MON: Differentiation And Inclusion (Anne Bjelke)

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Anne Bjelke
24 January 2018

Differentiation and inclusion

Treating as equal those who are different just makes them more unequal.

Inclusion is desired in education. This applies to both teachers and pupils. Networking enables inclusion for teachers' professional development. In this respect I discuss the new curriculum being introduced in my country Peru and an online course I wrote for teachers for the Ministry of Education. The curriculum introduces the notion of competences and formative assessment and teachers are helped to understand it and change their current practices through the opportunities offered by professional networking. There are barriers to inclusion, but many steps forward have been taken.

However, for any curriculum practice to be successful there needs to be learning. Most educational systems round the world apply a uniform curriculum Homogeneity is sought based on the idea that giving everybody the same is a way of providing equal opportunities and therefore students will not be excluded. At the same time, however, teachers recognise the differences amongst their pupils early on in an academic year. We therefore have a tension created by educational systems which seek to be inclusive but because of differences amongst pupils the one size fits all premise actually reinforces their differences and serves to exclude pupils. This is where the differentiated classroom comes in.

Howard Gardner, the renowned American developmental psychologist, believes that the way to respond to this tension is by 'teaching to the individual and in lots of different ways' (Gardner, 2013). Teachers should use the information they have about the differences in their pupils –which may be cognitive, emotional or social–   in order to teach them in ways that are suited to their ways of thinking and learning adding that we can do that nowadays because of computers which through the internet and various programmes provide access to a wealth of resources, information and ideas.

Consequently, if we aim for inclusion in education what we need to take into account mainly are differences amongst pupils, how to teach to the individual whilst following a set curriculum and how to teach in different ways –these are the principles of differentiation. It is not so much what we teach but how we teach it that matters (Tomlinson, 2003). I consider the ideas of Rebeca Anijovich (Anijovich, 2005) who advocates for the following of a compulsory core

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curriculum and for giving pupils choices. Billie Birnie (Birnie, 2015) has answers for how complicated and time consuming the differentiated classroom may be. She supports the idea that differentiation is not a strategy or a model of instruction but a way of thinking about teaching and learning that advocates beginning where individuals are rather than with a prescribed plan of action that ignores pupil variance. My argument is that it is all possible nowadays because of the opportunities technology offers to provide options of interesting and appealing work for pupils at different levels and the professional networking practices of teachers. The differentiated classroom is an important element in inclusion and I will look at how technology and networking enable its effectiveness.

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Steven Durant-Burgin
9:00pm 28 January 2018 Permalink

Hi Anne,

I am looking forward to your presentation as with being a fellow tutor, I only have my students for 4 weeks before the next cohort start. So I only have a few days to discover the differences in my learners, I will be interested in seeing if you have an ideas or thoughts that can aid me to help be more inclusive with my differentiated learners.

Regards

Steve Durant-Burgin

Denise McDonough
7:21pm 13 February 2018 (*Edited 8:33pm 26 February 2018*) Permalink

Hi Anne,
Coming from an informal model of teaching on the helpdesk at the university where I work, your topic is especially interesting for my development in supporting learners. How will computers do this? Will they use analytics or have 10 options that students choose 6, like our modules?

This comment resonated with me, "Rebeca Anijovich (Anijovich, 2005) who advocates for the following of a compulsory core curriculum and for giving pupils choices". In my project I suggest types of apps that are useful for studying not THE apps - given guidance students will make good decisions and hopefully take ownership if engaged by their choices.

I had hoped to see your Sway here since only 3 of us used it (that I am aware of). I love seeing what how other people make choices with it. It wasn't easy due to the non-exisistant text formating. However, it is free without Office, endless options with Youtube, flickr, your own files, google docs, etc - almost any content goes into it (except a Twitter :-) All the best, Denise

Helen Dixon
1:04pm 18 February 2018 Permalink

Hi Anne

Your topic is really intriguing and I agree that inclusion is a complex but important factor in education. I am looking forward to hearing about your views on how we can offer more flexibility in how we teach and hope to explore this area more in the future along with neurodiversity as discussed by Steve earlier.

Good luck for tomorrow!

Dr Simon Ball
9:34am 20 February 2018 Permalink

Hi Anita

Well done on a great presentation! Here is a summary of the comments and questions you received following your presentation (including those you may have addressed verbally). Please respond in whatever way you choose.

Best wishes

Simon

- Choice = ownership
- The choice of activities is interesting. Did you find all the options were chosen equally or were some more popular?
- I wondered what the analytic data was telling you - set against the previous question
- If we continue to try to squeeze learners with specific needs into mainstream curricula doesn't work...
- were choices geographical or across the Nation.
- Empowerment, networking choice for PLE...were resources OER or national educational resources?
- Never thought about of using Whatapp - great idea. I think once you get users communicating in an easy way it snowballs - a few of our recent forums had very long threads as confidence and camaraderie has grown as Anne found.

Anne Bjelke

7:27pm 22 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Regarding the use of WhatsApp, yes it snowballed. I had not realised its strength for networking and interaction. Initially it was introduced as a way of ensuring that participants did get together to do the activities. But the questions and answers that followed with the tutors did much more than that. It is easy to use and ubiquitous and that is one of the virtues here. People did not have to provide long, learned comments and that gave them confidence. Also I think that without realising it, participant teachers were forced to be succinct and just focus on what matters. The sharing went further to suggestions for other types of networking.

However, the evidence I have is limited. Analytic data of choice of activities for instance is not shared with me as I'm just a course designer. What I have is what is published - the numbers who have completed the course successfully divided by region. What I have qualitatively are the comments that were read at the conference. These were selected responses to the survey regarding what they had got out of the course and then I got some anecdotal evidence from tutors at the conference describing their experience and that of their groups. So data is limited. The course finished in December and then there was the summer holidays. The academic year in state schools begins on 12 March. This is always a problem....how much will people remember? And how ideas are followed up is not something in which I am involved. So maybe I'm considering inclusion possibilities rather than certainties.

[Dr Simon Ball](#)
11:40am 26 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Many Congratulations Anita! Your presentation has been voted by delegates to be one of the most effective of the H818 Online Conference 2018 and you are officially one of our H818 Presentation Star Open Badge Winners! Please see how to Apply for your Badge here: http://cloudworks.ac.uk/badge/view/33

Well done!

Simon

H818 Conference Organiser

[Denise McDonough](#)
8:38pm 26 February 2018 (*Edited 8:42pm 26 February 2018*) [Permalink](#)

Hi Anita,
Congratulations on breaking new ground using WhatsApp! Reaching the Amazon (as in rainforest not nice packages in one day :-) How cool is that!!!! We have a group on H818 and I'd love for you to join us. If follow me @d607 on Twitter you can DM - Direct Message me your number - it would be really interesting to experiment with how you used it.

I am pretty new to this app (usually use iPhone apps) and wonder if the anonymity of only seeing people's phone number is helpful or do they add them to their contacts in the workshop so the Names of the person comes up? It is hard to follow a conversation without names. I eventually found them in my app after tapping around exploring its

features. So glad you also made it through the module.

All the best, Denise

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