

Lecture 8: Providing for Individual Differences

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Introduction

- ▶ Learners differ in many areas such as their gender, physical characteristics, approach to learning, rate of learning, reaction to learning resources & situations
- ▶ There are psychological factors that are likely to account for individual differences which may include; interests, attitude, motivation, home background, learning, intelligence and aptitude
- ▶ Learners may also have problems which are likely to inhibit learning such as physical disabilities and emotional disabilities
- ▶ NB: The differences that exist among the learners cause them to learn at different rate, to succeed or fail, to be interested or to be bored in school.

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Objectives

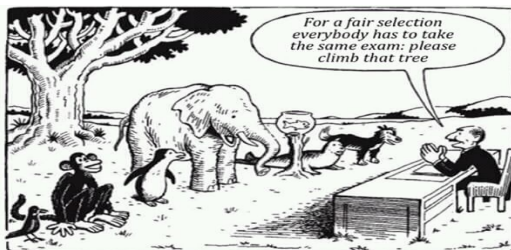
- ▶ At the end of this lesson, the learner should be able to;
 - i. Explain the term “Individual difference”
 - ii. Identify learner individual differences
 - iii. Manage learner individual differences in a Computer Studies class

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Introduction

- ▶ It has been observed that pupils/students learn at different rates such that we have students who are above average, average and below average
- ▶ Such differences in learning are noticeable if the individual needs are ignored in the teaching techniques used by the teacher
- ▶ This applies where the learners are taught everything in the same way and at the same time and pace
- ▶ Therefore as a teacher you need to bear in mind that:

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“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”

- Albert Einstein

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Introduction

- i. Differences do exist among learners in a classroom
- ii. The differences should be considered in teaching
- iii. There is need to provide opportunities for learners to use style they prefer most and suits them
- iv. There is need to be familiar with some ways of finding out important characteristics of each individual learner in the class
- v. The differences existing among the learners should be used to enhance one’s effectiveness as a teacher
- vi. Many of the differences that exist among the learners can be modified in order to help different groups of students to learn successfully

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Methods of identifying learners with individual differences

- ▶ Observation of learner's behaviour in and outside classroom
- ▶ Physical appearance e.g. dressing, health, etc
- ▶ Physical deformities
- ▶ Oral interviews
- ▶ Written questionnaires
- ▶ Formal methods e.g. study of records of individual learners
- ▶ Use of teacher-student conference
- ▶ Use of open days
- ▶ Use of tests

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Methods of providing for individual differences in classroom

- ▶ Encourages social interaction among learners
- ▶ Enables students to learn from each other
- ▶ Gives access to the same content using same teaching methods
- ▶ What are the disadvantages of using mixed abilities grouping method?

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Methods of identifying learners with individual differences

- ▶ As a professional, you have a role to recognize and to develop the potential of each individual learner.
- ▶ But the question is?
 - i. Is it practical to attend to each learner individually?
 - ii. Can you handle all the learner differences?
 - iii. What are some of the factors that may affect your ability to attend to each individual learner?

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Methods of providing for individual differences in classroom

- ii. Homogeneous grouping – consists of learners with similar characteristics e.g. gender, interests, needs, goals, aspirations, etc. This method is suitable because;
 - ▶ It is easy to select content and methods that will be suitable for all learners in the group
 - ▶ It reduces heterogeneity in a class thus handling learners with similar needs together
 - ▶ It makes certain aspects of providing for individual differences in a learner more manageable
 - ▶ What are the disadvantages of this grouping method?

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Methods of providing for individual differences in classroom

- i. Grouping – this is the best method of providing for individual differences in a class which consists of bright, average, weak, poor and disabled grouping. It can take the following forms:
 - i. Mixed ability grouping – involves mixing students of various mental and physical abilities together in a group. This method is suitable because it:
 - ▶ Prevents rejection of the less able students by the bright students
 - ▶ Diminishes feelings of inferiority, superiority and aggression among learners
 - ▶ Promotes spirit of cooperation among the learners of different abilities

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Methods of providing for individual differences in classroom

- iii. Differential abilities grouping – this involves:
 - ▶ Giving different assignments to learners according to their ability
 - ▶ Stating objectives in such a way that some cater for slow learners while others cater for quick learners
 - ▶ Specifying different learning activities for different learners or group of learner
 - ▶ Handling the same content at different levels of difficulty depending on learner's ability
 - ▶ Differential abilities grouping has the following advantages:

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Methods of providing for individual differences in classroom

- iii. Differential abilities grouping – this involves:
- ▶ Differential abilities grouping has the following advantages:
 - ▶ Learners are given tasks according to their ability
 - ▶ Learners learn at their own pace
 - ▶ It is easier to teach learners of the same ability than those of mixed ability

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Methods of providing for individual differences in classroom

- b) Use of a variety of instructional resources
- c) Need for attractive learning environment
- d) Use of appropriate teaching strategies/approaches
- e) Use of a variety of learning activities
- f) Provision of suitable curriculum
- g) Use of special help for specific learner with special needs

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Methods of providing for individual differences in classroom

- iv. Friendship grouping – involves grouping learners who are friends together.
- ▶ The friendship could be due to their social, economic, neighborhood, and religious background.
 - ▶ When learners are grouped according to friendship, they enjoy learning since they have common interest
 - ▶ What are the disadvantages of friendship grouping?

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Challenges faced in providing for individual differences in a classroom

- a) Loss of control of the rest of the class leading to indiscipline
- b) Restlessness among the unattended learners
- c) Negative labeling of the so called “favoured” making them feel uncomfortable or embarrassed
- d) A lot of time likely to be consumed thus making it impossible to cover the syllabus
- e) Emotional tension may crop up between different groups in class

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Methods of providing for individual differences in classroom

- v. Interest grouping – involves forming groups according to what interests the learner
- ▶ In this method, learners are free to join groups on the basis of interest in a given task
 - ▶ Learners with the same interest can work together to achieve some goal
 - ▶ This promotes spirit of cooperation and also motivates learners as they work on what interests them

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Challenges faced in providing for individual differences in a classroom

- f) Some learners are likely to be over reliant on the teacher
- g) Alienating or isolating some students may result to lack of interest in learning

NB: For a teacher, providing for individual differences in a classroom requires professionalism and delicate balancing

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Revision Questions

- i. Explain the term "Individual differences:
- ii. Identify different differences that exist among learners in a classroom
- iii. Discuss FIVE methods used in identifying learners with individual needs
- iv. Explain how grouping help to provide for individual differences in a computer studies class
- v. Explain the challenges you would face as a teacher in your bid to providing individual differences among computer studies students

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Questions

- vi. Differentiate between a slow learner and academically talented learner
- vii. Discuss how you would provide for individual differences among the following:
 - a. Slow learner
 - b. Academically talented
- viii. Explain FIVE methods you would employ to provide for individual differences in a computer studies class

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