

Standards Unit

IMPROVING DIFFERENTIATION IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

TOPIC 1: WHAT IS DIFFERENTIATION?

FACILITATOR GUIDANCE

Activity 1: Defining differentiation (1 hr, 30 mins)

Facilitator notes

This first session is a preparatory one designed to help participants to explore what differentiation means and to agree a shared definition.

PowerPoint presentation

The objectives for this first activity are on Slide 3.

Slides 4-7 introduce the importance of differentiating. They can be used either to prompt discussion during the first activity or as part of the summary following the feedback from the activity.

If time is short (or if participants are more experienced) you may prefer not to use the activity and simply to use PowerPoint Slide 11 to suggest a definition and then use Slides 4-7 to stress its importance. However, we have learned that participants value the opportunity to share ideas with colleagues and reach their own definition.

There is information on using PowerPoint Slides 8-11 later in this facilitator guidance. You will need to allow 10-15 minutes if you use all the slides.

Arranging the groups

Participants should sit at tables of four or six, depending on the overall number present. Using mixed groups of teachers or trainers from different curriculum areas can provide a richer discussion.

Now read the activity.

Objectives

- To explore individual and group understanding of differentiation.
- To identify any obstacles that may hinder differentiation in practice.
- To identify factors that may stimulate differentiation in practice.

Resources

PowerPoint Slides 3-11

Yellow and green sticky notes

Standard pens

Flipchart pens

Flipchart paper

Stage 1 (individually) (10 mins)

On a yellow sticky note, write your own personal definition of 'differentiation'.

Stage 2 (in pairs, then as a whole table in groups of four or six) (20 mins)

Compare your definition and combine and revise your definition with your partner. Write this on a green sticky note.

Combine and revise your definition with the group on your table.

Write your group definition on flipchart paper.

Stage 3 (as a whole group) (15 mins)

Display and discuss your group definitions.

Facilitator notes

Once the definitions have been displayed and compared it can be useful to pull out common features or key words that appear in several definitions.

PowerPoint Slides 8-11 offer several definitions. Slide 11 has a definition of 'differentiation' developed by teachers, trainers and managers during the pilot phase of this project. It highlights several key words (shown in italics below):

“ Differentiation is about *identifying and addressing* the different *needs, interests and abilities* of *all learners* to give them the best possible chance of *achieving their learning goals*. ”

It's worth spending five minutes discussing these key words and their significance.

Identifying

This stage is essential if individual needs are to emerge.

Addressing

Once needs, interests and abilities are identified, action needs to be taken to address them.

Needs, interests and abilities

Differentiation applies to all levels of learners. It's not a deficit model. All learners have particular needs, interests and abilities.

All learners

Differentiation should apply to all learners.

Achieving their learning goals

Differentiation is not an end in itself. It has a purpose – to help learners achieve and succeed.

Stage 4 (individually) (5 mins)

Identify obstacles that could prevent differentiation in practice in your organisation. Then develop solutions to the obstacles you have identified.

Stage 5 (in groups of 6-8) (15 mins)

Compare obstacles and solutions you've identified and compile two lists on flipchart paper.

Stage 6 (as a whole group) (10 mins)

Compare flipcharts and discuss obstacles and solutions.