

## **Introduction**

Learners are each unique. Therefore, each individual has to be approached in a different way when it comes to teaching. However, this is not always possible as teaching does not take place on a one on one basis but in a class setting. Nevertheless, teachers should try to differentiate between their students. One way this can be achieved is by taking into account different groups that are taught. This essay will cover two areas in which teachers can differentiate: differences in gender and difference in backgrounds.

## **Gender differences**

Boys and girls are different. Consequently, they learn in different ways and have different preferences when it comes to choosing subjects (European Commission, 2009). Although it is difficult to make a distinction between innate and learned preferences, gender is a factor that affects achievement in a number of subject. Especially in reading girls seem to do better than boys; results of girls are better than those of boys, girls read more and they enjoy this activity more. Even math, which is often considered to be a male dominated field, performance differences are almost not noticeable in primary education (European Commission, 2009). For teachers this often means extra attention is being paid to the underperforming of boys instead of well-performing girls. Although it is good to make sure all students attain results at a certain level, this difference might be the result of other things. Maybe boys learn in a different way than the ways schools are organised and need a more active approach to learning than is currently the case. Furthermore, given the fact the percentage of male teachers has been dropping steadily, boys have less role models in schools. As was presented in the introductory course of this series, teachers have a large impact on the life of their students. With the lack of male teachers, boys lack exposure to people of the same gender who can help them to become successful in schools.

## **Background differences**

The differences in the background of students does have an impact on their performance. Whether they are part of an ethnic minority or their parents have a low social economic status (SES), their performance will be affected by this. A lot of research has been done on the impact of SES on academic achievement. Students with parents from a high SES have a higher change of going to university than those with parents that have a low SES. Although this is the case, teachers can still have a positive impact of those who are disadvantaged. And although this does not necessary mean students will go to top tier universities, it helps them to improve their future and give more chances to their and future generations.

## **Conclusion**

Differentiating for each of your individual student is a hard thing to do for teachers. As they still have to cater a wide variety of needs teachers can adapt their teaching by focussing on different groups. In this essay two of these have been examined: gender and background. With regard to gender it was noted that, although the causes resulting in the differences between academic achievement does not necessary be the result of gender, differences still exist. In the case of background it was noted that especially SES has an impact on achievement yet teachers can still have a positive impact.

## **References**

European Commission. (2009). *Gender differences in educational outcomes: Study on the measures taken and the situation in Europe*. Brussels: Educational Commission.