



## CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND CONDITIONS OF SCHOOL INCLUSION - A BRIEF REPORT AND A CONSTANT CHALLENGE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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### Abstract:

This article discusses the issue of the school inclusion of children with learning disabilities in the light of the basic principles and conditions of inclusion philosophy. The main features of children with learning disabilities are summarized, and basic intervention and early intervention parameters are mentioned, such as interdisciplinary approach, systematic teaching with appropriate adaptations, teacher role, collaboration with family, personalized programs, pedagogical therapeutic environment, the introduction of innovations in education to stimulate a sense of adaptation to the environment, etc. The goal of early recognition is not to simply locate high-risk children, but rather the early intervention to reduce difficulties and preventative intervention with regard to secondary disorders accompanying the predominant difficulty or disability.

**Keywords:** learning difficulties, school inclusion, pupils teaching, teachers, inclusive education

### 1. Introduction

In general, learning difficulties are a problem of both General and Special Education. In addition, they are a constant and permanent condition and they appear differently and at different ages. In addition, learning difficulties are often accompanied by socio-emotional problems caused by either repeated failure or cognitive impairment. However, children with learning disabilities can not only learn but also undertake academic studies with a prerequisite to be trained according to their special needs in order to overcome the difficulties they face during the learning process. This is because, although pupils with learning disabilities have normal intelligence-some children have high intelligence, while others are at the bottom of the normal one-the appropriate

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adaptation of teaching is the one that can facilitate learning and exploit the potential of the pupil with learning difficulties (Botsas, Panteliadou, 2007, pp. 14-15; Panteliadou, Botsas 2007). This article discusses the issue of the school inclusion of children with learning disabilities in the light of the basic principles and conditions of inclusion philosophy.

## **2. Characteristics of children with learning disabilities**

Students with learning difficulties are often led to a stalemate in educational practice even after entering Secondary Education. Their knowledge is fragmentary and mechanistic, they contain limited generalizations, and they are poor in problem solving strategies and in the processing of school material and work. Consequently, they are lead to a cognitive stalemate, many times combined with difficulties in the process of social integration. Thus, it is no coincidence that the characteristics of children experiencing difficulties in learning or learning difficulties can be distinguished in (Nicolopoulos, 2007, p. 198 et seq.):

- personality and behavioral features such as low self-image and lack of motivation, low investment in the future, behavioral problems ranging from apathy and introversion to aggression and misconduct, etc.
- cognitive and linguistic features such as small intellectual abilities, time lag, difficulties in remembering thoughts and information, lack of attention, poor methods and problem-solving strategies, phonological, morphological, semantic, etc. language problems, as well as problems in mathematical calculations, etc.

In particular, the characteristics of children with learning disabilities can be described as follows (Mati-Zisi, 2004, p. 167):

- excessive activity or laziness, when the learning object bothers,
- lack of perceptual-kinetic coordination,
- emotional instability,
- attention disorders due to the difficulty of learning material,
- impulse,
- short-term memory and thought disorders, which are related to the planning and organization of the actions before the solution of a problem,
- special academic difficulties,
- speech and hearing disorders, e.g. articulation problems, incomplete vocabulary, lack of acoustic discrimination,
- lack of metacognition and other strategic approaches to learning,
- low self-esteem,
- reduced learning incentives.

Thus, the goal of early recognition is not the simple identification of high-risk children, but also early intervention to reduce difficulties and preventative intervention with regard to secondary disorders accompanying the predominant difficulty or disability.

### 3. Conditions of school inclusion

Given that high levels of integration can be fully compatible with high levels of achievement and that the combination of both is not only feasible but also necessary if all children have the opportunity to participate fully in education (Black-Hawkins et al., 2016), it is evident that the provision of early intervention services to children with learning difficulties and behavior and generally children with special educational needs is based on:

- the interdisciplinary approach to special educational needs, as interdisciplinary collaborative training becomes very important for professionals providing special education and health care services (Papa et al., 2009),
- systematic teaching with appropriate adaptations to school activities and basic skills, eg. listening, communication, solving conflict resolution problems and prejudices and stereotypes (Cook et al., 2015),
- the role of the family in the prevention and treatment of disability, as well as in its cooperation with the school. Research findings show that parent expectations for their children's educational level have made the strongest single prediction for a high achievement followed by the time they have maintained their expectations (Jacobs, Harvey, 2005).

Therefore, in this general provision of scientific principles and educational services, basic conditions for supporting and facilitating school inclusion (see Zoniou-Sideris, 2004) are:

- the education and training of teachers in the field of special education and support for people with disabilities and special needs ([http://dea.sch.gr/ThematicPublication\\_Greek.pdf](http://dea.sch.gr/ThematicPublication_Greek.pdf)), which affects all categories of children with special needs during the transition from school in adulthood (Heward, 2009),
- enhancement and improvement of effectiveness for early diagnosis and intervention (Heward, 2009) and the development of tailor-made teaching programs and methods to identify needs, objectives and instruments, and to specify the degree and type of adaptation to be made in the curriculum to assess the progress of pupils and to make it a "contract" between teachers, parents and other professionals in special education ([http://dea.sch.gr/ThematicPublication\\_Greek.pdf](http://dea.sch.gr/ThematicPublication_Greek.pdf)),
- as well as the introduction of innovations in special education, such as health education and the environment in order to stimulate the sense of adaptation of children with and without special educational needs in the environment; either school e.g. classroom and school community, or the social environment (Ioannidi, 2006).

Within the framework of the basic conditions for achieving the pupil's schooling with learning difficulties, it must not be neglected within the educational reality:

- the importance of learning incentives, which are influenced by the performance of school success or failure (Brown, 1994), and

- the importance of peer-to-peer cooperation and cooperation with adults, which allows for the joint processing of thought patterns and the observation of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, which are internalized and gradually applied autonomously.

In particular, metacognition refers to the student's awareness of the cognitive processes they use to learn, e.g. knowledge on cognitive functions and cognitive strategies, organizational and evaluation skills of these strategies, processes of cognitive function, namely metacognitive strategies to design the learning process, monitor and evaluate its course, and intervene corrective. Learning as a knowledge-building is an energetic effort to interpret our experiences. It is not just the accumulation of new knowledge in the existing one, but the transformation and reorganization of past knowledge. Modern cognitive theories and approaches highlight the importance of multiple factors that relate to the learning process and, ultimately, can help to better understand the difficulties encountered in the learning process. At the same time, they emphasize the importance of developing collaborations and debates that are learner-centered, where on the hand the learner is concerned, negotiated, documented, and on the other hand the teacher directs on ways of thinking and behavior that ensure the effectiveness of group cooperative activities. (Vekiri, 2007, p. 1-5).

#### 4. Epilogue

Finally, a pedagogical therapeutic climate as shaped by the teacher, the establishment of a positive ecology in the classroom, regardless of pupils' learning and behavioral characteristics, pedagogical humor, the promotion of positive interpersonal relations and individualized relationships of trust, the reference to rules, the constant rewarding, working with the family, avoiding labeling procedures and providing adequate information, are important parameters of long-term effective interventions (Kourkoutas, 2007).

It is important for teachers to understand that the teaching of students with learning difficulties is considered a rather demanding process in which they themselves are called upon to take into account not only the subject to be taught but also the student's cognitive level, the basic cognitive and emotional characteristics of these children, as well as their memory potential, the difficulties they face and in which areas, the ability to organize and manage the information they teach, their views on their abilities, motives as well as their the social characteristics they carry (Botsas, 2008). This is a lasting challenge of inclusive education and education without exclusions. It is a challenge for the learning and well-being for people with learning disabilities.

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