

Technologies of managing students' creative activities: differentiated instruction

Tecnologías de gestión de las actividades creativas de los alumnos: instrucción diferenciada.

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of the study is to substantiate the fruitfulness of differentiation and reveal its specifics in the university educational process. Differentiated instruction has significant potential for the formation of students' readiness for creative self-development in the context of the humanitarization of education, inclusive education, and their intensive transition to the digital format. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University of the Russian Federation, a conclusion has been made on the use of differentiation as a tool for creating a developing educational environment of the university. It is effective as a technology focused on improving the personality of a student, their creative potential, intellectual abilities, and personal qualities.

Keywords: Creative activities, students, technologies, differentiated instruction, humanitarization

RESUMEN:

El propósito del estudio es probar la fecundidad de la diferenciación y revelar sus aspectos específicos en el proceso educativo universitario. La instrucción diferenciada tiene un potencial significativo para la formación de la preparación de los estudiantes para el autodesarrollo creativo en el contexto de la humanización de la educación, la educación inclusiva y su transición intensiva al formato digital. En la Universidad Federal Nororiental de la Federación Rusa de Ammosov, se ha llegado a una conclusión sobre el uso de la diferenciación como herramienta para crear un entorno educativo en desarrollo en la universidad. Es eficaz como una tecnología enfocada en mejorar la personalidad de un estudiante, su potencial creativo, habilidades intelectuales y cualidades personales.

Palabras clave: actividades creativas, estudiantes, tecnologías, instrucción diferenciada, humanización.

1. Introduction

Under the conditions of the competitive environment of the modern national labor market and socio-economic upheavals, the successful socialization and professional development of young specialists – graduates of Russian and foreign universities – are hampered by

prevailing realities. Addressing the issues of successful adaptation of a young person in society and profession actualizes the problem of using such higher school educational technologies that contribute to the intensive activation of an individual's potential and, in terms of goals and results, have a humanitarian focus and developing character. Distinctive features of such technologies are pronounced personality-oriented and developing character, provision of a favorable psychological climate, a democratic atmosphere of communication, provision of participants in the educational process with a subjective position, use of the "style of pedagogical interaction that stimulates students' readiness for creativity, co-creation, and cooperation" (Zalutskaya, 2018).

Technologies developing a student's personality, their willingness for self-education, self-development, and self-realization play a decisive role in the educational process, "in which the social program of human development is implemented and their personal qualities are formed" (Mudrik, 2000).

In universities of the humanitarian profile, technologies for the development of students' creative potential and their readiness for further creative self-improvement are in particular demand. These technologies traditionally respond more actively to new requirements for updating the system of organization, content, and methods of the educational process (Galitskih et al., 2018). Technical universities have the possibility of introducing into the educational process the already approved and tested in practice models of personnel training taking into account the humanitarization vital for higher education.

The development and introduction of innovative educational technologies into practice correlates with the goal of Russian universities to improve the quality of vocational education, stimulate innovative processes, and at the same time, preserve the fundamental character of humanitarian training, its prestige, competitiveness, and relevance to the current and future needs of an individual, society, and state. Achieving the goal requires enhancing the role of all participants in the educational process, including the teacher: the prospects for the development of humanitarian education largely depend on their professionalism, willingness to innovate, and ability to adequately respond to modern challenges. A university teacher, acting in accordance with federal educational and professional standards, is faced with the need to control a student's motivation through targeted pedagogical activities, one of the tasks of which should be to create conditions for developing the skills of "self-building of personality" (Bibler, 1991) and the creative self-development of personality.

2. Methods

The research methods include content analysis of scientific literature on creative self-development of an individual and pedagogical regulation of the creative personality formation in the context of the humanitarization of education. Pedagogical and methodological experiment, generalization of experience, and analytical study using targeted observation were applied as well.

3. Results

The content analysis of Russian and foreign scientific research in the field of the pedagogy of creativity, as well as the study of the practice of teaching the humanities on the basis of North-Eastern Federal University, confirm the fruitfulness of differentiation application for the purpose of forming a student's creative personality. It allows creating the necessary pedagogical conditions of the educational environment comfortable for an individual's diverse development, regardless of their psychological, physiological, intellectual, and creative features. Differentiation as the basis for learning individualization is effective in the implementation of students' educational routes due to its "pronounced personality-oriented character" (Yakimanskaya, 2014).

Differentiated instruction is a "complex of methodological, psychological, educational, organizational, and managerial measures" (Selevko, 2006), providing subject specialization for various groups of students and taking into account their personal characteristics.

“Differentiation allows organizing training based on the individual characteristics of a person, ensuring that all students learn the content of education” (Yakimanskaya, 2014). The content of education can be divided into basic and variable parts for the purpose of successful development of every student. The purpose of education differentiation meets the demands of humanization and humanitarization of education. It consists of creating comfortable conditions in the single educational space of the country for the optimal development of the abilities, inclinations and personal qualities of an individual, for satisfying their cognitive and creative needs and interests in the process of mastering the content of education.

In pedagogical science, various approaches to the characterization of the essence, types, and levels of differentiation are known (N.K. Goncharov, G.K. Selevko, I.M. Osmolovskaya, M.N. Skatkin, etc.). Traditionally, students are divided based on general and special abilities, disabilities, interests and inclinations, learning level, level of development of intellectual and creative abilities, future profession, etc.

In the context of the problem of managing students' creative activity, of great interest is the approach of the researcher I.E. Unt (1990), who defines the specificity of differentiation as consideration of the individual characteristics inherent in groups of students and the organization of variable learning in these groups. The author argues that, in accordance with the theory of L.S. Vygotsky on the zone of proximal development, work in different groups stimulates, among other things, the creative activity of an individual. The outstanding Russian psychologist solved the problem of the relationship between learning and personal development based on the general law of the origin of a child's mental functions and zones of their proximal development, which are created in the process of learning and communication with adults and peers. According to the scientist, it is possible for a person to create something new after they do it in cooperation with others. A new psychological function appears as a kind of individual continuation of its implementation in collective activities, the organization of which is learning. (Vygotsky, 1997).

Differentiation allows one to effectively organize, harmoniously combine in training individual and group creative activities of students, aimed at shaping the abilities and qualities of a person thinking outside the box.

4. Discussion

The popularity of group activity in differentiated instruction at higher education institutions is connected with the solution of the following tasks: involving students in the process of mastering educational material, increasing cognitive motivation, developing the skills of successful communication (the ability to listen and hear each other, build a dialogue, ask questions in order to understand), developing the skills for independent learning activities (determining urgent and important tasks, choosing the optimal way to solve them, foreseeing the consequences of one's choice, assessing it objectively), developing leadership skills, developing the ability to work in group, to take responsibility for group and individual activities, to achieve results.

During group work, all students become teachers. However, “the transformation does not take place immediately, it emerges objectively when students become aware of their new educational functions: I understand–I teach, I speak–I listen, I learn to be both a follower and a leader, etc.” (Kocherova et al., 2017). These competencies of cooperation and co-learning acquire special significance in the complex of professional competencies of future teachers. In the process, they are objectively formed as educators, improving their pedagogical skills and mastering in practice such functions of a teacher-organizer of schoolchildren' group work as:

- organization of a learning situation corresponding to the goals of differentiated instruction;
- implementation of the principles of cooperation and co-creation;
- audit of a student's individual program and their participation in group activities, as well as consultation;
- teaching the rules of interaction when working in a group;
- teaching to choose the best creative solutions to problems;

- time management of group work.

The success of group creative work depends on the degree of its organizer's compliance with a complex of requirements that future teachers learn about organizing their own group activities at university practical and seminar classes. These requirements include, first, the ability of a teacher to design differentiated creative tasks;; second, the ability to select empirical quality indicators of activity of a person performing a creative task; third, the ability to analyze the reasons for a student's readiness to perform a particular task; fourth, the ability to quickly transform the original lesson plan in response to arising challenges (Watts-Taffe et al., 2012).

Differentiated creative tasks help to organize the group creative activity of students and involve them in group creative work, which allows them to actively improve their individual creative potential. When compiling the tasks, it is advisable to use tasks that require a large amount of work, a variety of knowledge and skills, all of which are possessed not by any of the students individually, but by the group, to use tasks for the development of creative abilities, tasks requiring making decisions directly related to the future activities of the group.

In order for work on creative tasks to be both beneficial and satisfying, the complexity of the material must be in the "zone of actual development" of students: the tasks must be complex but feasible. They should focus on the organization of the dialogue between, be problematic, create a certain cognitive difficulty, and provide an opportunity for active use of existing knowledge. Differentiated creative tasks involve the use and understanding of a learner's life experience, information from various sources. They give everyone the opportunity to realize their abilities, existing knowledge, and skills as a part of the group.

To maximize the effectiveness of students' group activities using differentiated tasks, a teacher should plan the organization of space for group work, the number of group members, its composition, offer students creative tasks and set learning goals, monitor the work of students in the group, and organize reflection.

Working in a group allows not only combining the knowledge, skills, and abilities of several people but also enriching their creative experience, teaching them the skills of collective professional activity. For example, in groups specially designed by a teacher, students can independently perform various creative tasks: taking notes, planning an unconventional lesson, finding a solution to a problem, solving a situational pedagogical problem, developing creative tasks for gifted students or students limited opportunities (Westwood, 2016), creating a pedagogical project (for example, advertising a book for teenagers, holding a special socio-cultural event), developing visual materials for a lesson, writing a script for an educational game, etc.

For the most effective use of differentiation in teaching students, tasks of the creative nature should be distinguished from tasks of the reproducing nature, which are aimed at developing memory and the ability to copy, as well as revision of covered material. Creative tasks improve imagination, the ability to compare, abstract, synthesize, and develop intuition and thinking. They promote solutions to problems, which are new to a student.

Creative tasks must be differentiated as well. The differentiation can be based on different principles:

- level of difficulty
- form of learning activity
- nature of the developed abilities
- object of active development.

Individual creative tasks are designed for a specific student, taking into account their psychological and physiological features, level of intellectual development, personal inclinations and interests. The teacher gives a student the opportunity to open up, express themselves, show their merits, identify and correct their shortcomings (Galitskih et al., 2018). Tasks must contain a certain degree of complexity and a share of novelty and be diverse: even a familiar creative task each time must be solved with new material and with new results.

Group creative tasks are aimed at a certain micro-group of like-minded people. They allow organizing group work in the class with the greatest return. High performance by a group is possible if the teacher creates the conditions most favorable for co-creation: they precisely set and clarify the tasks, select the group psychologically correctly, help if necessary to distribute responsibilities between the participants of the group, and make the results useful for all members (Panina et al., 2017).

The variety and effectiveness of differentiated creative tasks are influenced by the type of class. Many creative tasks can be performed when conducting business, drama, role-playing, imitation and other didactic games: crossword puzzle, quiz, dramatization, press conference, talk show, flash mob, trial, brainstorm, production process simulation, commercial, quest and much more.

Classes in the game format enrich students' professional experience, actualize their professional competencies, and broaden their horizons. Creative tasks help to transfer students to the game world, to the world of imagination, which they create individually or together.

5. Conclusion

A developing educational space as a necessary condition for the effective solution of the problem of creative self-development should be included in the totality of the pedagogical conditions of the educational process organization. This is due to the fact that the educational process, considered as a system, functions in a specific environment of an educational organization, structuring it, acting as a source of organizing influences and at the same time experiencing the effects of the environment. The environment can be favorable and contribute to the performance of functions (motivational, technological, informational, etc.) of the pedagogical support of a student's creative self-development or it may hinder their realization.

Differentiated instruction allows creating the necessary pedagogical conditions for students' diverse personality development taking into account all their characteristics. Differentiation has proved its viability and importance in the process of forming the developing university environment, in educating students as future professionals with flexible, innovative thinking, high-level professional and creative abilities, and willingness to adapt to society and profession. However, the question of the differentiation technologies effective use in studying specific academic disciplines, in particular, the humanities, whose specificity is the orientation to the personality of a student and the impact on their inner world, remains debatable. In the context of the rapid transition to digital education, new methods of instruction both in the electronic environment and reality are needed that would promote the development of students' creative abilities, stimulate their cognitive activities and imagination, help acquire taste and search skills, motivate them to learn about life and their place in it.

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