4g. Developmental or intellectual impairment

Differentiation

Differentiation is a process that involves the adaptation of teaching-learning strategies to the needs of all learners: 'The purpose of education for all children is the same; the goals are the same. But the help that individual children need in progressing towards them will be different' (Warnock Report, in Dickinson and Wright, 1993, p. 2). Differentiation is therefore a process whereby teachers recognise the individual learner's needs in their classroom, and plan accordingly to meet those needs to give each learner access to learning according to their own capability, and to account for differences in comprehension, abilities, current knowledge and what they can achieve.

This process does not happen automatically: it must be well planned. Differentiation means that the teacher(s) will do something intentionally. This is related to lesson planning to meet the individual needs of each learner. It is based on understanding individual differences, as well as the value placed on the learning of each child.

You should be aware that children acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding in different ways and at a different pace.

Differentiation refers to the changes that we make that enable to help all learners to move forward with their learning. It includes:

➢ **Modifying the learning environment** – The physical changes that you have considered, for example in relation to access, lighting or noise are examples of the differentiation of the physical learning environment.
➢ **Modifying how we structure and present learning activities** – Considering the ways in which activities are presented, for example using pair or group work, are examples of differentiation of your teaching approach and may address social and psychological aspects student learning.
➢ **Modifying expectations of what learners need to achieve within a given period of time** – This can involve giving learners the option to create a different learning **product.** For example, a girl whose physical impairment prevents her from writing might complete an assessment orally, or through dictation to your assistant. The learning process may also be differentiated. For example, a girl with an intellectual disability may have more time to complete a particular learning activity or achieve a stated learning. In some cases, the **content** can be learning differentiated, using learning materials of different levels. This might occur within a group where some learners are not yet able to read and others are becoming fluent readers, and they are expected to read different texts about the same topic.

- The learning objectives (and the learning outcomes) must be differentiated in such a way so as to take into consideration and value all learners' talents and needs. One way of differentiating the objectives is by defining what:

  - <u>all</u> learners will understand/know/be able to do
  - <u>most</u> learners will understand/know/be able to do
  - <u>a few</u> learners will understand/know/be able to do.

  For example, if your objective was to create a clay pot and your group is varied, then your learning objectives may be differentiated:

  - all the pupils will have made a pot
  - most of the pupils will do a pot with straight and waterproof sides
  - some pupils could do a pot with straight and waterproof sides, with decorations and a handle.

- Differentiating is important because it allows all learners to achieve. This is important for girls attending your Hub, because if they feel they are failing they are likely to feel frustrated and become less motivated to attend and learn. By ensuring success using differentiation you can help keep them motivated.
- How you differentiate your activities will depend on the strengths, needs and preferences of the individual girls. It is therefore important to get to know them well in order to inform judgements that will support the girl's learning and build on their strengths.
- As a general rule of thumb, you are likely to be considering the pacing and time of activities for girls with mild learning disabilities. They may require a little longer to achieve the same as their peers. For those who have moderate learning disabilities, you may also differentiate the content of activities, so they complete the key aspects of the activities and where some repletion might be used to achieve mastery of a skill. For girls with severe learning disabilities, you might break down an activity into a series of manageable steps, and then be working on one or two of these steps within the session. These tasks can be unexpectedly demanding and so you will need to monitor if the girl is becoming fatigued and adjust your planning accordingly. This might include adjusting the length of the task, giving breaks, or changing between activities of different types.

Reading

- Most children with learning disabilities are likely to engage well with the structured approach to literacy development within the SAGE programme. They may need additional time and practice and the encouragement of small steps progress to do so. The suggestions given for supporting children with dyslexia might also be helpful here for some girls.

> ➤ Children with severe learning disabilities may well struggle to begin reading or decode written words. If this is the case, then it is worth discussing this with another Community Educator or your school head. You might then choose to focus on helping them to develop a sight vocabulary, rather than concentrating on decoding skills.

Three key principles to remember:
- ➤ divide skill development into small steps and allow for slow progression
- ➤ provide frequent opportunities for repetition
- ➤ provide lots of encouragement, and use praise to reward hard work, progress and good behaviour.