

VOICE

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Interaction Collective decision
making Education

Differentiated Pedagogy from the perspective of children's participation



H.F.R.I.
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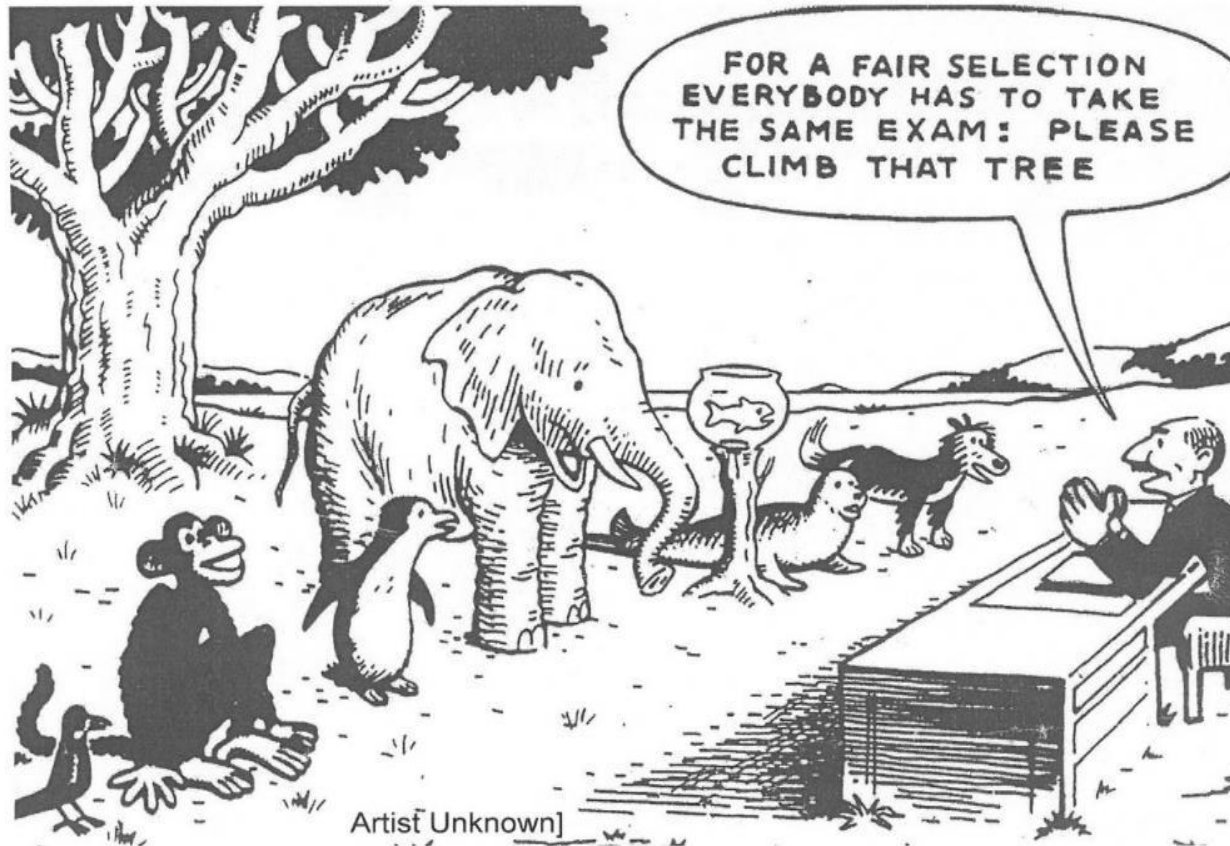
Questions

- How is the differentiated approach defined?
- Why is it necessary to move away from designing the educational process for the "average" child?

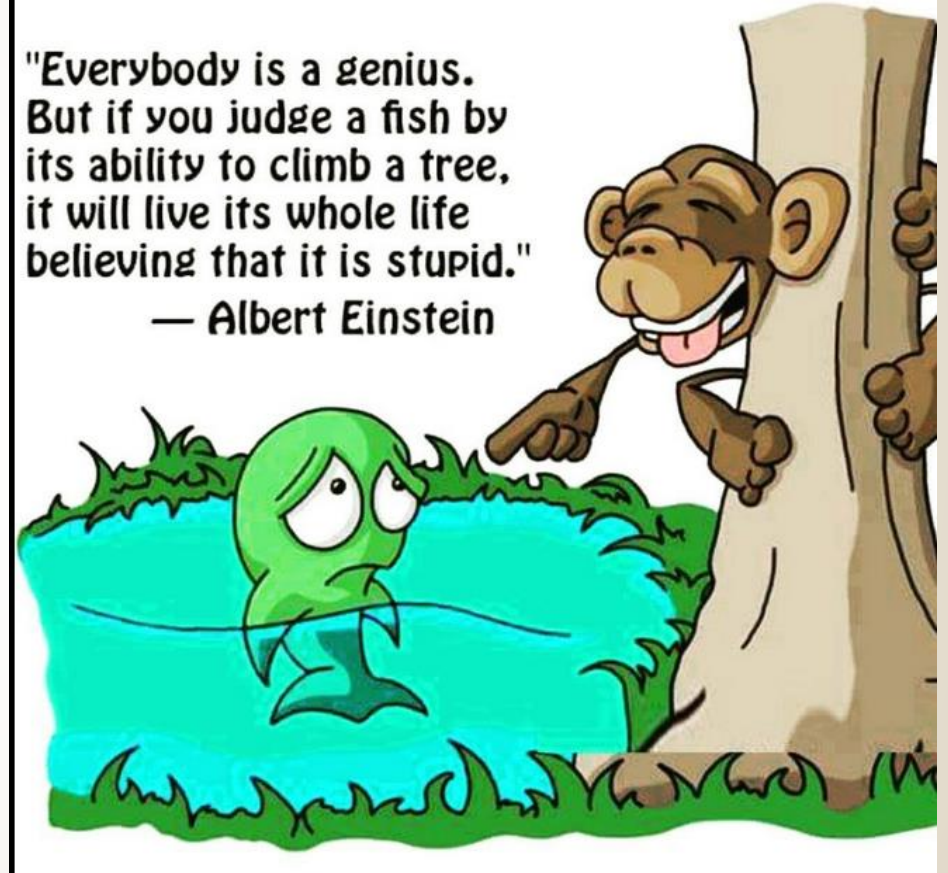


What words come to mind when you hear the term differentiated pedagogy?

The myth of homogeneity...



"Everybody is a genius.
But if you judge a fish by
its ability to climb a tree,
it will live its whole life
believing that it is stupid."
— Albert Einstein



<https://www.quotemaster.org/climb+the+tree#&gid=1&pid=4>

Differentiation is needed because...

Diversity in education places is a reality. The classroom cannot be perfectly **homogeneous** simply because children have been placed in it on the basis of their age.

In recent years, global developments, the economic crisis, migration, inclusive education, etc. have created conditions in which **the diversity of** children in modern classrooms is highlighted.

Diversity creates different learning needs

Origin, age, gender, language, socio-economic group, cultural habits...

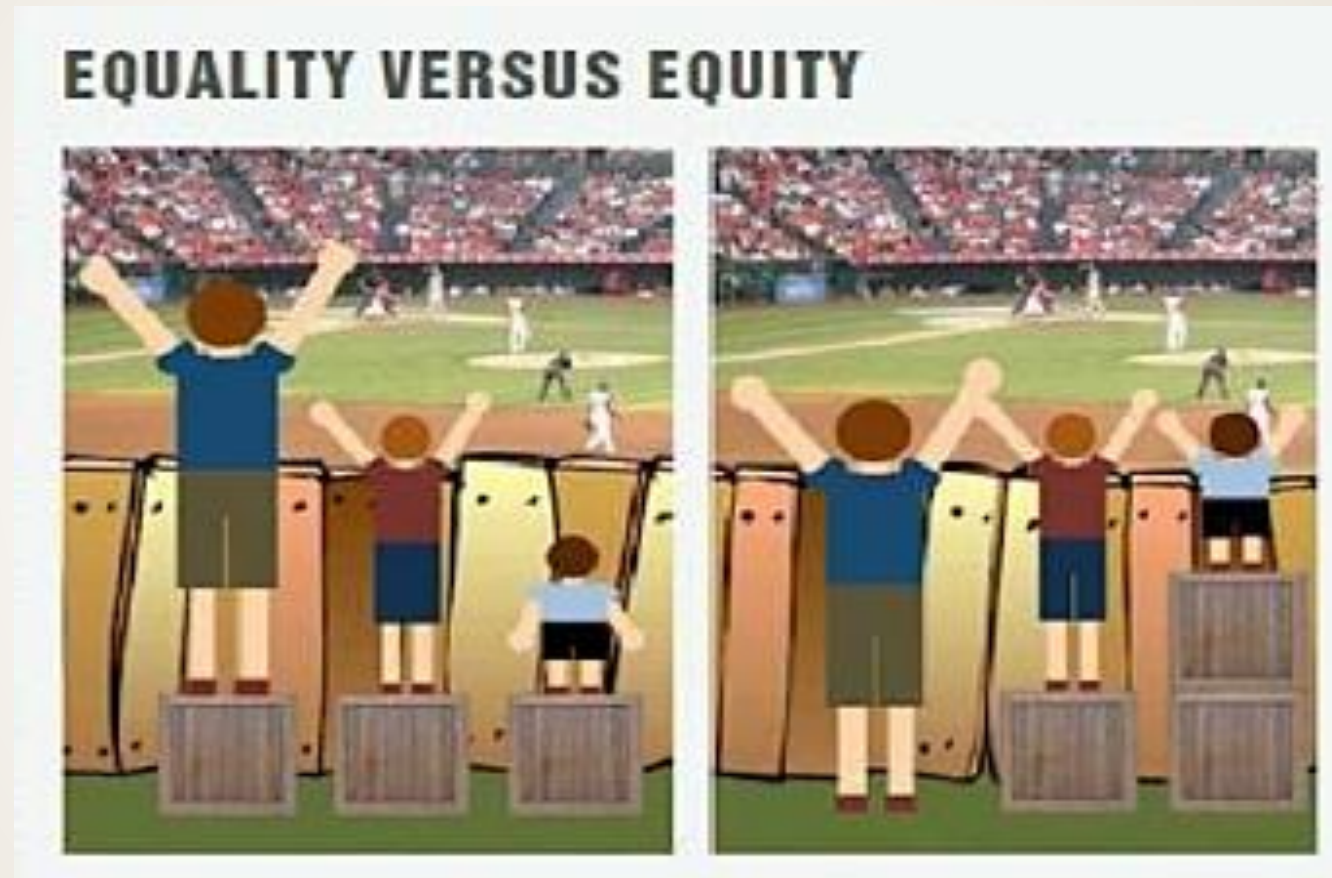
Differences related to the family environment such as experiences, interests, needs, friends, values and attitudes...

They combine the **uniqueness of** each child and lead to different preferences, but also to different levels of ability.

Therefore,

When the teacher designs the educational process for the **average/median level** that children of a particular age are supposed to have, she ignores important elements that facilitate each child's participation in learning.

Providing "the same" help to everyone is not effective



<http://blog.core-ed.org/blog/2016/07/unpacking-udl-differentiation-and-adaptation.html>



Questions

- **How is differentiated instruction defined?**

-**How can differentiation be applied in the classroom?**

Defining differentiated instruction

Carol Tomlinson (1999) has formulated the best known definition of differentiated instruction:

"the teacher's response to learners' needs, guided by general principles of differentiation such as **respectful tasks** (interesting, enjoyable, meaningful), **flexible grouping**, and **ongoing assessment and adjustment**" (p. 15).

Differentiated instruction is "an approach to teaching in which teachers proactively modify **curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities** and student **products** to address the diverse needs of individual students and small groups of students to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in a classroom" (Tomlinson et al., 2003, p. 121).

Differentiated instruction is not...

According to Carol Ann Tomlinson (2001), differentiated instruction is NOT:

- ✓ individualised teaching,
- ✓ chaotic process,
- ✓ alternative way of organising homogeneous groups,
- ✓ the teacher having more demands on some students and less on others

Teacher's Guide to the Kindergarten Curriculum (2014), p. 32

Key elements of differentiation ¹

The **flexible grouping**

(importance of working in small groups and the need for flexibility in the grouping criterion).

This means that the teams are not permanent, but need to be changed on a frequent basis.

Key elements of differentiation 2

Continuous evaluation and adjustment of teaching.

- Collecting data on the many different ways each child learns (appropriate strategies, materials...).
- It is suggested that authentic assessment (at each stage of the educational process) be applied in order to achieve appropriate adjustment of teaching.

Key elements of differentiation ³

Important elements in the classroom: variety & alternatives
(= **choice**)

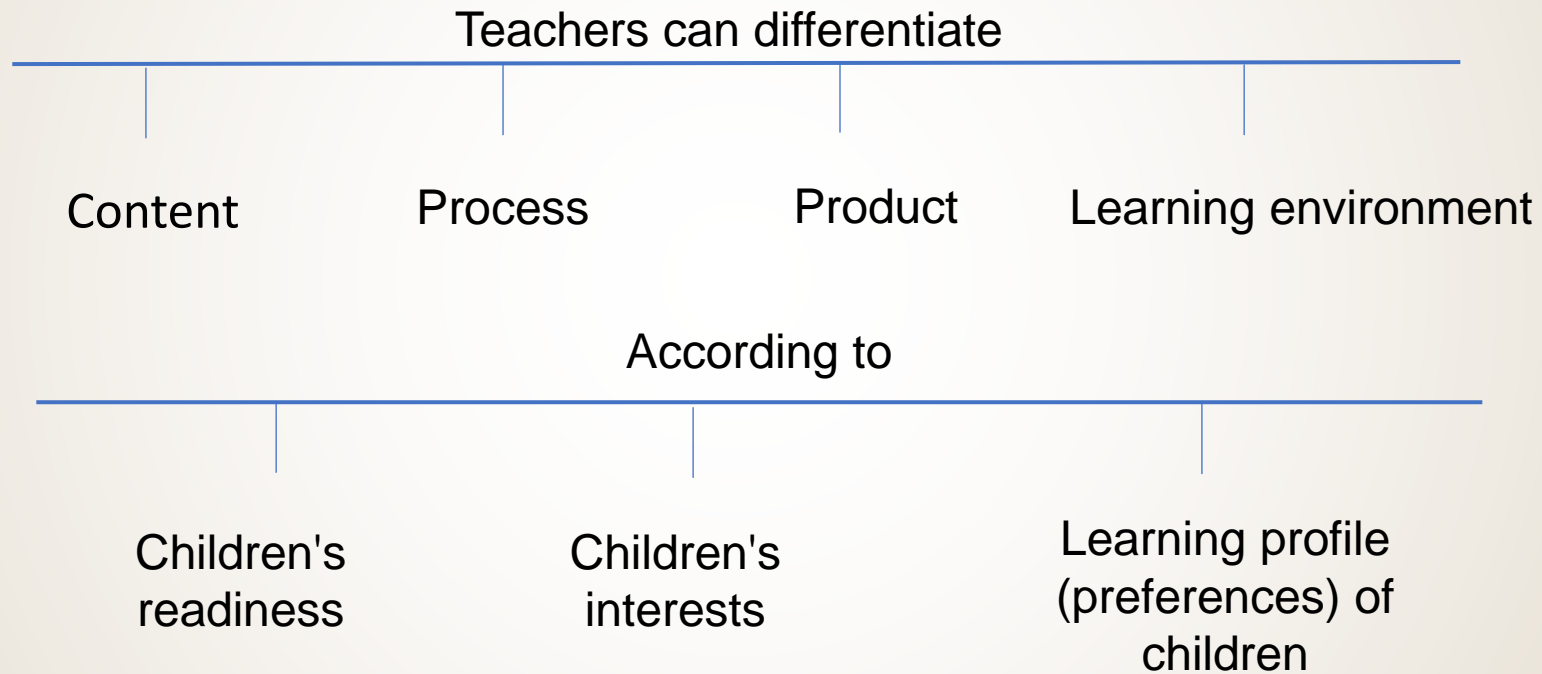
- ✓ presentation of the teaching content
- ✓ development of the process/methods of children's participation
- ✓ expression of what children understand and elaborate

Levels/axes of differentiation

Tomlinson argues that differentiation of teaching can be achieved at 4 levels:

- the **content, process, learning environment** and **product** based on
- the child's characteristics (**readiness, interests** and **learning profile/preferences**).

A figure always helps...



Content

Differentiation is related to how children approach the content.

Emphasis on options e.g.

- ✓ different working groups work on a topic in greater or lesser depth,
- ✓ different resources are provided depending on skills or interests.

Process

It is related to the learning path, how each activity develops.

Activities can be designed at levels of difficulty or complexity, to provide options for alternative actions depending on the type of learning that each activity most promotes.

There is also variation in the way support is provided by the teacher.

Learning environment

It refers to the physical (furniture, materials), but also to the emotional environment (relationships - sense of security, acceptance, encouragement of the expression of ideas, respect).

The structure of the classroom needs to support

- ✓ all forms of work (solitary and collaborative) and access to various materials related to different cultures and family practices,
- ✓ free movement of children in the classroom (flexible grouping of children).

The organisation of the space, the lighting, the noise level can vary the learning environment according to the particular preferences of the children.

Product

Ways provided for children to show, apply or present to others what they have learned.

Possibility to choose different ways of presentation (e.g. to show what they have learned through posters, models, constructions, written texts/digital presentations, drawings, narratives, drama/ puppet theatre...)

Child characteristics

Children learn best when activities (Tomlinson, 2001)

- ✓ match their skills and knowledge of a subject (*learning readiness; teaching starts from where each child is*)
- ✓ arouse curiosity and motivate them to get involved (*interest*)
- ✓ allow the choice of desired working style (*learning profile/preferences*)

Barriers to the implementation of Differentiated Pedagogy

There is no way that can happen...I don't know how much time I would have to spend doing so many different activities

I know roughly who is good at maths or language development and who is not.

If three groups work in parallel in different ways, the classroom will be a mess

I don't have children with learning disabilities, so why should I differentiate?

How will I know each time the readiness or what fits whom to give a choice?

It's one thing to have 10 children in the classroom, it's another to work with 25!

What are your comments on the above views?

The Differentiated Pedagogy...

- **It is not just another method**, but a pedagogical concept that allows everyone to participate, because **everyone is different**.
- It enables teachers to learn children better.
- It gives children opportunities to take the initiative, participate in their learning.
- It shapes conditions and relationships that leave room for everyone to be heard, share experiences and make choices. It therefore encourages rather than discourages participation.

Examples

Comment on the following choices made by the kindergarten teacher based on the principles of Differentiated Pedagogy.

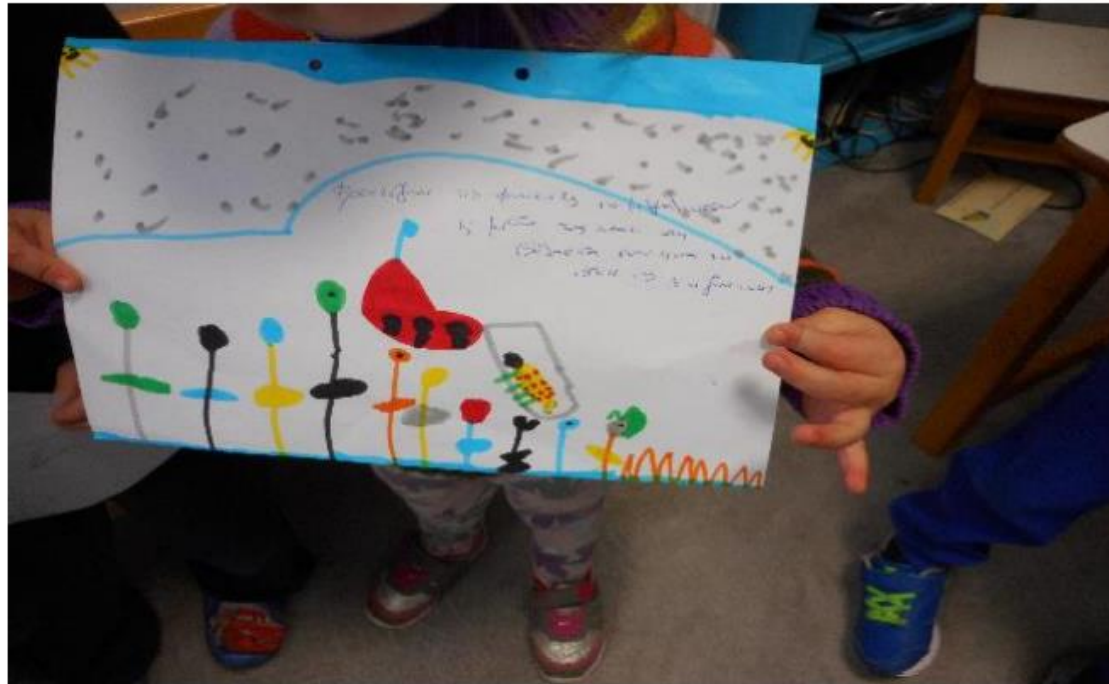
1ⁿ case: content differentiation with material grading

The kindergarten teacher used systematic observation to collect information about the children in her class about their language/reading readiness and interests.

The main aim was for all the children to be able to search for and record the actions of organisations that protect animals.

Material graduation

Three groups were formed: one group watched a video and then drew an action (Mavidou & Kakana, 2019, p. 430)



Εικόνα 2. Ζωγραφιά που δείχνει την οργάνωση να σώζει την τραυματισμένη φώκια.

Figure: Drawing showing the organization rescuing the injured seal

Another group worked on a knowledge book with large pictures and short texts. The children were given tabs with headings from within the book to match the tab with the corresponding heading. Then, with the help of the kindergarten teacher, they processed the text on that page and listed the actions they found (Mavidou & Kakana, 2019, p. 430).



Εικόνα 3. Ταιριάζοντας τις καρτέλες με τους τίτλους.

Figure: Matching the tabs with the headings

Another group processed leaflets of an organisation and created their own list (Mavidou & Kakana, 2019, p. 431).



Εικόνα 4. Επεξεργασία ενημερωτικών φυλλαδίων του Αρκτούρου.

Figure: Processing of leaflets from Arcturos Environmental Organization.

Therefore...

The kindergarten teacher tried to facilitate the participation of all the children by giving them the choice to join one of the groups that suited their characteristics.

The basic objective has not changed: what has essentially differed is the material that each team has processed and of course this has influenced the way each team has chosen to document the actions of animal protection organisations.

2ⁿ case: differentiating the process by grading material into levels of difficulty

As patterns are one of the usual teaching objects from the learning area of mathematics, the kindergarten teacher makes use of the readiness of the children in her class (to analyse pattern in its constituent elements, to distinguish the repeating unit and to reproduce it), but also of the children's interests.

On the occasion of the necessity to decorate a birthday invitation card, it diversifies the activity by providing 2 options:

- ✓ in the first case there is the "beginning" of the pattern with balloons of different colours,
- ✓ in the second case, children choose materials they like (stamps, stickers, favourite heroes, etc.) and start the pattern themselves.

Thus, the children were able to process the concept of the pattern at two levels of difficulty: reproducing and extending the pattern based on a template and creating the pattern without a template, with material of their choice (Kampeza, 2020, p. 112).

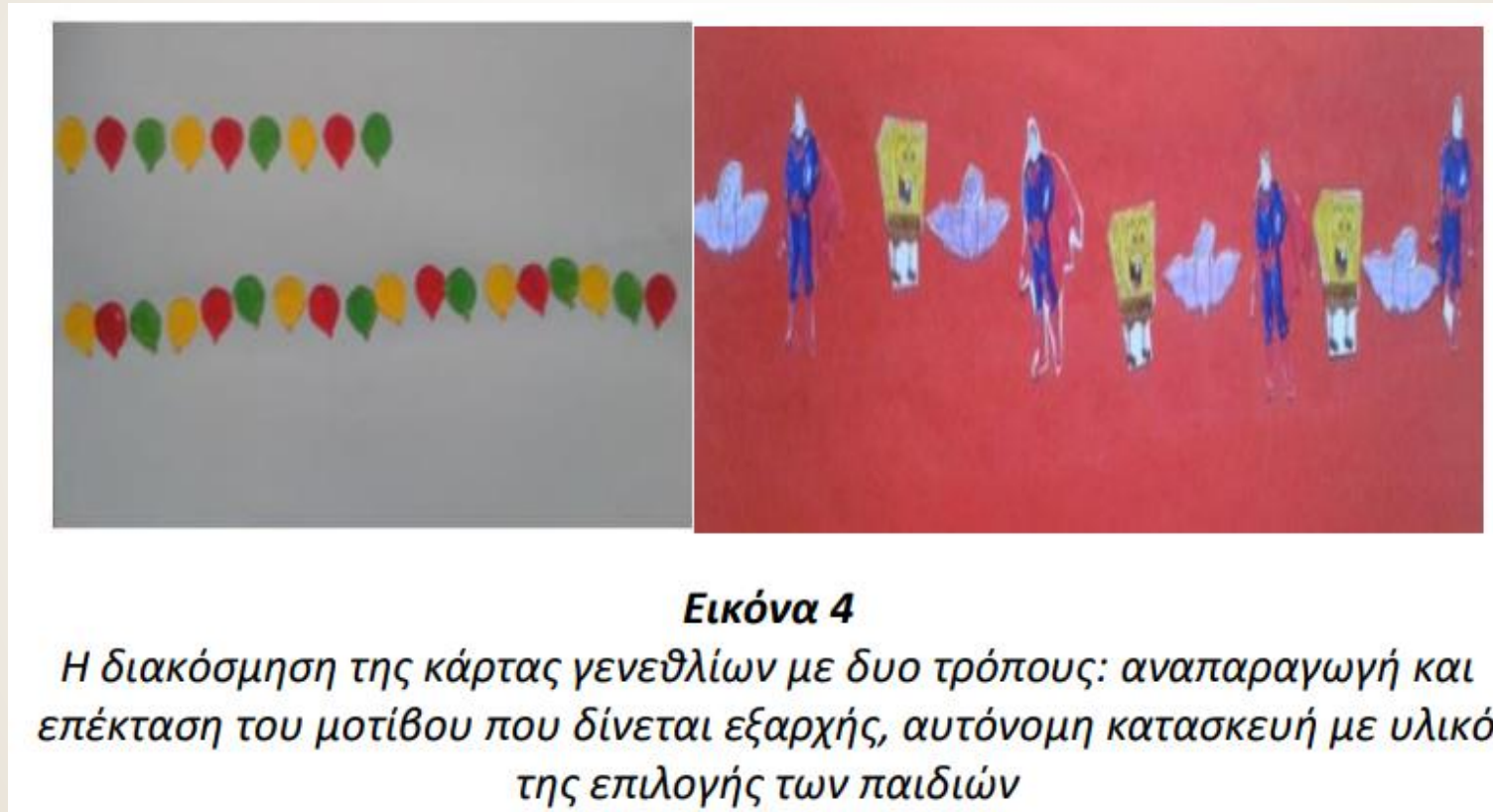


Figure: the decoration of the birthday card in two ways: reproduction and extension of the pattern given from the very start, independent production with material of the children's own choice.

What do you think is troubling the kindergarten teacher? 1

I give all the children a simple crossword puzzle. 3 words of 4 to 6 letters. Underneath is all the words the children have to fill in. Some children immediately understand what they have to do. Some seem to have never seen it before. Many children finish it very quickly and seem bored. K. Sits holding the pencil and trying to peek from his peers to see what letters to fill in and in which position. S. is writing mixed-up letters. She does not speak at all, only stares at the paper with her head bowed. B. has written correctly some words and seems to be thinking. Several other children are doing the same. Almost half the class is succeeding. E. makes no effort, just colours the boxes. N. doesn't bother with what he has to do at all. I allow him to withdraw.... and get on with something else, which, after all, happens very often. When everyone is finished, I reward all the children for their effort and ask them to put the assignment in their folder. Allowing each child to complete the crossword puzzle as they can, I believe that, to some extent, I respect and follow the pace of my students. At least I am not pushing them. I differentiate. However, something is troubling me.

(Sfyroera, 2019, p. 56)

What do you think is troubling the kindergarten teacher? 2

- Does she really give all children opportunities to move at their own pace and ability?
- What does the remark "almost half the class is succeeding" mean?
- Does the use of a "learning pathway" by everyone motivate all the children in the class in the same way?

How would you suggest the kindergarten teacher continue the activity?

- Using the Red Riding Hood fairy tale, firstly a discussion is held about the heroes of the story (e.g. mum, grandmother, hunter).
- The children were divided into groups according to the hero they each chose to make their own story (mum, grandma, wolf, hunter)...one girl asked to make a story about another "hero" of the fairy tale...the beautiful flowers that had led Little Red Riding Hood off the path. Her idea appealed to 2 other girls in the class.

(Kortesi-Dafermou, & Sfyroera, 2019)

- Does it make sense to create a new group? Why?
- Do all teams need to work in the same way?

To sum up...

Processes that ensure opportunities and the development of all students (Kortesi-Dafermou, & Sfyroera, 2019, p. 47):

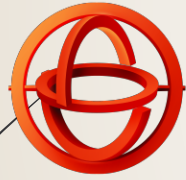
- ✓ Many different activities, so that all students can be involved,
- ✓ Flexibility in pursuits, so that everyone can develop as much as they can,
- ✓ Differentiated learning pathways leading to the above objectives,
- ✓ Differentiation in content, process, product and learning environment.

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