

“Specific learning difficulties, pedagogical and teaching interventions in musical school:- myths and reality.”

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Abstract: Autonomous school has the ultimate goal of educating and participating with or without specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) [1] in the common school. Despite significant efforts at the global and national levels there seem to be a number of myths [2] that violate the rules – through which the school reality is understood in terms of the implementation of appropriate pedagogical and teaching interventions in secondary education [3]

In this study, we investigate the factors involved in the constructing teaching interventions in a dyslexic school student in a music school in the Peloponnese Region (Greece). The methodological tools used the informal pedagogical evaluation through participatory observation [4] with some basic skills checklists with emphasis on the Experimental Analytical Program of Specific Learning Difficulties [5]. According to these records, the teaching priorities [6] were defined in the special educational intervention of the literary courses according to appropriate pedagogical and didactic tools, such as that of the Targeted Individual Teaching Structured, Inclusive Intervention Program for the pupils with Special education needs (TISIPfSEnS) [7]

The results of the work revealed myths regarding the timely and valid diagnosis of specific learning difficulties [5]. Another legend appeared in relation to the difference between what the autonomous school understands [8] about the student's intervention [9] with the specific learning difficulties and what is happening in the daily school routine through the weekly program schedule.

Keywords: Specific learning difficulties (dyslexia), TISIPfSEnS.

Introduction

Learning is tied to human and his needs (Aristotle). It is a complex and difficult task necessary for the evolution of human life. In modern times it is obvious right of all people acquiring knowledge and successfully completing the learning process serves the person to adapt to his social environment and to his survival. However, learning as complex task is not easy to be completed for all people as there are factors that influence the ability of a person to learn. This difficulty in acquiring knowledge is known today as learning difficulties [10].

Learning difficulties [6] are being researched already since 1800 but the term learning difficulties was first used in 1962 by Samuel Kirk in *Educating Exceptional Children* [11][12]. Later on, there are many definitions of learning difficulties mainly in the United States, the most prevalent of which is the term by the 1988 National Committee on Learning Disabilities in the United States, which states: *"Learning difficulties are a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders, manifested as difficulties in learning and using speech, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical skills. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, attributable to dysfunction of the central nervous system and may be manifested throughout their life. Learning difficulties can coexist with problems of self-control of behavior, social perception and social interaction, which, however, are not learning disabilities. Although learning difficulties may arise along with other disadvantaged situations (eg sensory impairment, mental retardation, severe emotional disturbance) or the effects of extraneous factors (such as cultural differences and insufficient or inadequate training), learning difficulties are not the direct result of these situations or exogenous factors."*

In Greek society and bibliography [5][13][8], Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD) are associated with the terms: dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysanagnosia, dyspraxia, dysorthographia. In recent years, there is an increasing number of views on causes, diagnosis, assessment criteria and methods of intervention in Specific learning difficulties [8]. Many times instead of the term specific learning difficulties, the term learning difficulties is used alternatively [1][2]. Generally speaking, however, the use of learning difficulties has prevailed in the United States for specific learning difficulties either, while in Great Britain there is a distinction between the two [14][15][16][17][18]. The specific learning difficulties are divided into:

1. Specific Developmental dyslexia
2. Specific learning difficulties in reading (dissatisfaction)
3. Specific learning difficulties in written expression - spelling (spelling)
4. Specific learning difficulties in mathematics - arithmetic

Students with Specific learning difficulties, have difficulties in oral and written speech, reading, reasoning and mathematics. Dyslexia is a neurological condition whose symptoms can affect various areas of learning and functioning and can be described as a particular difficulty in reading, writing and spelling, and one or more of these areas can be affected [13] Numerical, symbolic abilities such as music, motor function and organizational skills can also be affected.

A basic prerequisite for dealing with the difficulties and problems that children face in learning is a valid and timely diagnosis of Specific learning difficulties (Dyslexia). Thus, the Diagnosis and Evaluation of the Specific learning difficulties consists mainly of two objectives: 1) the existence of any difficulties and problems and classifies the child in the corresponding category of difficulties (such as learning difficulties, mental retardation, etc.); and 2) based on the results of the diagnosis and evaluation, an appropriate educating program is planned and executed, as well as any measures to improve eg. the attitude of parents, etc. for the special education of the student. According to the first stage of the targeted individual, didactically structured, inclusive, intervention program of special education needs (TISIPfSEnS) with emphasis on Specific learning difficulties, the empirical systematic observation referred in the child's history (family, individual, medical, school), sensory organs, first of all Teacher must know if the child hears and sees well, developmental skills (personal, social, linguistic and psychomotor skills), cognitive skills (perception, memory, attention), cognitive abilities, school or learning activities, behavior, social adaptation, interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, etc.).

The assessment process includes the parent's request to investigate the special educational needs (first step), the referral of the child for diagnosis to the department responsible for the diagnosis and evaluation of the child that in Greece is the Diagnostical and Support Differentiation Centers, known in the greek language as KEDDY by the Ministry of Education. Also, the medical and pedagogical centers, the pediatric clinics of hospitals, the centers of mental health and other pedagogical services of the Ministry of Health can have done diagnosis and evaluation.

Appropriate pedagogical tools and psycho-technical tests are used for the valid evaluation by the special educational staff (psychologists, speech therapists, special pedagogues). The Informal Pedagogical Assessment [19] with the cross-references recorded in the basic skills checklists [20] tests the performance and behavior of pupils. The Informal Pedagogical Assessment, together with the tests developed in accordance with ICD-10 International Classification of Diseases Manual, are part of the differential diagnosis assessment. Such tests used up to date are the twelve diagnostical criteria developed by European program funding, the ATHENA test, the Triga Reading Test, the Taffa Reading Test, the Achenbach Questionnaire, and WISC-III (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children) for the assessment of children's intelligence. The use of all these criteria requires specific training, supervision and certification for the delivery and interpretation of the findings.

The Informal Pedagogical Assessment uses non statistically measured pedagogical criteria that are not certified tests and refers to semi-structured questionnaires, curricula, Basic Skills Check Lists such as those listed in the Special Education Needs, the Educational Book on Neurodevelopment Learning Readiness Areas [21] [20] as well as exercises with learning readiness activities accompanied by experiential educational material with which the teacher can control all school right reactions (reading, writing, etc.). The experimental curriculum for specific learning difficulties, in Greece (2000), written by Markakis and Drossinou, and has been included in Christakis' book "Particular Difficulties and Needs in Primary School", is also being exploited.

Methodology: tools, data, case study

In the methodology of students with special educational needs we used the methodology of observation and the methodology of teaching interventions. In this research [4] we have based in the pedagogical instrument of the Targeted Individual Teaching Structured, Inclusive Intervention Program for the pupils with Special education needs (TISIPfSEnS) [10]. It is applied to a student with dyslexia diagnosis in all five phases. The first is the systematic empirical observation with a) the individual history b) the family history and c) the school history of the case study. In the second phase, the Informal Pedagogical Assessment (IPA) with the Basic Skills Checklists (BSC) in the areas of: (1) Learning Readiness, (2) Special Educational Needs in accordance with the Framework Curriculum for Special Education (FCSE), known in the Greek as PAPEA (3) General learning difficulties according to the Cross-curricular Study Framework and the curriculum in language courses and (4) Specific learning difficulties as been described in the experimental program of specific learning difficulties. In the third phase of TISIPfSEnS the drafting of the differentiated teaching plan adapted to the specific learning and linguistic difficulties according to the case study scenario. Here is completed the Personalized Structured

Curriculum Schedule Form sheet according to the methodological instructions in the teacher's book. In the fourth phase, the TISIPfSEnS is implemented with emphasis on language skills using three-dimensional pedagogical tools such as the cognitive machine with the creation of a shoe-box, the booklet with fixed and mobile cards and a board game based on the lesson of the day. Finally, in the fifth phase, the pupil's assessment will be done through the implementation of the differentiated curriculum, the didactic interaction with the same and the heterosexuality and the collaboration record with the parent.

Also, we used the methodology with a small informal questionnaire for the music school staff [21] in the Region of Peloponnese. In this we have discussed if there are students with symptoms of learning difficulties of the Dyslexia type without diagnosis and evaluation. Also in the cases with dyslexic students we have demanded if they have applied to help them with the special educational programs as the teaching with differentiations [20].

In the hypothesis of our study we investigated the questions point:

- a) myths regarding the timely and valid diagnosis of the special learning difficulties [22] and
- b) the myth about what the autonomous school understands [8] about the student's intervention [19] "when something is wrong" through the weekly program [23] [19].

The data from the first phase of TISIPfSEnS: case study

The data recorded the differentiated didactic intervention is the adaptation of the teaching before the students fail both an organic and a permanent element rather than a stage of teaching. Strategies for didactic diversified teaching vary depending on preparedness, interests, learning preference and the needs and difficulties of students. Thus, in the first phase of TISIPfSEnS, data from the child's interaction with the teacher was collected from the child himself, but also from people in his environment (school, family and academic, etc.).

The study focused on data from a case study of a third high school student who has been diagnosed with learning difficulties and attending a musical school in the Peloponnese region. According to the systematic empirical observation, we investigated the way in which our pupil is being supported educationally, Natalia, was called for the protection of personal data.

In the individual history we noted that Natalia is fourteen and six months old and lives with her parents. She is a tall girl more developed for her age and she wears glasses of myopia. He has a special love for animals, especially wolves, and when he grows up she wants to become a veterinarian. She likes to watch anime series (a kind of cartoon of Japanese origin) and she longs to travel to Japan. She also has a second great love for drawing and in her free time she loves to draw. As far as her school performance is concerned, she was quite low for her age in the early grades of the Primary School, and the parents felt that this was due to her laziness and indifference to school.

In the family history we noted that Natalia is a member of a seven-member family and lives in an apartment in a provincial city. Her father works as an employee in the public sector while her mother works in the private sector. She has four older siblings that have all finished school. From what she says, Natalia seems to have very good relationships with the other family members, often referring to her older sister with whom she spends most of her time. Her parents try to do the best for their quality of life, and from the very first moment they were informed about the learning difficulties faced by Natalia, they tried to help her as much as possible.

In the school history we noted that Natalia had accumulated school failure from her career so far in school. Thus, from the first grades of the Primary school, there were several deficiencies, while her proficiency was too low for her age. This, according to her parents, was also due to negative attitude towards her from children her age, coupled with her ignorance of her learning difficulty, which led to her abandonment of anything related to the lesson. Also, a necessary journey of her mother abroad for one year was another factor that helped to make her mood for study almost non-existent. In the classroom she was not easily involved in conversations because she feared the foolish comments of her classmates to her. Seeing her parents unable to cope with her lessons, she had a home teacher who would help her 4 hours a week. This teacher from the first moment informed them that Natalia faced learning difficulties and urged them to contact the Centers for Differential Diagnosis and Support known in the greek language as KEDDY, where the learning difficulties were diagnosed. The teacher continued Natalia's support at home while attending Speech Therapy classes during her elementary school attendance. Natalia, from the very first days of her high school attendance, began to show a significant increase in her lessons, something that her classmates' positive attitudes contributed to her, as well as the contribution of her teacher at home, which continues her support so far.

As shown in Table (1), the student of the 3rd Grade of Musical School attends a total of 40 hours of teaching while being diagnosed with Learning Difficulties is not supported by a program of special education teacher. It is worth noting that from the questionnaire that we put in the musical schools of Peloponnese Region none of the children with diagnosed Learning Difficulties attended a program by a special education teacher. In

this particular case, the pupil has the impact of showing poor performance in school lessons, as shown by her grade in the 1st Fourth grade of third High School.

Specifically in language courses her grades are from 11 to 15, in the positive lessons (Mathematics etc) her grades range from 9 to 16 and in foreign languages from 11 to 13. On the contrary, we see that the student is getting up in terms of the musical lessons she attends at school with the corresponding rankings starting from 15th to 19th. The excellent grades in the greek music high school are the 20, into the scale between 1-20.

The data from the second phase of TISIPfSEns: Informal Pedagogical Assessment

Data through the Informal Pedagogical Assessment were gathered by the teacher-observer-researcher with the Informal Pedagogical Assessment (IPA) collected data that controls basic skills in the areas: (1) Learning Readiness, (2) Special Educational Needs as impressed by the Framework Curriculum for Special Education (FCSE), (3) General Learning Difficulties according to the Cross-curricular Study Framework and the curriculum in language courses and (4) Special Learning Functions as described in the Experimental Program of Specific Learning Difficulties[5]. The Informal Pedagogical Assessment records the pupil's skill and behavior level and the deviations occurring during the semesters of the enrolled class and follows the weekly timetable without specific treatment support.

After a thorough study of the data gathered from the qualitative and quantitative data, the myths and the reality regarding the timely and valid diagnosis of specific learning difficulties and the difference between what the autonomous school [8] understands for the intervention of the pupil with an specific learning difficulties and what is happening daily in the school routine, in the case of Natalia.

(a) Results: The myths regarding the timely and valid diagnosis of the special learning difficulties

The myth about the timely and valid diagnosis of specific learning difficulties has shown that in the case of our study it was not supported by the pedagogical and didactic interventions in the musical high school. The reality was that the student with dyslexia remained helpless. This is evidenced by the records of the basic skills checklists we used in accordance with the participatory observation methodology of pupils with special educational needs, in interventions of special education in literary lessons at home. This was evidenced by the data from the second phase of the Targeted Individual Teaching Structured, Inclusive Intervention Program for the pupils with Specific learning difficulties TISIPfSpLDs and the informal pedagogical assessments where we recorded differences and deviations in its skill levels as follows:

(1) Informal Pedagogical Assessment of Learning Readiness Levels

Natalia with the Informal Pedagogical Assessment in the development areas of Learning Readiness is tested on learning readiness skills as follows: In the oral speech (1), the hearing marks a deviation of one semester from the baseline (semester of study); participation in the dialogue marks a two-semester deviation from the baseline, while in the field of expression it is more difficult, so it is three semesters below.

In the area of Psychomotricity (2), as shown in the diagram, it is fluctuating because in the area of rough and thin mobility there are three semesters under the semester of study, in the time orientation it is at the level of four semesters down, while in the rhythm and the time it presents improvement as it is only two semesters under the baseline. Finally, there is a three-semester deviation from the semester of study in Laterality.

In the area of mental capabilities as shown in the diagram, it also presents significant fluctuations. In the area of visual and acoustic memory it is only two semesters under the semester of study. However, the level of functional memory is three semesters below the baseline, concentration of attention is four-semester divergence, two-semester divergence, and three-semester deviations. These fluctuations in Mental Capacities are normal given that these fields are related to the reading in which Natalia, according to the diagnosis, has difficulties in reading as she often pauses to overwrite it replaces tones and words that have morphological similarities.

Finally, Natalia in the area of the emotional organization seems to have significant discrepancies according to the diagram and the diagnosis. While Natalia is quite social, however, she seems to be at a low level for her five-semester age under the baseline in self-esteem, while her interest in the subject is similar. Finally, she has significantly improved her cooperation with others and this is due to her sociability.

The teaching priority was defined by the areas in which the student experiences an improvement, that is, in the area of the Oral Speech where we will emphasize Clarity Expression as shown in the table below.

(2) Informal Pedagogical Assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN) as depicted in the Framework Curriculum for Special Education (FCSE).

Natalia in the Special Educational Needs Program as depicted in the PAPEA is checked with deviations from the baseline, defined by the semester and the class of study, as follows:

As far as learning readiness (1) is concerned, the greatest difference lies in the emotional organization which is located five semesters under the semester of study, while the field of speech and cognitive competence is only two semesters down. Finally, in the field of psychomotor, the level of the student is three semesters below the baseline. Basic academic skills (2) have a major problem, so there is a teaching priority. Reading as well as writing have many deficits for it and they are five levels below the baseline. Understanding is three levels below, while in mathematics it seems to go better, so it's just a level below the baseline. In the third area of Social Skills and Environmental Adaptation, Natalia is not at a very low level, since in areas of autonomy in the environment and social behavior it is deviating from two semesters, while in adaptation to the environment it appears to have a three-level deviation below the semester attendance. Natalia, having great love for painting, as shown in the table, shows the area of creative activities at high levels since in the arts her level is at the level of her semester. Finally, in pre-occupational readiness, she seems to be at normal age levels.

(3) Informal Pedagogical Assessment (APA) of General Learning Difficulties.

Natalia in the Informal Pedagogical Assessment in General Learning Difficulties is controlled as follows:

In Language Skills (1), in which the teaching priority is set, Natalia is faced with the greatest difficulties. As can be seen in the following table, reading and writing are four levels below the baseline. However, understanding is two levels below that because Natalia, despite her problem, her intelligence index is normal. On the preparedness skills (2), Natalia has two levels below production, one level under the spoken word, three levels in psychomotricity, just one level down in cognitive abilities, and where there are significant shortcomings since it is six levels below the half of her is the emotional organization. In mathematical skills (3) levels are superior to linguistic. As shown in the actions, Natalia is exactly at the level of her semester, while in the advancement and problem solving it is just two levels below the baseline. Behavioral skills have an emotional dependence on her older sister.

(4) Informal Pedagogical Assessment (IPA) of Specific Learning Difficulties

Natalia in the Informal Pedagogical Assessment in Special Learning Difficulties is controlled as follows:

The perceptual skills (1) the visual perception are two levels below the base and this is because the visual perception achieves the recruitment and recognition of the visual symbols of the written discourse. Acoustic perception is just one level below, while audiovisual perceptions as well as multi-sensory perceptual functions are also two levels below the baseline.

The mnemonic skills (2) observe almost the same deviation. More specifically, functional memory is only a half-year down while both long-term and short-term memory are located two semesters below the baseline.

Graphic space skills (3) both spatio-temporal orientation and spatio-temporal orientation are three semesters below the baseline.

Levels are low, as is reasonable in basic reading skills (4) in which the teaching priority is set. Phonological perception and pre-reading are five semesters under the baseline as well as reading, while writing four, while the greatest deviation presents it to the morphological mainly in spelling, which is also shown by the diagnosis since it is at the level of eight semesters. Only in the semantic sector is there three semesters down but in terms of the written expression Natalia is at a low level for the 5-month period below the baseline.

In mathematical skills (5) Natalia is at a higher level and could be even better. It is observed, therefore, that the numbers and mathematical symbols are located one semester below the base while linguistically mathematical one also level down.

Finally, in behavioral skills (6) emotional support is three semesters down, programming skills four semesters down while the reading self three-semester under the baseline.

Methodology of Observation																			
Grades/Semesters	Skills perception				Memory Skills			Skills of graphic space		Basic reading skills					Age: 14				
	Visual perception	Acoustic perception	Visual / Acoustic perception	Multiple Sensory Skills	Functional memory	Long-term memory	Short-term memory	Spatial-time orientation	Motion and writing	Phonological awareness	Writing	Morphology - Orthography	Semantic	Written expression	Numbers / mathematical symbols	Language and mathematics	Emotional support	Programming skills	Reading Self-image
Third Grade of Middle School - First Semester																			
Second Grade of Middle School - Second Semester																			
Second Grade of Middle School - First Semester	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
First Grade of Middle School - Second Semester																			
First Grade of Middle School - First Semester																			
Sixth Grade of Primary School - Second Semester																			
Sixth Grade of Primary School - First Semester																			
Fifth Grade of Primary School - Second Semester																			
Fifth Grade of Primary School - First Semester																			

Table 1 Methodology of Observation: Informal Pedagogical Assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN) as depicted in the Framework Curriculum for Special Education (FCSE) [10] [20] [11] [6].

(b) Results: The Myth of Understanding Special Learning Difficulties in Music School.

Another legend seemed to impede about the student's support from the musical school's because the teachers have lack of understanding of the specific learning difficulties. Teachers have informed the mother about the low performance of language courses without being able to set teaching assignments and teaching objectives to help the student with dyslexia. The teaching time is exhausted according to the weekly timetable program in musical instrument education without supporting the low and injured self-estimate because the student has accumulated school failure.

The special education and training[7] from elementary school has been initiated by the visiting teacher who attends individual sessions at home and her sister completes her studies as a philologist. The student's parents and her family environment seem to understand the multifaceted aspects of special learning difficulties because they have lived her everyday effort to cope her reading difficulties. The musical school seems to be little discussing what is happening in the student's everyday life and is limited to the oral assessment to control the knowledge in the lessons. This lack of understanding shows that most teachers are unaware or unwilling to engage with dyslexic students.

A fact that stereotypically reproduces in the school community and local provincial mentality and distorts perceptions about the consequences of dyslexia in adulthood[23]. The difference between what the autonomous school [8] understands about the student's intervention with an specific learning difficulties and what is happening daily in the school routine of the music school, in the case of Natalia, is evidenced by the number of forty (40) hours per week teaching, null support by special education teachers despite the diagnosis of Natalia diagnosed by the Centers for Differential Diagnosis and Support, known in the greek language as KEDDY.

Conclusions

Inappropriate diagnosis, that is to say, at the beginning of the child's schooling, results in significant child development problems. In recent years, there has been a significant improvement in the valid diagnosis by providing reliable information to teachers, psychologists, therapists, pediatricians and the public about the nature and potential of interference with dyslexia and the learning difficulties in general [21][6][11]. However, as we have noticed and through the questionnaire we have put to teachers of music schools [24] in the Region of Peloponnese, there are students with symptoms of learning difficulties of the Dyslexia type without diagnosis and evaluation. Regarding the timely and valid diagnosis of the specific learning difficulties, the difference between what the autonomous school understands about the pupil's intervention with the specific learning difficulties and what is happening daily in the school routine through the weekly program [7].

According to the diagnosis of dyslexia by the Centers for Differential Diagnosis and Support, known in the greek language as KEDDY of the third high school student, it is suggested to provide a counseling type of intervention in the family and to show discretionary leniency from the part of the Teachers when evaluating giving more time to the student to develop her thoughts something that doesn't happening with the result that the student misses several points in her assessment of the competitions as shown by her grades. Finally, as we

have seen from the questionnaire we put to teachers of music schools in the Region of Peloponnese, we do not apply targeted individualized interdisciplinary intervention programs (TISIPFSENS) in the case of students with dyslexia, other than oral assessment of competence and skills.

Finally, as shown by the questionnaire replies and the discussion with the teachers and the school's school director, the students did not accept extra support. They did not provide systematic training with the for special education programs because in the music school there not be the specialized teachers on dyslexia. Also, they did not know the pedagogical instrument (TISIPFSENS)[25] and they did not support the students with the adapting teaching differentiations in the school curriculum of music school.

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