

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION AS A PREREQUISITE FOR EFFECTIVE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**Kitibayeva A.***PhD, Associate Professor, Dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages
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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17352727>***Abstract**

The article examines the role of differentiated instruction as an important condition for successful inclusion in secondary schools. It is emphasized that modern classrooms are diverse: students have different levels of training, abilities, and individual characteristics. In such conditions, unified approaches are not always effective, therefore, it is the differentiation of the content, methods and forms of education that makes it possible to create equal opportunities for all students. This approach contributes not only to better learning of the material, but also to the formation of a positive educational environment where each student feels included in the overall process. It is concluded that differentiated instruction should be considered not as an auxiliary tool, but as the basis for successful inclusive practice.

Keywords: differentiated education, inclusive education, learning characteristics, educational environment, academic success.

Modern schools are undergoing a period of active change related to the focus on the principles of inclusive education. Increasing attention is being paid to ensuring that every child, regardless of their level of preparation or special educational needs, has equal opportunities for learning. That is why the question of what conditions ensure successful inclusion is becoming particularly relevant [1]. In recent years, educational literature has often emphasized that one such condition is differentiated instruction, as it allows teachers to respond flexibly to the individual characteristics of students and create a comfortable educational environment [2].

It is no coincidence that researchers note that differentiation is not limited to changing the content of assignments, but also involves varying methods, forms of work, and assessment methods, which allows each student to demonstrate their strengths [3, p. 45]. Thus, the relevance of this study is determined by the need for theoretical understanding and practical justification of the role of differentiated instruction as one of the basic conditions for the successful implementation of inclusive practices in secondary school.

It should be emphasized that the purpose of this work is to show the importance of a differentiated approach in the organization of the educational process and to identify its contribution to the development of an inclusive educational environment. In this regard, the objectives of the study are to consider key approaches to understanding differentiated instruction, analyze the features of inclusion in secondary schools, identify the relationship between these phenomena and suggest possible ways to improve school practice.

The subject of the study is the process of differentiated learning itself as a pedagogical phenomenon, and the object is inclusive education in secondary schools.

Based on the tasks set, it is possible to formulate a hypothesis: if differentiated instruction is implemented systematically and consistently, taking into account the level of training, pace and needs of students, this will not only improve academic performance, but also strengthen the sense of social inclusion, which is one of the most important criteria for successful inclusion [4].

It is important to note that the novelty of this study lies in the attempt to consider differentiated instruction not as a separate method of improving the effectiveness of the lesson, but as a basis for building a holistic inclusive environment. Domestic publications have so far covered this relationship in fragments, while foreign studies emphasize the need for an integrated approach combining pedagogical, organizational and social factors [5]. Thus, the presented work is focused on filling this gap and may be relevant both for the theoretical basis of linguodidactics and for the practice of teaching in secondary schools.

The issues of inclusive education have become particularly relevant in recent decades, as more and more children with special educational needs are studying in mass schools. We are talking about children with hearing, vision, speech, motor or intellectual disabilities, who previously most often studied in specialized institutions. Today, the task is not only to ensure that such children are physically present in the classroom, but also to ensure that they are full participants in the educational process [1, p. 678].

In this regard, there is a need to find methodological solutions that would allow taking into account the diversity of students' abilities. Differentiated instruction is recognized as one of these solutions. It involves adapting the content and teaching methods to the individual characteristics of students, including those with developmental disabilities. According to K. A. Tomlinson, differentiation is a systematic approach that is

based on varying tasks, forms of presentation of material and ways of evaluating knowledge so that each child can show results within their capabilities [6].

Foreign studies also confirm that it is the use of differentiated strategies that increases the success of including children with disabilities in the general educational process. Thus, the work of M. Pozas and co-authors shows that differentiation has a positive effect not only on academic success, but also on the social well-being of such students [4, p.19].

Kazakhstani researchers emphasize that without the use of differentiated methods, it is difficult to ensure the real integration of children with special needs into mass schools. Nurlanova and Chunkurova point out that teachers need to combine various forms of work, from individual assignments to group projects, so that children with disabilities can participate in educational activities on an equal basis with their peers [7].

Practice shows that the introduction of differentiated education in secondary schools requires teachers to be flexible and able to take into account the different levels of preparedness of students. One of the most effective techniques is the so-called "layered tasks", when the material is given in several difficulty variants at once. This approach allows strong students to work with complicated tasks, and those who need more time to gradually master the basic level [1, p. 678].

Equally important is the use of group work. Classes are usually heterogeneous, so the teacher can combine different options: sometimes mixed groups are formed where the strong help the weak, and sometimes groups based on the level of knowledge to practice specific skills. Foreign experience shows that this method helps not only in teaching, but also in creating a positive climate in the classroom [6, p. 52]. In addition, it is of great importance to give students the right to choose the form of assignment: someone prefers an oral answer, someone prefers a written or project version. As a result, students feel more freedom and interest [8, p. 94].

A vivid illustration of differentiated instruction in practice can be seen in a secondary school English class that includes several children with special educational needs. For instance, while the majority of students are working on writing a short argumentative essay, two students with hearing impairments are provided with a visual task: they create a storyboard that conveys the same argument through pictures and key words. At the same time, a student with dyslexia is offered an oral activity — presenting ideas in a recorded audio message instead of a written text. The teacher thus organizes one lesson in such a way that every child participates in the same theme but demonstrates understanding in different formats. This approach not only ensures equal participation but also builds confidence, as students feel their strengths are valued.

Another important group of students who benefit greatly from differentiated instruction are those with developmental and behavioral challenges, such as autism spectrum disorders or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. For example, in a mathematics lesson, a student with ADHD may be offered short, time-limited exercises with frequent changes of activity, while a peer

with autism may receive tasks with clear step-by-step instructions and additional visual support. The teacher's role in this case is to structure the learning environment in such a way that children can remain engaged without feeling overwhelmed. This practice demonstrates that differentiation is not about lowering standards, but about creating conditions in which every student, regardless of their specific needs, can succeed and feel included in the classroom community.

The experience of a number of foreign schools proves that the effectiveness of differentiation largely depends on the teacher's willingness to adapt educational materials. Even with a lack of resources, it is possible to organize work based on multimedia tools and alternating forms of classes, which is confirmed by research in South Africa [9, 10].

Kazakh schools are also actively turning to this approach. For example, a survey of English language teachers showed that the vast majority of respondents noted an increase in motivation and engagement among students when applying differentiated assignments. At the same time, teachers speak honestly about the difficulties: it takes more time to prepare, and there are not always enough ready-made materials [11]. In specialized schools for gifted children, the emphasis is on more complex tasks and a variety of ways to perform exercises, which allows students to reveal their abilities and maintain their interest.

The experience of schools in different countries shows that it is the teacher who becomes the central figure in the implementation of a differentiated approach. Success is largely determined by his professional competencies, the ability to build trusting relationships with students and cooperate with their parents. It is important that the teacher has not only a methodological arsenal, but also the ability to create a supportive atmosphere where each student feels the value of their own contribution. Such an environment strengthens the interaction between school and family and helps children with different educational opportunities to be involved in the overall process.

Along with this, the teacher's activity is associated with certain difficulties. Lack of time, saturation of curricula, and limited resources often become obstacles to full-fledged differentiation. However, many studies emphasize that with professional motivation and methodological support, teachers find effective solutions. As T. Hall notes, high-quality teacher training in the field of differentiated learning directly affects the success of inclusion and the level of educational achievement of students [8].

In addition, it is worth considering the competencies that teachers themselves must develop to successfully implement a differentiated approach. Among them are the ability to quickly adapt lesson plans, emotional intelligence, and the skill to maintain motivation among students with very different learning paces. In practice, this often means that teachers prepare several scenarios of one lesson in advance and flexibly move between them depending on the situation in the classroom. Equally important is the ability to work with digital tools, since technology today significantly expands the possibilities of differentiation, allowing the same

material to be presented in visual, auditory, and interactive formats.

As for the effectiveness of the differentiated approach itself, it is manifested not only in the academic field. Students involved in inclusive practices have the opportunity to become more aware of their own strengths, see personal progress, and maintain an interest in learning. In addition, the joint work of children with different abilities builds cooperation skills, develops tolerance and willingness to dialogue. Gradually, the classroom is turning into a space where diversity and mutual assistance are valued, and this is becoming an important prerequisite for successful social adaptation in the future.

The presented material is generalizing and shows that differentiated instruction can be considered as one of the key conditions for successful inclusion in secondary schools. The article reviewed the theoretical foundations of this approach, described practical methods for its implementation, and outlined the role of teachers in creating a favorable educational environment.

Another important aspect is the long-term impact of differentiated instruction on students' development. Regular participation in inclusive and differentiated learning practices helps children become more independent in setting their own educational goals, develops responsibility, and strengthens their self-confidence. Moreover, such practices prepare schoolchildren for further education by teaching them to plan their activities, make decisions, and cooperate with peers. These skills are highly valued in modern society and directly relate to the goals of lifelong learning.

The systematization of different points of view allows us to assert that a differentiated approach contributes not only to a more equitable distribution of the academic load, but also to the formation of a tolerant team where diversity and mutual respect are valued.

The practical significance of the article lies in the fact that the collected materials can be useful to teachers working in inclusive classrooms, as well as students of pedagogical fields and organizers of the educational process. The application of the proposed ideas and techniques can help schools take a step forward in the development of truly accessible and humane education.

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