

Individual Differences: Inter and Intra Individual Differences, Concept, Causes and Implications

(1) CONCEPT OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

(1) Meaning of Individual Differences :

Perhaps the first task of every teacher in the classroom should be to know the individual differences among his pupils. No two individuals are alike. Every individual is different from the other. Individuals differ in physique (i.e. size, shape, appearance), intelligence, attitudes, aptitudes, achievement, memory, thinking, reasoning, imagination, problem solving, creativity, concentration, habits, skills, sentiments, aims, ambitions, aspirations, philosophy of life, sociability, emotionality (temperaments) and various other personality traits and types. It is these differences between individuals which separate them from others and make them unique individuals. In psychology we call these differences as 'Individual Differences'.

1. **Skinner's view:** "Today we think of individual differences as including any measurable aspect of the total personality." It is clear from this definition that it comprehends every aspect of human personality which in some manner is measurable. Individual differences may be slight, moderate or extreme.

2. **Tyler's view:** "Measurable differences have been shown to exist in physical size and shape, psychological functions, motor capacities, intelligence, achievement and knowledge, interests, attitudes and personality traits."

3. **Charles Darwin's view:** "No two individuals of the same race are quite alike, we may compare millions of faces and each will be distinct."

Individual differences play the most dominating role in the development of the child. It is of utmost importance to study the nature, causes and significance of individual differences.

(2) Characteristics of Individual Differences:

Nature of individual differences can be further illustrated by highlighting the characteristics of individual differences :

1. **Differ:** Individuals differ from one another. They differ in physique i.e., in size, shape, appearance, attitudes, achievements, aptitudes, memory, thinking, reasoning, imagination, problem solving, creativity, concentration, habits, skills, sentiments, gestures, ways of talking, acting, walking, philosophy of life (style of life), sociability, emotionality, temperaments and various other personality traits and types.
2. **No equal development:** Every individual is a unique and typical human being. Individuals neither have the same endowment nor develop equally.

3. **Measurable aspect:** Individual differences exist in any measurable aspect of personality. They comprehend every aspect of personality which in some manner is measurable. As Tyler believes, "Measurable differences have been shown to exist in physical size and shape, psychological functions, capacities, intelligence, achievement and knowledge, interests, attitudes and personality traits."
4. **Different reactions:** An individual reacts to the same situation in different manners at different times.
5. **Dependence:** Individual differences are caused due to heredity and environment. They depend on specific trait and ability or job performance or certain activity (which is the result of heredity and environment).
6. **Moderate or extreme:** Differences among individuals may be slight, moderate or extreme. For example, one child (individual) may be extremely dull, other intelligent and still another extremely intelligent.
7. **Differences among same individual:** Differences are not only found among different individuals but can be noticed within the same individual. For example, a child may be very good in language expression but very poor in mathematics. A child may do exceedingly well in academic subjects but his performance in field of sports may be very poor. Some may be very good in acting, dancing and musical activities and vice-versa. Differences are noticed in the way a child reacts to different situations.
8. **Similarities:** All children (individuals) have some general similar characteristics: (1) All the children have sense organs, brain, muscles and glands and through the joint action of all these intellectual capacity appears. (2) Every child has some intellectual capacity. (3) Every child has the emotion of fear, anger and love and the feelings of This description equally applies to individual differences of learners. Individual differences play the most dominating role in the development of the child. It is of utmost important to study the nature, causes and significance of individual differences.

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(3) Types Of Individual Differences:

1. **Inter-Individual Differences:** Differences in a particular characteristic among various individuals. e.g. Differences among persons in their attitude, interests, learning etc.
2. **Intra- Individual Differences:** Differences among various characteristics possessed by the same person. It reflects the strengths and weaknesses of an individual. Different abilities are present in different quantities within the same person. e.g. A person may be good at drawing but not at singing.

(2) CAUSES OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

1. Race: Individuals of different races exhibit marked differences. Differences in environment is a normal factor in causing individual differences. On the basis of these average differences between the races, the mental age of a particular individual cannot be calculated since this

difference is based on environment. Individuals of different nations differ in respect of physical and mental differences, interests and personality etc. "Russians are tall and stout: "Ceylonese are short and slim"; "Germans have no sense of humor. Yellow races are cruel and revengeful"; Americans are hearty and frank; "Indians are timid and peace loving and the like observations enter into our common talk

2. Sex: Development of boys and girls show differences due to differences in sex. The physical development of the girl takes place a year or two earlier than the boys. Between the age of 11 and 14, girls are generally taller and heavier than the boys. After 15, boys start winning the race. Girls are kind, affectionate, sympathetic, affectionate and tolerant while the boys are brave, hard, choleric, efficient and competent. Women have greater skill in memory while men have greater motor ability. Handwriting of women is superior while men excel in mathematics and logic. Girls are more emotional, jealous and social. Boys are more ambitious and independent. All these factors affect learning behaviour of boys and girls.

3. Heredity: Heredity is one of the basic of individual differences. Heredity stands for all those factors which are present not at the time of birth but at the time of conception. Genes are considered to be the real carriers of heredity. The child inherits (1) physical traits like face with its features, height, weight, complexion, colour of eyes, characteristics of hair, physical structure and defects like deafness, dumbness, blindness, internal and external organs of the body, (2) mental traits like intelligence and partly higher mental processes such as memory imagination, abstract reasoning and creativity, (3) Other personality traits like aptitudes, partly character, sentiments, musical and other talents, smelling and hearing power, colour blindness, baldness and tendency to certain diseases like tuberculosis, cancer and even mental diseases. Individuals differ in physical, intellectual and other' personality traits because of differences in heredity.

4. Social status: Individual differences are also caused due to social status of the family. Social status is one of the important basis of individual differences.

5. Economic Status: Individual Differences are caused due to economic conditions of the family and education of the children. It is not possible for the children of two economic classes to have a similarity and equality. Economic condition significantly influences physical, intellectual, social, emotional and other aspects of personality. Poor economic status of the family adversely influences physical, intellectual. emotional and social aspect of personality development

6. Culture: Culture plays an important role in causing individual differences. Individual differences are the mirror of culture. Personality of an individual is gradually shaped by the culture in-which he is born. Individuals acquire different ways of life, develop different traits and qualities when they are reared in a different culture. Every culture has its own customs, traditions, folkways, rituals values, ideals, norms, laws, legends, stereotypes, way of worship, social, economic and political institutions. Culture includes all that man has acquired in the intellectual sphere of his individual and social life.

7. Rural-urban home: Individual differences are caused also due to rural-urban home. Some individuals are related to rural families while some other individuals are related to urban families. Effect of rural or urban home is reflected in personality patterns of the individual. Individuals belonging to rural homes have to deprive of certain facilities which are easily

available to urban people. Children of rural families generally get lesser opportunities for recreation as compared to children belonging to urban families.

8. Language spoken and language of instruction: Individual differences are also caused due to language. It includes every means of communication in which thoughts and feelings are symbolised so as to convey meaning including such widely differing forms of communication as the written, spoken, sign, gesture, pantomime and art. Language is the means of communication as well as an instrument of thinking and feeling. It is an aid to thought, aid to attention and aid to recall. It is also an effective means of directing and controlling behaviour. Use of language enables children to compare things and employ reasoning ability.

9. Environment: Like heredity, environment is one of the main causes of individual differences. Changes in child's environment are reflected in the changes in his personality. Psychologically speaking, a person's environment consists of sum total of stimulation which he receives from conception till his death. Environment consists of physical, intellectual, social, moral, educational, economic, political and cultural forces. All these forces are responsible for causing individual differences. Individual differences are caused by both heredity and environment.

11. Temperament and emotional stability: Some individuals are active and quick by temperament while others are passive and slow, some are humorous and others are short tempered. Emotional stability of the individual is differently affected by physical, mental and environmental factors. Differences in emotional stability cause individual differences.

12. Level of aspiration: Individual differences are caused also due to level of aspiration. Aspiration is a key for progress and success in life. Every person wants to achieve some or the other things in his life. All of us have urge of aspiration and we differ in level of aspiration. Many individuals have a very high level of aspiration for making achievements in their lives. Many other individuals have a very low level of aspiration. A level of aspiration for above than one's potential is likely to cause frustration to the individual. On the other hand to set one's level of aspiration below to his potential is equally dangerous and frustrating.

13. Other causes: Achievements, sentiments, character, educational and homebackground lead to individual differences.

(3) EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Learners have different goals, different interests, different emotional problems and different abilities. We cannot afford to ignore these individual differences in imparting education to learners. Since school work is planned on group basis it presents a formidable challenge to all teachers. Hence some practical procedures for adapting school work to individual differences are suggested:

1. Limited size of the class: Generally there are 50 or more than 50 students/learners in a class. In such a large class, it is not possible for the teacher to pay individual attention to the students. The size of the class should be small. It should be divided into various units so that after classroom work their various difficulties may be found out.

- 2. Proper division of the class:** Now there are separate classes for the students, who have different intelligence. While bringing about this classification, the teacher should keep in mind the difference in age, interests, emotional and social qualities. Many methods are adopted to group learners. Some schools divide learners of the same age into classes and each class is further divided into different sections so that the number of learners taught together is reasonably manageable. Many schools, while adhering to age, divide learners into different sections as homogeneous groupings. Usually this grouping is based on intellectual attainments or on intelligence tests, etc
- 3. Home task:** The teacher should assign home task to the students while keeping in view the individual differences.
- 4. Factor of sex:** Boys and girls are to play different roles in society. Hence, the factor of sex should be kept in mind.
- 5. Curriculum:** The curriculum should be modified to suit the needs of all types of learners. A large number of subjects should be included in the curriculum so that education can be provided to each learner according to his interests, needs, abilities and aptitudes. Curriculum should not be rigid but it should be flexible. If we lay down the same curriculum for all the students/learners, the brilliant students will not be able to have full mental diet, and the backward students and the students of lower I.Q. will lag far behind in the class. They may start playing truancy from the school. A variety of co-curricular activities should be organised.
- 6. Disciplinary treatment:** There are some learners whose parents are very dominating with the result that their children develop inferiority complex. Too lenient parents allow their children to be free-lancers and such children suffer from other complexes and develop bad habits. Children of the rich and the poor have altogether different situations to be faced with
- 7. Methods of teaching:** Methods of teaching should be chosen on the basis of individual differences. It is not advisable to use the same method of education in the case of all learners-gifted or backward. Gifted children learn very rapidly. Therefore, they need to be provided more opportunities to explore. Remedial teaching may be needed in the case of weak learners.
- 8. Guidance:** The programme of guidance is not confined to the selection of subjects, co-curricular activities, schools, vocations, etc. All learners need guidance in such fields as educational, vocational, recreational, social, health, ethical and sex. They need guidance in every aspect of their harmonious development.

- (i) Educational guidance
- (ii) Vocational guidance
- (iii) Recreational guidance
- (iv) Social guidance
- (v) Health guidance