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THE CONCEPT, ESSENCE AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIFFERENTIATED APPROACH

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Abstract. This thesis examines the concept of the differentiated approach in education, clarifies its essence and traces its historical development from the ideas of classical pedagogy to modern models of differentiated instruction. The terms "differentiation" and "individualization" are compared, the main forms and levels of differentiation are described, and the relevance of the approach to teaching English in general secondary schools of Uzbekistan is substantiated.

Keywords: differentiated approach, differentiated instruction, individualization, learner differences, readiness, learning profile, zone of proximal development, English language teaching, general secondary school.

Introduction

The modernization of the education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan places the learner at the centre of the educational process. Presidential Resolution No. PQ-1875 of 10 December 2012 "On measures to further improve the system of learning foreign languages" made English a compulsory subject from the first grade, and the Concept for the Development of the Public Education System until 2030 approved by Decree No. PF-5712 of 29 April 2019 emphasizes the quality of teaching and the development of each pupil's abilities [1; 2]. Yet English classes bring together pupils of very different proficiency, pace and motivation, and a uniform programme cannot serve them all equally. The differentiated approach answers this problem, and understanding its concept, essence and origins is a necessary basis for applying it in practice.

The concept of the differentiated approach

The word "differentiation" comes from the Latin differentia – "difference", and in pedagogy it denotes the organization of teaching that takes into account the individual and typological characteristics of learners. In the post-Soviet didactic tradition I.E. Unt defines differentiation as taking into account individual features of pupils in such a form that they are grouped on the basis of certain features for separate teaching, while individualization means taking into account the features of each particular learner [3]. Differentiation is thus a group-oriented form of individualization.

In Western pedagogy the concept was developed most fully by C.A. Tomlinson, who describes differentiated instruction as a teacher's proactive response to learners' needs. According to her model, the teacher may differentiate content (what pupils learn), process (how they make sense of it), product (how they show what they have learned) and the learning environment, in accordance with learners' readiness, interests and learning profile [4; 5]. D. Heacox similarly stresses that differentiation means changing

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the pace, level or kind of instruction in response to individual needs, styles or interests [6].

It is important to distinguish two levels of differentiation. External (structural) differentiation is implemented at the level of the school system: specialized schools and classes, profile education, elective courses and level groups. Internal (intra-class) differentiation is carried out by the teacher through multi-level tasks, flexible grouping and individual pacing; it has the greatest value for general secondary schools.

The essence of the differentiated approach

The essence of the differentiated approach lies in recognizing that learners differ and in turning these differences into a resource rather than an obstacle. Its psychological foundation is L.S. Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development: learning is most effective when tasks are slightly above the learner's current level but achievable with support [7]. Since pupils' zones of proximal development do not coincide, one task for the whole class is inevitably too easy for some and too difficult for others. H. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences further showed that pupils learn through different channels – linguistic, logical, visual, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal and others – which justifies offering varied ways of working with the same material [8].

Its key principles are continuous formative assessment, flexible grouping, equally meaningful tasks for every group and a common goal reached by different routes. In English lessons they are realized through graded texts, tiered speaking and writing tasks and varied lexical and grammatical support. P. Subban's review of research confirms that such instruction increases learners' engagement, motivation and achievement in mixed-ability classes [9].

Historical development of the differentiated approach

The idea of adapting teaching to the learner has deep roots. Already in Eastern pedagogical thought, scholars such as Abu Nasr al-Farabi and Abu Ali ibn Sino (Avicenna) advised teachers to consider the age, abilities and character of each pupil and to move from simple to complex. In the seventeenth century J.A. Comenius, while creating the class-lesson system in his "Great Didactic", at the same time insisted that teaching must correspond to the nature and abilities of children [10].

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the first systematic attempts to solve this contradiction. The Batavia and Mannheim systems divided pupils into groups according to their abilities; the Dalton Plan of H. Parkhurst (1920s) replaced uniform lessons with individual monthly assignments and laboratory work [11]; the Winnetka Plan of C. Washburne allowed pupils to master basic subjects at their own pace.

In the second half of the twentieth century, differentiation became an object of theoretical research. B. Bloom's concept of mastery learning showed that most pupils can reach high results if they are given sufficient time and corrective help [12]. In Soviet didactics the works of A.A. Kirsanov and I.E. Unt substantiated internal differentiation and the system of multi-level tasks [3; 13]. From the 1990s onwards the term "differentiated instruction" was established in international pedagogy thanks to C.A. Tomlinson, whose model shifted the emphasis from the selection and separation of learners to the flexible adaptation of teaching within one inclusive classroom [4; 5].

In Uzbekistan, the differentiated approach has developed together with the reforms of the national education system: the introduction of specialized schools, academic

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lyceums, profile education and, more recently, the CEFR-based standards of foreign language teaching, which require determining and monitoring each learner's level of proficiency. Uzbek methodologists, in particular J.J. Jalolov, emphasize that foreign language teaching must take into account learners' individual psychological characteristics and level of preparation [14].

Conclusion

The analysis shows that the differentiated approach is a form of organizing education in which content, methods, pace and forms of assessment are adapted to groups of learners with similar characteristics, while all pupils move towards common learning goals. Its essence is based on the theory of the zone of proximal development, the recognition of learner diversity and the principles of flexible grouping and continuous assessment. Historically, it evolved from the ideas of Eastern scholars and Comenius to the modern model of differentiated instruction. For English language teaching in the general secondary schools of Uzbekistan, where classes are heterogeneous in proficiency and motivation, internal differentiation based on CEFR-oriented diagnosis and tiered tasks is a promising way of raising the effectiveness and quality of instruction.

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