickly become redundant in a rapidly changing modern world, the most important skills which pupils need to acquire are those concerned with learning how to learn. By over-emphasising content, teachers may omit to pay attention to the ways in which individuals will respond to what they are going to teach.

Evaluating Lessons

For differentiation to work effectively, it will be necessary to devote more time to the evaluation of lessons. It is a crucial part of the planning process. Time spent on evaluation leads to a time saving in the planning and delivery of future teaching. The following set of questions based upon work with teachers and students in evaluating classroom practice is useful guidance.

- What did I do?
- What did the children do?
- What did I learn?
- What did the children learn?

Therefore:

- What will I do next?
- How will this be incorporated into the next lesson?

This will take some time, particularly when first introduced. However, if used systematically, the eventual time taken will be reduced dramatically. "Answers" to these questions can be sought not only by the teacher reflecting upon the lesson but also by obtaining feedback from the children. Pupils' explanations of the task which they have performed will not only serve to provide teachers with some indication of the ways in which they have approached the learning tasks but also give some indication of the efficacy of the teaching.

Record-keeping

Record-keeping is necessary for teachers as some part of their professional role. It is also an important way in which the child and the teacher can celebrate success. Celebrating success is a necessary part of motivation for everyone. Without it, both teacher and taught will progress very slowly, if at all.

Organising for Differentiation

Classroom

Support

Time

Management

Materials

Organising for Differentiation

Classroom organisation

Classroom organisation is a critical point for the success of any teaching. The teacher requires an intimate knowledge of the children to be taught which cannot only be gained from teaching the children, but also from the written or spoken comments of other teachers. Good teaching does not just happen. To the uninitiated casual observer, it might seem that way, particularly if he or she is with a very skilled teacher. However, this smoothness of operation is only achieved by understanding the children, appreciating their strengths and weaknesses, and the particular ways in which they operate both as individuals and in groups. The skilled teacher uses this information to provide situations where children achieve the maximum learning with the minimum amount of disruptive behaviour. It is of crucial importance to realise that the classroom or learning situation does need organising for effective learning to take place.

Support arrangements and teacher time

Increasingly, support teaching has come to mean that the special needs teacher works in close cooperation with the classroom teacher, particularly in the secondary sector. However, in practice, it can mean that the support teacher becomes little more than an extra pair of hands in the classroom. This is hardly an effective use of a scarce resource or an effective way of differentiating the delivery of the curriculum. The support teacher needs to contribute to both pre- and post-lesson planning. It is here that he or she can make an effective contribution to the differentiation of the lessons.

Management of on task supervision

Without good control, no lesson is effective. Providing a differentiated curriculum cannot be done in a laissez-faire classroom. Discipline is a much misunderstood word in teaching circles. The concentrated look on a pupil's features as he or she engages in an activity which he or she finds all absorbing is the first step for the child in achieving self-discipline. Managing on-task behaviour is what the teacher has to undertake. It is made easier in a differentiated curriculum where the task is set at a level the child can achieve and the task has a relevancy which is perceived by the child. The context provides a powerful ethos in which to work on task is to gain some sense of worthwhileness. The child's self-esteem is enhanced and she or he is much less likely to be disruptive since the principal reasons for being disruptive have been taken care of.

In order to achieve this, the teacher needs to have a set of rules which are clear to the children and are fairly enforced.

Assessment of materials

Assessing materials to be placed in front of children is an important activity for all teachers who are concerned with special needs pupils. Readability levels have restricted many pupils to uninteresting materials which were supposedly matched to their needs, money having been spent on simplified texts and worksheets which pupils promptly dismissed as being too "babyish".

In preparing worksheets, teachers do need to be careful when considering factors such as layout, number of new concepts on one sheet, and the way explanations are given. However, differentiation does not mean that the text has to be simplified to the point of having only one concept on a sheet and explanations being monosyllabic, thereby underestimating what special needs pupils can achieve. A range of materials is required which enables all children to gain information from a variety of formats. The ways in which children gain access to information on a particular topic should also be addressed, for example by using the DARTS materials. (Lunzer and Gardner, 1984).

Group Work

Paired Work

Developing Partnerships

Resource Led

Individualised

Analysis of

Teaching Styles for Differentiation

Whole Class

Group Work

Paired Work

Developing Partnerships

Resource Led

Individualised

Analysis of Tasks

OHP 7

Teaching Styles for Differentiation

Teaching styles for differentiation

Flexibility is the keyword in any discussion about teaching styles. No one method is correct for any one child for the whole time. Children need to be in different groupings to achieve different tasks. The appropriateness of any particular grouping depends upon the task being set; the child's learning needs; the space available and the teacher's needs. Listed below is a range of different groups in which children could be placed for learning.

- a. class teaching (whole group) access;
- b. small group work;
- c. paired/shared work;
- d. pupil-teacher partnerships;
- e. resource-led learning;
- f. individualised work;
- g. analysis of tasks.

There are many occasions when a child requires some individualised instruction. This may be to master a particular skill or to gain an understanding of a particular piece of learning. However, these sessions should not be for long periods of time. (If you are finding something difficult, you don't want to spend long stretches of time on it.) Short bursts of concentrated effort are usually more productive than whole lessons devoted to a particular skill.

Another factor to be borne in mind is that of the nature of the task being set. Often, in individualised work, the task is insufficiently cognitively engaging and is divorced from the whole task. Rote activities are not necessarily an effective use of an individual's time.

Individual programmes cut down the amount of time a pupil can engage in social learning and serious consideration to the right balance should be given in planning. It is often the case that, when working with others engaged in problem-solving, pupils learn faster.

Differentiation & Pupils' Learning Styles

Shared Learning

Free Choice

Information Technology

Success

Feedback

Celebrating Success

Pupils' Learning Styles

These are, in a way, the obverse of teaching styles and should be taken into consideration with them. By making learning more experiential in these situations, the teacher is providing opportunities for the pupil to be more involved with his or her learning. The pupil has in these situations to make choices, negotiating with adults and other pupils in order to achieve a successful outcome. In doing so, he or she has to take responsibility for his/her decisions and, to some extent, begins to take responsibility for his or her own learning.

a. Paired/shared learning experience

b. Free choice of groupings

In another context, the National Curriculum Council has argued for some degree of choice to take account of pupils' varied approaches, aptitudes and needs. If this is the case with regard to Key Stage Four, it is equally applicable to children throughout their school careers.

c. Full access through hardware and software

d. Successful learning

Successful learning is based upon what children can do, making the next stage achievable.

e. Feedback from learning

One way in which differentiation has been in use is by outcome. The formal examination system has for a number of years provided for differentiation in the GCSE.

We need to look for more positive ways of giving children feedback. Pupils need to have an understanding of what they do know, understand, and can do. The experience of special needs teachers with Records of Achievement has much to offer here.

f. Celebrating success

For differentiation to succeed, each child must feel valued. In order to feel valued, each child's achievements in learning should be acknowledged by the adults who are significant in his or her world. Teachers are significant adults in children's lives.

Appropriate praise is required in an atmosphere where children are expected to achieve and are rewarded for doing so. Appropriate praise can be the 'excellent' on the written piece of work; a certificate for putting some extra effort into a project; a self-adhesive sticker upon which teacher has written "I'M A GOOD WORKER". It can also be the quiet word to a child for doing something, or even not doing it, as he leaves the room.

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