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# Differentiation and planning for diversity

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lifechanging



**University of  
Sunderland**

# Focus of today's session

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- Exploring the concept and practical translation of 'differentiation' in primary settings
- Understanding the 'learning without limits' approach to differentiation
- Exploring the concept of 'Diversity' in schools
- Highlighting the role of interventions in teaching that supports diversity

But First.....

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What are the principals of 'Differentiation?'

# Differentiation

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Principles for differentiation:

- All children have a right to high quality education
- Every child can learn
- Every teacher can learn
- Progress for all will be expected, recognised and rewarded
- People and learning systems can change for the better

(O'Brien & Guiney, 2001)

*“Differentiation is only meaningful if it is a process for all”*  
(O'Brien & Guiney, 2001, p.4)

# How do teachers commonly differentiate?

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- Ability... High, middle, low etc.
- Learning style
- Gender
- Special Educational Needs/Disabilities (SEND)
- English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Personalities
- Children's experiences
- Staff experiences
- Staff knowledge/understanding

(Bearne, 1996)

# Concepts of ability

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- What might inform our judgment of children as ..
  - 'low ability' ?
  - 'Middle ability' ?
  - 'high ability' ?
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- What are the positives/negatives of these groupings?

# Traditional vs progressive approaches to differentiation

Progressive approaches	Traditional approaches
Mixed ability, mixed groupings- this usually means children are seated in mixed ability groupings around the classroom	Setting and streaming- grouping by ability
Individual needs are the focus. Acknowledge that children will work at different levels and rates	Children must be treated the same, no allowances should be made for differences at an individual level
Children's prior experiences are a starting point for a lesson. Curriculum can be built around children's perceived needs	The curriculum content is a starting point. Set knowledge must be gained by all children.
Differentiation by outcome	Differentiation by task
Differentiation by resource- focus on extending learning of some individuals and further supporting others	Ability groupings provided with similar resources for the task

(McNamara & Moreton, 1997)

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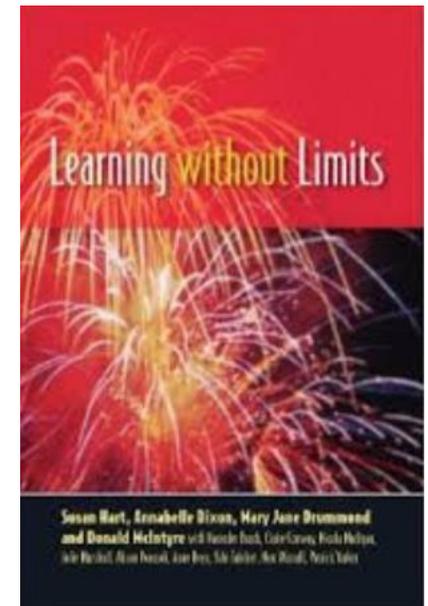
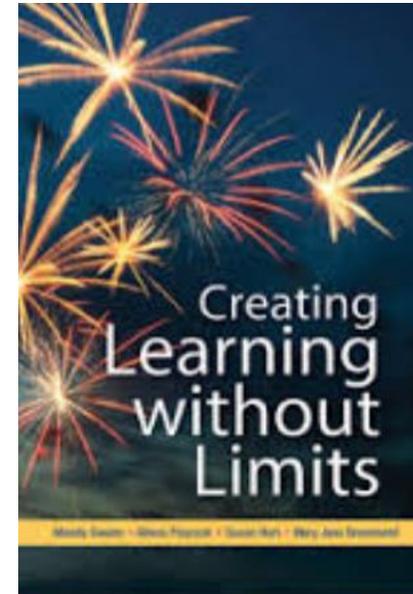
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**What opportunities/challenges are presented by progressive approaches to differentiation?**

# Learning without limits (LwL) project

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- Conducted by researchers at the University of Cambridge
- Aimed to challenge accepted and traditional views of what effective differentiation looked like
- Aimed to go beyond ability-based teaching and learning
- What the LwL team wanted to find out:
  - What would replace 'ability' in teachers' thinking and practice?
  - What are the key features of an alternative approach to differentiation?



# Learning without limits project

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- Researchers worked with teachers through the course of one academic year
- Three phases:
  - Phase 1: Understand teachers' concepts of differentiation
  - Phase 2: Implement a range of imaginative activities to encourage children to articulate themselves as learners
  - Phase 3: Interview teachers and members of wider school to identify key themes of approaches and any differences in thinking

(Hart, 2004)



# Article: Beyond Assessment Levels

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Reading before session: Peacock, A., 2011. Beyond assessment levels: Reaching for new heights in primary education. *Education Review*, 24(1).

- What key arguments did Alison Peacock make in the need to look beyond assessment levels?
- What practical implications would this approach have?
- What are your views on the approach advocated in this paper?

# Beyond assessment levels: key arguments

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- The article “challenges the assumption that ability is fixed and measurable” (Peacock, 2011, p.14).
- Challenges the so-called ‘standards agenda.’ Argues that teaching to the test has led to prioritising measurable performance at the expense of learning.
- ‘Ability’ and ‘potential’ indicate a pre-programmed capacity for learning and achievement
- Challenges the notion of linear progression
- Focus on individual skills-based challenges, rather than ‘levels’ or ‘targets’
- Articulates a “necessary balance of success and cognitive challenge in all areas of the curriculum” (ibid, p.17).

# Beyond assessment levels: Practicalities

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- Teachers provide a range of tasks, of varying complexity for children to select during lessons
- Focus on self-assessment: Years 5 and 6 produce and present a powerpoint on their learning at parents' meetings
- All children from Year One upwards write their own reports electronically
- *"...requires an approach to professional learning that continually asks questions and seeks new ways of understanding about what takes place in our classrooms" (Peacock, 2011, p.21).*

**Resource Heavy?**

# What is the difference between these types of feedback?

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*“I can see that you employed a range of problem solving skills to that task”*

*“You are very clever, well done!”*

# Mindset: Dweck (2006)

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*“ She discovered that when children receive process feedback e.g. **“I can see that you employed a range of problem solving skills to that task”**- they are encouraged to develop a growth mindset which inspires them to keep on attempting tasks of increasing complexity.*

*Conversely, attainment based feedback e.g. **“You are very clever, well done!”** awards congratulation for innate ability, thereby unintentionally building a fixed mindset. The message communicated to the child in the second example implies that sooner or later their capability will reach a limit.”*

(Peacock, 2011, p.20).

# Learning without limits

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- The biggest problem that the researchers faced was challenging ideas of fixed ability (high ability children, middle ability children, lower ability children)

*One of the greatest tragedies of the last hundred years has been our failure ... to take on the essential concept of human educability and therefore to challenge the idea that children are born with a fixed quota of “intelligence” which remains constant during childhood and adult life.*

(Chitty, 2001)

**What are your thoughts on this approach?**

# TED Talk: Alison Peacock

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oxxPi6c-Nw>

# Learning without limits: Principles for success

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- Teachers have core idea of ‘transformability’
- Offer children choices
- Involve children in assessing their own learning
- Offer open-ended curriculum experiences
- Take account of children’s interests
- Take account of the social dynamics that children and adults bring to the classroom
- Create a school-wide culture of learning
- Listen to children’s views and preferences

(Swann, 2012)

# Defining 'Diversity'

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What does the term 'Diversity' mean to you?

# Defining 'Diversity'

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- Hugely multi-faceted concept, involving a number of inter-related concepts
- At a basic level, diversity is concerned with acknowledging and valuing difference
- Historically (and currently!) debates around Diversity have focused on:
  - Racism
  - Homophobia
  - Sexism
  - Classism/ Socio-economic status
  - Antisemitism
  - Ageism

(Adams et al., 1997)

- Important to acknowledge that 'Diversity' is often inter-linked with 'Inclusion.'

# Defining 'Diversity'

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*“Diversity in...schools is both an opportunity and a challenge. The nation is enriched by the ethnic, cultural, and language diversity among its citizens and within its schools. However, whenever diverse groups interact, intergroup tension, stereotypes, and institutionalized discrimination develops. Schools must find a way to respect the diversity of their students as well as help to create a unified superordinate nation-state to which all citizens have allegiance”*

(Peterson & Warwick, 2015).

# Policy on Diversity

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- Important to be aware of relevant policy/political initiatives related to provision for all and the concept of diversity in education
- Equality Act 2010
- SEND Code of Practice 2015
- National Curriculum and 'Promoting British Values'

# Equality Act 2010

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- The Equality Act was introduced to offer legal protection to those people with one or more 'protected characteristics'. The protected characteristics are:
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Gender reassignment
  - Marriage and civil partnership
  - Pregnancy and maternity
  - Race
  - Religion or belief
  - Sex
  - Sexual orientation

# 'Promoting British values'

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Examples of the understanding and knowledge pupils are expected to learn include:

- an understanding of how citizens can influence decision-making through the democratic process
- an understanding that the freedom to hold other faiths and beliefs is protected in law
- an acceptance that people having different faiths or beliefs to oneself (or having none) should be accepted and tolerated, and should not be the cause of prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour
- an understanding of the importance of identifying and combatting discrimination

(DFE, 2014)

# Policy into practice

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- Think about the needs of students from diverse groups in your planning—take time to be self-reflective every half term to consider the inclusivity and accessibility of your teaching for all students in your class.
- Demonstrate and model the values that you expect all students in your class to reflect
- Identify opportunities within your teaching for students to work collaboratively in diverse groups.
- Devise creative and respectful ways of using the diverse experiences of students to add value to the learning experience for everyone.
- Ensure all pupils within the school have a voice that is listened to, and demonstrate how democracy works by actively promoting democratic processes such as a school council whose members are voted for by the pupils
- Make sure you find time to keep up to date with policy changes and initiatives

(DFE, 2014)

# Interventions to support Diversity

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- National Curriculum requires that 14-16 year old be taught about the ‘diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.’ (DfE, 2013).
- In 2014, DfE published ‘Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools Departmental advice for maintained schools.’
- Many specific interventions implemented through PSHE lessons
- Examples of interventions/schemes to support diversity include:
  - Circle Time
  - School Councils
  - Buddying systems
  - Parental engagement schemes
  - Interventions that support pupils identified with a SEND

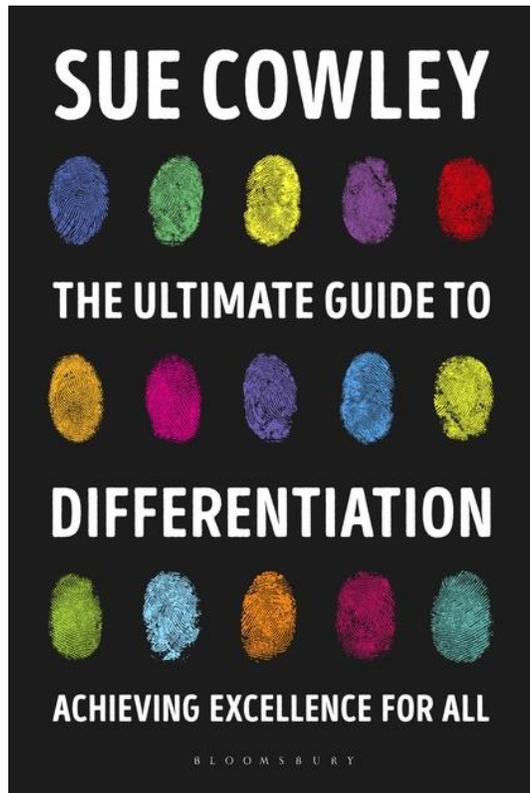
# TED Talk: Sue Austin

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCWIGN3181U>

# Further Reading

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