

Special education meetings at the University and pedagogical reflections on autism.

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ABSTRACT: *The Special education and Training (SET) meetings at the university and the pedagogical reflections on autism are discussed according the inclusion criteria into the continues of education interventions of students was aged 17-25 years, in line with the SEND Code of Practice and limited into the Agricultural University (AUA). The case study of a young woman 22 years old with Asperger's autism, is referred to the experiences as the SET focus might represent priorities at different lifecycle time points as metacognitive learning skills, individual learning style, health or housing concerns, financial or relationship worries. The data from this research were organized into three chronological stages: before [1], dure [2] and after pandemic. The methodology with pedagogical tool TISIPfSEns emphasizes the setting up of strategies that can promote access and participation young people with autism and learning difficulties, around contracting, clear communication, the pedagogical alliance. Broadening the parameters may have yielded more research, for illuminating other means of promoting effective pedagogical practice for young people with autism.*

KEYWORDS: *Special education and training (SET), university, autism.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) according to the American Psychiatric Association (2013) and the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders constitute a neuro-developmental and neuropsychiatric disability(American Psychiatric Association, 2013), followed by the person for life (World Health Organization, 2020 a ; 2020 b). The epidemiological footprint and frequency of ASD has changed radically in the last ten years (Synodinou, 2007). The autism spectrum includes a large number of students with "special abilities", high functionality and good academic prospects who are known as Asperger syndrome (Attwood, & Atkinson, 2020). The education of children on the autistic spectrum (Christakis, 2013) is inclined to higher education into the continues of education interventions of students in line with the SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education, & Department of Health, 2015). The basic characteristics of students with ASD, the difficulties and obstacles they encounter at the university, but also effective ways of supporting them in higher education are stated in the narratives of the students themselves (Drossinou-Korea, 2020, c). The individual sessions of Special Education and Training (SET) with certain protocols are defined through the pedagogical tool concern the criteria as the Target Individual, Structured, Inclusion Programs of learning readiness for students with Special Education Needs (TISIPfSEns) (Drossinou-Korea, 2017). The basic pedagogical principles of targeted and individual support, as well as structured, appropriately differentiated and inclusive teaching are used in the counselling interventions at the university (Stamboltzi, et al., 2018). Also, the Counseling Centers of the universities in collaboration with other existing structures, although they can contribute substantially to the learning and psychological support of students with ASD, this rarely happens (Sofianidou, et al., 2005). Despite the fact that it is imperative to establish Counseling Centers in all educational institutions of higher education for the equal attendance of students, this has not yet been carried out in our country. Nevertheless, the deficits of special educational services remain another open issue in higher education, especially during the period of confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread development of online university courses (Drossinou Korea, 2020, b).

Neurodevelopmental disorders (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), 2016) occur in the form of deficits in social transaction, communication and limited, repetitive behavior, which highlights a deficit in the creative imagination and affects the life of the individual for life. Synodinou, (2007), in her book "Childhood Autism - Therapeutic Approach", describing people with autism, refers to the denial of the outside and their isolation in the inside, as a defense reaction to the "intense outside" from which they try to protect themselves.

Asperger syndrome (AS), referred to as ASD, is characterized by significant difficulties in social interaction and verbal communication, while at the same time it manifests itself in limited and repetitive behaviors

and interests (Baron-Cohen, et al., 2009). The syndrome is named after the Austrian pediatrician Hans Asperger, who in his practice in 1944 studied and described children with reduced abilities of empathy and verbal communication with their peers, who at the same time were physically clumsy. In the latest revision, fifth edition (2013) of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM – 5), it has not been included as a separate category. The diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome is certified in the opinions, carried by the students, by the diagnostic services supervised by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education-Pedagogical Institute, 2009). Thus, educational interventions in higher education are necessary and aim to improve the functionality of the behavior of the ASD student (White, et al., 2011).

The aim of this study is to highlight factors of Special education and Training (SET) meetings and concern particulate pedagogical reflections on autism (Christakis, 2011, pp. 190-232) at the University and during the remote attendance of courses by distance learning (Stamboltzi & Giannakis, 2014). The online education of students on the autistic spectrum highlights as important the factor of familiarization with communication and information technologies. Often with the observations in the education of people with ASD the electronic communication is seen as an easier way to create friends, which in many cases students carries the risk of becoming obsessive and the only way of social transaction (Drossinou-Korea & Avramidi, 2019). This is a case study of a student, woman 22 years old at the Agricultural University of Athens (AUA) with Asperger's autism and examines the difficulties in her individual style ways of study and the methods in the continuous of teaching and exams. The hypothesis explores the possibilities of support with targeted individual SET sessions [1], as well as whether the protocols followed with the TISIPfSENs pedagogical tool, facilitate the students with Asperger (Attwood, 1998) in organizing their study [2]. The pedagogical reflections emerge from the narratives (Drossinou Korea, 2020 a) of the present case study of the young woman with Asperger, who are referring into her difficulties through the individual learning and her satisfaction when she come over them. Academic performance is not overestimated and is an important parameter of student life that evolves next to friendships, hobbies, new social transactions with new community stations (Wright, et al., 2014).

II. METHODOLOGY

This study was focused on a case study used the Research Methods in Special Education (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2006), as it was envisaged that it would be difficult to draw conclusions from different students with autism, because of variation of the conceptualization of mental health (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), 2016) and learning difficulties and the way in which SET is offered and delivered. A systematic search of the following electronic data protocols was recorded from every week special education meetings with a student, woman 22 years old, named "ATHINA" at the AUA and the pedagogical reflections on autism from October 2020 to May 2022. The pedagogical key search terms were what is meaning the autism in connection the learning disability, learning difficulty, intellectual disability, mental handicapped, mental retardation, therapy, supporting interventions. Also, it researches the pedagogical reflections on autism perspectives in the academic's skills, opinions about social skills with the other students, views for the "Asperger", the school and the family experiences from the special education services user and the inclusions parameters into university. This case study is utilized the protocols of the observation methodology with the informal pedagogical evaluation according to the first and second phase of TISIPfSENs pedagogical tool. The participatory empirical observation, in order to understand the peculiarities reflected in the diagnosis of the Center for Differential Diagnosis and Evaluation Support as Asperger.

This paper which aimed to capture the hypothesis explores the possibilities of support with targeted individual SET sessions [1], as well as whether the protocols followed with the TISIPfSENs pedagogical tool, facilitate the students with Asperger (Attwood,1998) in organizing their study [2]. The remote attendance of courses and the special education and training sessions at the University are recorded with methodology of observation and the methodology of intervention. Also, in the individual sessions of SET by the Greek (Law 2817; 2000; 3699; 2018) with the TISIPfSENs protocols, in the context of understanding the individual study method, metacognitive skills and an effective way of developing and supporting social skills are discussed. The content of social conventions, the rules governing them, as well as the language of gestures and the body. In order to understand the "strange" and "incompatible" social behaviors of their fellow student in the group take advantage of the opportunities for interactive social transactions, which promote the individual method of study. They are also encouraged to participate in recreational and cultural activities, which offer multiple possibilities for understanding the rules governing the conventions of active socialization. The aim of the remote participation in individual SET sessions before [1], during [2] and after [3] the pandemic is to better support her on common issues of daily living and socialization (Pickard et al., 2021). The special educator, who supports the ATHINA's Asperger, collaborates with the academic mentor in the subjects with the aim of organizing and supporting the individual method of studying. The data with student's self-observations data were analyzed with the discovery of Grounded Theory and the strategies for qualitative research (Barney & Strauss, 2006). The topics discussed that ATHINA had not made friends in the begin of interventions, it was very difficult to participate in joint social

transactions during the pandemic and after opening the courses' AUA, she joined a small group of fellow students. The data were collected from (eighty) 80 individual SET sessions with the aim of organizing and supporting the individual method of studying focused on the following (Table 1).

1. Individual method of study: way chosen by the student
2. Study organization: the way the student is organized to study.
3. Sending the application of the student with autism to the student care for facilitation in the exams.
4. Stress management at work when she states "it catches me anxious".

Periods of SET sessions	Number of individual SET sessions	TISIPfSEns: first and second phase "ATHINA"
before [1] the pandemic: Oct 2020-Febr2021	20	had not made friends
during [2] the pandemic: March 2021-Sept 2021	30	it was very difficult to participate in joint social transactions
opening the University courses [3] the pandemic: Oct 2021-May2022	30	she joined a small group of fellow students
total	80	She has passed with success 30 courses from the 36.

Table 1. Individual SET sessions support the organizing and supporting the individual method of studying.

In addition, the data were recorded and interpreted according to the basic fundamental and applied research (Barney & Strauss, 2006) and the making the future together with common target which shaping research through autism with the meaningful individual participation (Fletcher-Watson et al., 2019). Because this is carried out to promote human knowledge without expectations for immediate and tangible "here and now" benefits from the interventions in Special Education meetings. Fundamental and applied research is intended to solve practical problems of the modern world and then to produce scientific knowledge itself. According to the methodology of participatory systematic empirical observation, which is applied to the SET data from the case of ATHINA student' Asperger were collected with certain protocols. By this approach, distance education records and discusses her self-observations in the interactive relationships with the special educator - consultant, who supporting her individual study method. The most of them become in a teleconference (N=50) and some others (N=30) which occur with a physical presence in a face-to-face relationship one by one.

The e- records were carried out with certain SET protocols applicating the first phase of the Targeted Individual Structured Integration Program for special education intervention (TISIPfSEns), with hetero-observations and self-observations of teaching relationship using the empirical observation of special educational needs and with emphasis on the individual study method (Roscoe, et al., 2016).

Restrictions

The limitations on work stem from the fact that participatory, systematic, empirical observation and individual SET sessions with an emphasis on supporting the individual study method in people with autism, has no funding in academic environments and therefore participatory "styles" of teaching work in tertiary education are excluded.

III. DISCUSSION: Pedagogical reflections - proposals

The results of this research have shown that they support the ecological perspective in the learning work of student with ASD. The factors showed that support possibilities with targeted individual SET sessions are increased and these can help student with autism to discuss the difficulties associated with attending university courses remotely. They also help them negotiate with teachers the individual difficulties in understanding the cognitive issues, due to the frequent technical online problems in the flow of the lecture.

The dialectical behavior for the case study of young woman named ATHINA has examined her learning and social difficulties which are came from autism. Also, it put the new ideas in the table. So. the way of thinks on pedagogical reflections has changed about and what the meaning in the pedagogical language the term autism for the behavior as well as for the special education service users' perspectives in the university.

In particular, they are quoted from the records some parts "verbatim the spontaneous words» from the narratives of this case study Asperger with the young woman named ATHINA for these needs.

IV. FINDINGS: Parts from the discussions that took place in the individual SET sessions.

Parts from the discussions that took place in the individual SET sessions. They focused in the remote attendance of classes.

ATHINA: [Initially I had problems connecting to the internet and it was not easy to always attend the lesson, because if it gets stuck you don't have time for the teacher and he can't go back, so you can't fully understand the lesson when half the things you lose]

Special Pedagogist: That is, you are referring to technical problems.

ATHINA: [Yes but also in another problem It wasn't easy to concentrate, I saw that it was too tiring to have so much time in front of a screen, you get tired mentally but also in the eyes].

Special Pedagogist: Had and headaches?

ATHINA: [Yes, and myopia increased; I had significant problems of course with sleep; so, because generally when you are with too many hours on devices that take out this blue light, it causes me problems sleeping. I now encountered it very quickly. anyway, irrelevant I put eye drops how they call this liquid for the eyes. because otherwise this is actually true, that with 8 hours on a computer it is not possible for this to be positive, you blur].

Special Pedagogist: What else is there that does not satisfy you in the remote attendance of classes?

ATHINA: [Yes, the most basic thing was there no interaction between professor and student; there was no visual human contact in the presence that they were completely impersonal, like watching a series on TV; a process that was not done at the level that should be done for my own abilities and difficulties].

Special Pedagogist: I understand. Now, it has made it difficult for you.

ATHINA: [Along with these were the problems in nutrition; so I couldn't manage my diet because I didn't have the time to cook or I haven't learned to cook yet; the feeding we have as students at the university in the pandemic had been closed; we were in quarantine we didn't have access to the discussions in the restaurant].

Special Pedagogist: Namely. What do you mean?

ATHINA: [We didn't have time to access it, it was just too far away i.e. how to say it now this was basically an open discussion. but it is not possible to go to university when you needed food, with the consequence that for this reason there is stress with what will happen next and as a result either I eat too much I do not eat at all and have problems with my metabolism and I get extra pounds. This saddens me because it spoiled my aesthetic image that I have of myself, I could not wear my clothes].

Special Pedagogist: What else did you, this fixation in front of the computer for endless hours, as you say...

ATHINA: [yes moreover this statement with the cell phone you have. you wake up in the morning you get dressed you wash you have this whole routine which is healthy and you go walking. As soon as you wake up in the pandemic, you say I know what to do. And you stay in the pajamas, because you are tired of doing this, because you say where I will go, I will not go anywhere and you sit. So you do not take care of yourself and it is, you are going to tell you just you are like a zombie].

Special Pedagogist: Oh, we're human, I agree that we're neither robots nor zombies and we're not sick. Can you tell me how many lessons you went through last year?

ATHINA: [well, last year I passed 27 lessons. Yes but it is not the same educational process of the exam. especially in the exams it is not the same and let's not forget that it is not, and how can I say it, there is no one who can support you, or they are not fair let's say or not all good. Yes let's say I gave an honor to the answers but what was going on or when I did not have time to read all the pronunciations or there were connection problems or they are all multi-answered. Or they ask you to answer 50 questions in 40 minutes so that others don't copy. What to do first. By the time you read the pronunciation the minute is over. Still all the teachers did not have vertical transmissibility and some did not have knowledge of technology or were older and had not just entered the process of doing the lesson from the beginning, that is, we did not have material we did not have slides but we did not have anywhere to read, nor did we have notes or because we did not know from what the professor said which was more important and which was not. So, in general, I was experiencing the lesson remotely].

Special Pedagogist: how did you get to the rating?

ATHINA: [there were lessons that I loved and I did not get the grade that I could achieve; in a very important lesson I took the base and let's say that I am not satisfied with it; another course I did not pass with 5 while I could have passed it with a much better grade because I loved to read it and watch it].

The Impact of Pedagogical reflections

The impact of pedagogical reflections evaluates spontaneous discourse positively, because it is a key deficit in the flow of metacognitive discourse in students with ASD. From the above dialogue arise difficulties

and specific learning and social difficulties that hinder the satisfaction of the student with Asperger during the different periods of SET sessions as the before [1] the pandemic: Oct 2020-Febr2021, the during [2] the pandemic: March 2021-Sept 2021 and the opening the University courses [3] the pandemic: Oct 2021-May2022.

The important points are stated in the observations regarding the way the student recounts her difficulties in managing and organizing study time. The student's account refers to the description of her behavior at work as follows:

- *"I got 7.5 in the first assignment. But I was stressed, my stomach caught me, I vomited and my mom sent me stomach pills, because I should have started before. According to my own estimation."*

The ensuing conclusion put the issue on another footing by discussing then reason that triggered the phobic anxiety for failure.

- *"From the result of the grade it seems that the content of my thought was wrong, because the time was sufficient and I was able to manage the demands of the work."*

V. CONCLUSION

To date, there has been almost no research looking in the university at how young students' autism the type Asperger with learning difficulties perceive effective support with special education meetings. To the best of the author' knowledge, this paper is the first to offer practical advice for professionals such as special pedagogists, counsellors, therapists, mental health workers, clinical and educational psychologists and pastoral lead to support the mental health and well-being needs of women with autism, learning and social difficulties. The During the SET meetings, the steps for managing the organization of work and the short electronic tests were discussed. These were formulated in the first person singular and are extended in a certain order, incorporation the content of the discussion-intervention from the individual SET session.

Step 1: *I listen and understand what the job asks of me.*

Step 2. *In the event that I do not understand something, I raise the hand of the computer and ask the question to the professor, before I start. With the microphone open.*

3rd step. *I start working from the easiest to the most difficult.*

4th step. *If any of the things I've appreciated are easy along the way seem to require disproportionately too much time, I stop and move on.*

5th step. *That is, I remember that I do not waste my n time and take advantage of it "smartly".*

Step 6. *Prof gives the work to us electronically and when we fill it out we make it pdf. Then it changes its form.*

Step 7. *I remember, before I pdf it, to take another close look at my answers.*

Step 8. *Then, I send it to the eclass platform.*

Finally, I remember doing a self-assessment of my performance by writing "how I did in each job", and attaching it with a message to the "webmail" of the university.

With the special education meetings at the university and pedagogical reflections (Christakis, 2013) on autism suggests implications for future practice with regard to promoting access and participation for young people with autism in the university. Such implications could be relevant for those professionals who work with young women with autism and want to bring about a positive change of long-term individual psychodynamic psychotherapy through the university education (Merriman & Beail, 2009). Although this case study of woman with autism in AUA highlights the value of understanding special education models, approaches and issues in supporting youngs of ASD with learning and social difficulties. It is acknowledged that many professionals as well as special pedagogist working with this population into schools-based in primary and secondary level. It is, therefore, essential that appropriate training for special education for autism to the students and the staff who working in the university.

Students with ASD seek the physical "live" presence and interaction with their lessons and teachers (Attwood & Atkinson, 2021). It is therefore necessary to explore their potential to acquire, through the individual method of study, metacognitive knowledge, learning experience and functional study strategies. in further research with more cases with students who are Asperger's institutions, including e-learning through the barriers from tele-lectures and tele-exams (Stamboltzi et al., 2018).

The assessment of difficulties is part of the integrative method of study, the student with ASD is trained in metacognitive skills. Thus, through interaction with the course, ATHINA learns to evaluate her level of difficulty, which helps her to evaluate more accurately her strengths in terms of mnemonic functions and to aim at making the study more efficient. She even took part in online small group work with couples and this time she did much better. Besides, as he characteristically said *"two minds are always better than one"*.

Acronyms

1. Special education and training [SET]

2. Agricultural University of Athens [AUA]
3. Autism spectrum disorders [ASD]
4. Targeted, Individual, Structured, Inclusion programs for students with Special Education Needs [TISIPSENs]
5. Special education needs and disabilities [SEND]

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