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## The teacher's Personality within the Differentiated Pedagogy

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### Abstract

The complete value of each individual personal resources is the aim of each well-organized education. Pedagogy of success is based on the need to respect everyone's needs, interests and individual availability, of everyone's rhythms and resources ensuring thus everyone's success. The present paper promotes elements of a didactic strategy adequate to the educational needs specific to different categories of students, a way to accept the differences and to cope with the diversity of human resources.

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### 1. Introduction

Education has the duty to encourage diversity and to transform it in a constructive contributing factor to realize social cohesion, to harden the understanding between individuals and/or groups. "education can promote cohesion as long as it takes into account the individual and group diversity, trying in the same time not to provoke their marginalization or social outcast. The respect for individuality and diversity represents a main principle that has to lead to the elimination of any standard type of learning. The official learning systems are often accused that they restrain personal accomplishment, obliging the children to obey to the same cultural and intellectual pattern, without taking into consideration individual talents. They tend, for example, to develop abstract knowledge in favour of other qualities, like imagination, communication skills, ability to lead, the spiritual sense and dimension of our existence or craftsmanship. Depending on their skills and natural inclinations, that differ even from birth, children do not benefit in the same way from the community

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educational resources. They can suffer failure if the school they attend to do not emphasize their talents and ambitions” [ 1, p.56 ]. The right for differentiated education and recognition of special needs and capacities represent real markers of a quality education.

## 2. Individual differences- Resource for learning

Individual differences define each one’s educability degree. Considerable through their variety and extent, preoccupations to diagnose individual aptitudes, with the aim to increase learning success, to foresee and prevent school failure to some students, represent as many tries to pass over the *differentiated psychology* and *differentiated pedagogy*, under the sign of democratic humanism.

The theory of multiple intelligences, elaborated by Howard Gardner, demonstrate that students are different one from the other, thus they become to learn and think differently. They have specific possibilities and preferences for certain learning models and strategies [ 2, pp. 78-91]. Howard Gardner’s theory starts from the idea of the existence of some different and self-sufficient intelligences that lead to diverse means of knowledge, learning and understanding. According to him, intelligence is not a feature emphasized by standard tests, but the ability to solve problems and realize products in real life situations. According to his belief, an intelligence is a promise for bio-psychological potential.

Gardner’s theory justifies what can be otherwise seen in everyone’s daily routine, that we do not learn in the same way, that we have different learning styles and aptitudes and that, as a consequence, we need a different, personal treatment during the entire learning process.

Howard Gardner was not the only celebrity in the field of psychology who was fascinated by the idea of human personal complexity, of different ways in which we do our daily routine. After a year after Gardner’s theory appeared, another famous psychologist R. Sternberg created the “Triple Theory of Intelligence”, according to which human intelligence include three basic aptitudes:

- Componential intelligence- the capacity to reason in speech; facilitates the academically performances;
- Experimental intelligence- the capacity to combine different experiences to solve new life situations; intelligence characteristic to artists, scientists, creators;
- Contextual intelligence- the capacity to practically function in daily situations, characteristic to human type “homeless”; they are great salesmen and negotiators.

Corresponding to this situation, Sternberg admits the existence of three types of intelligence- *analytical, creative and practical* [ 2, p. 96 ]. This vision leads us to an acception of the multiple character of intelligence.

For each teacher/trainer, the conclusions deduced from the theory of multiple intelligences are obvious:

- We think, learn and create in different ways;
- The development of our potential depends on what we learn and how we learn with our specific intelligence;
- Intelligence is fluid, not fix;
- A rich and varied experience increases intelligence.

If we are exposed to a variety range of learning opportunities, we will choose for sure the one that suits us the most for an efficient learning. Our learning performances will be thus increased. Limiting the chances for variety learning experiences can lead to a reduced intelligence, being known that those areas of human brain that are not used deactivate themselves leading thus to a diminished learning potential. It is thus important that the persons involved in any way of learning be able and desire to become active participants in the learning process, making use of those learning situations that will ensure them full success in their activity. This means that the way information are organized and transmitted should be in connection to the students’ learning styles, and their cerebral preferences. The knowledge and use of the theory of multiple intelligences is important for teachers in Romania from the perspective of educational changes as it supposes retaking into consideration the teaching style from the perspective of a differentiated education.

The differences between individuals, under the report of cognitive, social and moral, psychological development, well known and recorded by teachers represent the base of a *differentiated pedagogy*, able to ensure equality of chances in education.

### 3. The differentiated pedagogy and the teacher's role

A successful pedagogy is based on the necessity of respecting the individual needs, interests and availabilities, everyone's rhythms and resources, ensuring successful conditions for everyone. School failure can be avoided and thus, what is even more important, the risk of social failure will decrease. Quality education will encourage diversity and will transform it in a constructive contributing factor to realize social cohesion, common understanding among individuals and/or groups. *Diversity* and *plurality* represent key notions in postmodern, constructivist pedagogy, in which the perception of differences becomes the aim of human learning. *Differentiated pedagogy* brings into discussion the problem of a democratic school.

The term of differentiated pedagogy represents "an effort to diversify the didactic methodology from the perspective of individual differences among students" [ 3, p.38 ]. According to H. Przesmycki [ 4, p.29 ] the differentiated pedagogy « brings into discussion a flexible learning frame and explicit and diverse enough so thus the students may learn according to their own learning potential. » the point of view on the term of differentiated pedagogy varies from one author to another, but the main idea is the following: the student is the most important in the teaching-learning act.

A chronological perspective on education, and thus of the evolution of educational sciences indicates the existence of a learning area [ 5, p.147].

- The classic paradigm with the stress on the teacher and the teaching act in which the student was a passive receptor of the discourse;
- The present day paradigm of learning centred on the student, respectively on creating different learning experiences, adapted to the student's needs.

The new paradigm, of learning centred on students, makes the teachers achieve some psych pedagogical, scientific, methodological, managerial and social skills which will favour projecting and implementing some differentiated training strategies. A comparative view on the traditional conception and instructive-teaching activity and on the differentiated activity, emphasizes the formative valences of the latter in the field of a harmonious development of the child's personality, connected to his personal potential and teachers' attributions.

Table 1. The comparative analyses of traditional training and differentiated training

| The activity in traditional style  | Differentiated activity   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The differences among students are hidden; one takes action only when they become problems;</li> <li>· The child's interest are rarely taken into consideration ;</li> <li>· the activity with the entire class dominates;</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The differences among students are studied and accepted as a starting base in the training-educative process;</li> <li>· The students are lead towards their own interests and options guided by these;</li> <li>· One uses different forms of activity: group work, pair work, face to face or individual;</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The time is inflexible;</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Time is flexible, according to the students' needs;</li> </ul>   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| · One admits unique interpretations of ideas and events ;   | · One admits, even search for multiple perspectives on ideas and events;                             |
| · The teacher coordinates the students' behaviour ;   | · The teacher facilitates the students' independent activity;  |
| · The teacher solves the problems of his class;   | · Students help each other, assisted in solving the problems;  |
| · The teacher plans the lesson stages, objectives; it offers the evaluating standards for the activity; | · The students, together with teachers take action to establish the evaluating objectives, criteria; |
| · One respects WHAT should be learned.  | · Respect for the one WHO learns.  |

The role of the teacher, within the differenced activity, is changed as compared to the traditional teaching; he makes the instructive process more personal and adapted connected to the differences among students, gives value to intellectual and verbal changes among students, offers students higher autonomy and control in choosing the syllabus, the learning methods and rhythm. The differenced activity is an activity centred on the student and its environment is concentrated mainly on satisfying the students' needs, while the traditional activity concentrates mainly on the taught information.

The differenced support of students is not only the duty, but also the teacher's chance of professional affirming. "In order to stimulate the learning process, teachers have to identify, explain, and classify the relevant differences within a group"[ 6, p.107]. A responsible teacher will always support himself by the students' thorough knowledge, will treat them as real individuals and not abstractions. The maximum valour of the individual potential can be approached even from the student's perspective, but also from the teacher's, because both the student and the teacher and individuals, and they can develop themselves together. Learning activity, by its nature, and the way it is organized, will lead to an implication in different degrees of the teacher and also the student. It will lead to an intense interaction student-student, student-teacher, and student-himself. Thus can be realized an active participation of the student to his own training.

#### 4. Difference stages. Practical stages of difference

In order to realize a differenced enumeration one should take into consideration [ 7, pp.97-99]:

- Difference in report with the structure of the learning system
  - One legitimates the idea of a unique school, for all students (even for those with special requirements, learning difficulties), named the *school for all, the school for diversity or inclusive school*.
  - In this school we aim to ensure equal chances to education for all students, syllabuses can be studied at different rhythms and levels, according to the students' intellectual possibilities and aptitudes.
- Difference in learning content
  - At the level of secondary school, difference is made by extending and deepness of knowledge proposed for learning, within the main syllabus (base syllabus). When students with high aptitudes and special interests for a certain domain, the teacher has the possibility to deal with an " extended syllabus " (more than 70% of the curriculum, during the time allocated to the respective discipline);
  - At highschool level, "differenced organizing of the contents appears in the learning plans", that are different according the highschool profile [ 8, p.151];
  - In the case of students with special needs, a *differenced and personalized syllabus* is made, which consists of "making some programs that are adapted for the same discipline according to the evaluation results" [ 9, p.147 ].
- Difference through organizing the school collectivity and the didactic activities takes into consideration the homogeneity or heterogeneity degree of classes or groups of students. One can organize:

- *Level groups*- are formed by grouping the students of same age according to their general aptitudes, creating thus homogenous groups of students;
- *Level-discipline groups*, within the homogenous classes;
- *Groups for students with special skills* in certain domains;
- *Groups to support slow students* .
  - ° Difference through didactic methodology and pedagogical relation between teacher and student
- *Difference through didactic methodology* consists of using some varied methods and didactic procedures according to the taught contents, as well as some teaching means that will favour the understanding of the new contents. Teaching stages should correspond to the students' learning styles. The following strategies can be used in order to individualize learning:
- *Individualized instructive tasks (homework, test papers, etc)* according to their aptitudes, inclinations, options, intellectual level;
- *Individualized worksheets: revision* for students who cannot keep the pace; *development* for the best and good students, *exercises* in order to develop skills and aptitudes, *self-learning* to assume individual and independent learning techniques;
- *Evaluation worksheets* to observe the learning level and ensuring the feed-back;
- *Individual training under the form of private lessons, consultations, discussions and self-training*.

A different training means reflection on teaching and learning in new and different ways, continuously and flexible. From this perspective it is not a beginning and an end, correct or incorrect things, recipes or true “ingredients”. It is about a working philosophy about those who learn, about teaching and learning.

## Conclusion

In order to find profitable solutions in critical, or just actual situations, the teacher has to start from the following few ideas that have to be respected as general requirements of the educational action:

- The right to be different or the right to diversity is a human fundamental right;
- Individual potential should be improved at the greatest level;
- Ensuring equality of chances to education supposes recognition and respect of born and achieved capacity differences;
- Adapting school to the students' aptitudes, possibilities, needs, problems or knowledge interests is a necessity of education for all, education for each of us.

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