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Self-observation as a pedagogical method in the education of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

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Abstract. In the present paper, the method of self-observation is examined as the basis for the pedagogy of special educational interventions in people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). This is part of the informal pedagogical assessment that parents attempt as co-educators but also philologists as intervening educators in order to understand children with autism. The main work case explores the dynamics of pedagogical self-observation in a specific case study from Truffaut's French film, "The Wild Child" (Itard, 1990). The methodology of observing the special educational needs with emphasis on ADS is applied according to the pedagogical tool, the Targeted Individual Structured Integration Program of Special Education and Training (TISIPSET) (Drossinou-Korea, 2017). The results present data from the interactive relationship during homeschooling between the educator and physician Itard, who has adopted and educates Victor "The Wild Child." The observations and self-observations recorded confirm the difficulties of understanding childhood autism.

Keywords. self-observation, pedagogy, autism, education

Introduction

Autism, according to diagnostic criteria as defined at an international level DSM-V1 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and ICD-10 (World Health Organization, 2014), refers to a range of neurodevelopmental disorders known as Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). These affect human functionality and are identified by deficits in communication, socialization, and limited repetitive behavior which highlights a lack of creative imagination (World Health Organization, 2014, pp. 318-319). According to Happe, (2003) the cognitive functions are understood with the use of theories such as the theory of mind. The main shortcoming of human functionality in ASD is determined by the outcome of unpredictable mental states and the inability of children and young people to predict the consequences of their own and other people's behaviors. (Synodinou, 1999, p. 9) states that the nature of this disorder refers to the modern lonely person who has turned to and drawn in on themselves as a reaction to the violence they receive from what surrounds them and prefer the lonely management of their problems and needs. The problem is identified in the pedagogical approach and education of people with ASD by parents and philologists. According to (Faherty, 2014, p. 35), this understanding becomes complicated

due to the difficulty of formulating with a single definition "what autism means" for the parent, the student and the teachers, such as philologists, who are involved (Powell, & Jordan, 2001). The individual differences in performance of people with ASD are determined by criteria which have to do with the individual, the disability and community accessibility. The proposal for education of children and young people with special needs due to ASD through special education refers to the learning process without exclusions with teaching interactions that take place in the formal, informal and lifelong Special Education and Training. Often, parents report the aggression of their children with ASD, which is another major obstacle to their education (Kotsopoulos, 2014, p. 24). Special Education develops special educational programs to control the learning pressure that people with ASD receive in the school community. It also intervenes with educational programs which rationalize the social difficulty of understanding the rules governing pedagogical conventions and the emotional dysfunction that accompany their integration into the local community. To deal with the problem, pedagogical tools such as TISIPSET, are used by parents co-educators and philologists in order to avoid improvisation and arbitrariness. Self-observation is examined as a pedagogical method in the education of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

1.1. Self-observation as a pedagogical method

The research methods in Special Education (Avramidis, & Kalyva, 2006, pp. 252-254) refer to the methodology of observing the special educational needs of people with ASD as well as to the methodology of intervention with parents, the special education personnel, the teaching personnel but also the special auxiliary personnel. The methodology of observation of people with ASD takes into account the characteristics of the area where it takes place but also of the person or persons observed. It is related to its moral security, its legality and finally to its effectiveness both in the scientific field (pp. 257- 258) as well as in the pedagogical and didactic work. Principles such as the avoidance of any damage (financial, stigma, etc.) to those directly or indirectly involved, the voluntary participation in the process, the protection of personal data, the equal treatment of individuals, must be seriously considered, especially when someone is dealing with children (British Education Research Association, 2011). For these reasons, in our methodology, we chose to use the advantages of modern technology with the video that captures the film that allows us to apply the student-centered pedagogical principle with a targeted case study. This way we can watch the behaviors again and again and be exposed to thoughts and feelings about the child with ASD and reflect on by taking on the roles of either the parent co-educator or the philologist. Self-observation as a pedagogical method contributes to the determination of teaching priorities according to Atypical Pedagogical Evaluation (APA) as described in the second phase of the pedagogical tool TISIPSET and its conceptual delimitation (Drossinou-Korea, 2017). With self-observation, the parent co-educator is trained to learn to observe the feelings created in him by both his child's behavior and the interactive relationships with him at homeschooling (Christakis, 2011). In the case of the co-educator parent, self-observation is unconscious and undisguised, and what parents feel and think about their children is rarely verbalized. In the case of the philologist, self-observation can be communicated to the observers, people with ASD, but also disguised, "hidden", under the course and the weekly scheduled involvement of the philologist. An important common element in both cases of self-observation is the participation in the same experiences. The parent experiences the role of co-educator of the student with ASD as does the philologist who has the role of educator. Recordings of self-observation, mental processes, and behaviors are utilised in order to formulate realistic goals in the teaching interventions that focus on language skills.

Furthermore, the infiltration of self-observations into the student's with ASD inconspicuous behaviors facilitates the mediation of the meaning of integrational socialization.

1.2. Self-observation as a pedagogical method for a student with autism: the advantages and disadvantages

Self-observation can help the parent co-educator, but also the philologist- educator of a student with ASD to discover, among the skills, ways of connecting the inner life, both of the adults who intervene and of the person with ASD, with the environment. The recording of artistic expression is credited as a positive aspect of self-observation as a pedagogical method for a student with autism (Faherty, 2014, p. 78) The same applies for music (Drossinou-Korea, M. & Fragkouli, Asp., 2016) but also other peculiarities expressed in the children's obsessive and favorite objects. As in the case of intervention with music therapy, self-observation is at the core of the organization of the intervention but also of its completion with the analysis of the data.

Given the fact that the self-observations of the co-educator parent and the intervening educator primarily support the interaction, the organization of experiences, the regulation of emotions and the creation of relationships of people with ASD, they are accounted for as advantages. Of course, self-observation cannot help the co-parent "mourn" for the loss of an imaginary normal child, neither the philologist- educator to accept that academic performance of the student with ASD is not the main priority in the teaching relationship. In therapeutic psychoanalytic interventions, self-observation is credited as negative when trying to interpret the behavior of the student with autism. This is dangerous in the case of parents who overlook the "mourning" and the treatment they themselves need to attend in order to take on the pedagogical role of co-educator. Additional reasons for questioning the recordings of self-observations are the conditions of observation, the intentions, the resilience and the attitude of the observer parent co-educator and the philologist educator towards people with autism. Finally, the restraining factors in the process of self-observation include reasons related to issues concerning both the moral and the legal field Greek Society for Autistic Persons, 2018.

2.1. Case study: Itard and Victor

Self-observation, as a pedagogical method in the education of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), gathered data from the film "L'enfant sauvage" (Truffaut, 1969). The story is set in a forest in the French countryside, in the 18th century, where some villagers find a boy in a wild state, unable to walk, talk or read. Dr. Itard is impressed by the child and dedicates himself to his homeschooling. Difficulties in understanding "strange" behaviors are initially addressed with the use of medical protocols. Then the parent is oriented towards structured and targeted experiential learning readiness activities by observing Victor's performance in daily educational routines. These focus on the neurodevelopmental areas of psychomotor skills with food intake, personal hygiene and self-care, as well as oral speech skills. The data includes the culture of the family and the way it is expressed by the attitude of the parent Itard, who, despite the negative attitude that governs the culture of the local community, changes the meaning of strange behaviors with the love and patience with which he interacts with the "wild child" (Drossinou - Korea, 2020). The questions which the co-educator parent and the philologist as self-observers pose to themselves are included in the subsections. (1) Description of a scene of a person with autism, (2) How do I feel (a) as a co-educator parent and (b) as a teacher? (3) What do I think about the pedagogical principles of supervision (4) and communication (5)? The responses attempt, in a delayed manner, to understand autism on the basis of modern

pedagogical concepts focusing on the culture of the co-educator parent's family as well as the culture of the integrational school.

2.2. Description of an autistic person's scene: The alphabet's cognitive machine

It is morning time as seen from the preceding scene but also from the light of day entering the room from the open window of the office. Little Victor is in the office of Dr. Itard, who has adopted him and is a parent. The young student waits in front of the table watching the movements of the doctor as he arranges the cards inside the board, mixed up.

There, the doctor, educator has placed on a table, a board divided into 24 small squares in each of which a card that depicts one of the letters of the alphabet is placed. On the table and outside of this board, there are the wooden letters of the French alphabet, which attempt to give meaning to experiential concepts such as the word "g a l a"(m i l k) which is associated with the choices in food intake routines.



(1) Itard, (2) Itard and Victor - lesson time, (3) one-to-one relationship, (4) the cognitive machine with 24 letters

2.3. Serious learning difficulties in communication, behavior and reading behavior problems

The serious learning difficulties are identified in communication, with Victor finding it difficult to understand the whole learning process because he has not developed oral speech and is limited or loses communication despite dynamic interactions from the co-educator parent. It is noted that, on Itard's request, Victor was transferred from the deaf people's institution, in which he was socially "stigmatized", to Itard's house, in order for Itard to train him and integrate him into society. He had ended up in the deaf people's institution because he had not developed oral speech and behaved like a wild animal in the woods, until his doctor and later adoptive parent realised that he listened to the verbal commands and was not deaf, but found it difficult to respond to the content of his promptings. The transfer from the institution to the home took place after a special permit on the basis of which Victor's home care and supervision were assigned to Itard. Another person with whom Victor interacts emotionally is the governess, who has been hired by the parent after being financially supported by the palace. Her physical presence at homeschooling is important and proportionate to what we are discussing today as the role of "assistant special education teacher". The "social orientation", the almost zero response of Victor to social stimuli, such as the response to a spontaneous greeting or the participation in the dialogue waiting for his turn, is recorded to show great deficits as it is typical for people with ASD.

Itard: Put the new letters correctly, try again. Fine...

Observation: Victor cannot match the mixed letters.

Itard: No, that's not the alphabet. You're wrong, Victor, start again. Go pick them up.

Observation: Victor picks them up, looks at them in despair, and throws them down again

Itard: Victor, in the closet ...

Observation: Victor is being punished to spend time in confinement in order to understand, cooperate and respond when his turn comes.

Serious difficulties are determined by Victor's unresponsiveness in the lesson that causes the co-educator parent feelings of frustration, anger, disobedience, violent reaction and punishment. It is noted that authoritarian pedagogy is dominant in all educational structures wherever they take place, imposing harsh disciplines and punishments on students in the pedagogical systems of the 18th century.

Itard: "His anger often hinders our work. I don't treat it with mild means, they are unreliable, but with the harsh methods that were applied at Harlem Hospital. However, I must not overdo it. If this method fails, any other similar treatment will be "useless".
..... Come on Victor come on..... Don't cry. You can do it. Come on. You can do it. Fine. That's for you when you're done, Itard encourages him by showing him a glass of water he likes so much

Observation: "Today, for the first time, Victor cried."

The doctor's remorse and apology, the restoration of their relationship, and the student's eventually disciplined behavior all point to the educational intervention that uses body language to communicate with the aim of emotionally engaging the two (Caldwell, 2008).

Serious learning difficulties are obvious and they are identified in the problems of reading behavior. In language practice, Victor is asked to place the letters in alphabetical order when given to him in a certain order and he succeeds (Itard, 1990). When he is given a more difficult exercise, that is, to place the letters in alphabetical order when given to him in a random order, he is unable to do so and this is recorded in Itard's observations from the role of the educator. In today's pedagogical and didactic reality, by applying TISIPSET, we would include in the data the observations that the parent co-educator Itard implements Student Readiness Activities in the neurodevelopmental areas of oral speech, psychomotor skills, mental abilities, and emotional organization as presented in the Special Education and Training Teacher's (EAE) textbook and, without realising it, he organizes the teaching methodology. In pedagogical reflection, the teacher is called to take into account that Victor has not developed reading readiness which presupposes many other skills and abilities such as cognitive, emotional and social ones (Ministry of Education & Pedagogical Institute, 2009).

3. The results of pedagogical self-observation in the education of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

The results of pedagogical self-observation focused on what the parent co-educator (1) and the philologist educator (2) experienced during the teaching interaction and one to one relationship. The self-observations focus on what we felt, as observers of the French film, before the exposure to some scenes, during them and after the end. The basic working hypothesis is credited with the dynamics of pedagogical self-observation and the benefits of educating people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The pedagogical findings that emerge from the relationship between Dr. Itard and Victor, his student with Autism Syndrome, which was then unknown, highlight two active roles, the one of parent co-educator and the one of the pedagogue who deals with autism.

4.1. The results of pedagogical self-observation of the parent-co-educator

Before the scene, I feel relieved because "my child who behaves like a savage has begun to integrate into the narrow context of social coexistence" with his human environment and, with education, he is slowly becoming part of the current culture. During the scene, the embarrassment of what Victor feels next to me dominates. Obviously I am the person for whom a person with autism makes the exception and opens up (Synodinou, 1999, pp. 66-67). There is a positive feeling of satisfaction caused by the skill that Victor has acquired to wait for his turn.

In special education textbooks, great importance is given to the style in which adults approach children with autism when seeking communication (Synodinou, 1999; Happe, 2003; Drossinou-Korea, 2020). In this case, the punishment is meaningless because, in fact, Victor does not understand the meaning of error. This injustice intensifies the pain caused by the child's reaction when he is punished, as is the case with Victor who only has the body language as a means of expression, he cannot answer verbally to Itard and he just keeps quiet. Interactive relationships develop with my help in the role of co-educator parent, who seeks to support this wild child with disabilities, to understand the rules that govern life in the community where he is aimed to integrate in. The absence of speech, which happens without Victor being deaf, distresses me and I record it in my self-observations, despite the fact that research has linked it to the deficit of children with ASD in the skill of common attention either as an inability to initiate it or as an inability to respond to it (Chiang , et al., 2008). After the end of the scene with the graded difficulty language exercises with the "wooden" letters, I feel satisfied for the outcome of the teaching step as part of the educational process, in which my love and tenderness is unlimited, when I think I took the child from the institution because he was psychologically abused. Precisely so as Victor not to have such violent treatment, I think it is worthwhile to support deinstitutionalization as an adoptive parent who "takes a child without oral speech and with strange behavior out of isolation ". My house, "his home", provides him with the decent provision for special educational services as an equal person and for this reason I must do everything I can to take care of him. Thus, without changing the roles and the "heroes" in the different eras, what is timeless is highlighted and it presupposes emotional availability and love from the parent-co-educator Itard to his child. According to scientific developmental approaches, formulated only in the early 1980s, the objectives of interventions in children with neurodevelopmental delays are equivalent to those in children with typical development. This means that, regardless of biological age, children with autism first learn to use non-verbal means of communication and then the language, as is the case with children of typical development. The strong interactive relationship between the two characters is defined by the co-educator parent's dedication to the education of his child Victor, given that all pedagogical relationships begin with the culture that governs the family's behavior.

4.2. The results of the pedagogical self-observation of the philologist-educator

Before the scene, I think the reason Victor agrees to the education is certainly the love of his philologist-educator. His consent the second time, after his confinement in the small isolation area, signifies two cultural elements which have permeated pedagogy. The first refers to the school culture that seems to be oriented towards the pedagogical dipole "penalty-reward" as a learning process according to the authoritarian pedagogical approach and the violent reaction of his teacher. The second element refers to the learned behavior of the person with ASD. It is demonstrated how important it is to set the goal of improving the spontaneous communication of the person with autism as a teaching priority and the tender communication with the philologist-educator. During the scene with the letters "I remember that I have to constantly investigate the type of intervention, whether it is something that the student with autism needs and benefits from", taking into account neuroscience, special educational needs and learning readiness. I also note that, in order for my student to get to know the world, even a little bit, as I see it, it is essential for me to try to see the world as he sees it and understand it first. Self-observation as a pedagogical method in education negotiates the balance between the approach and the objectives of the intervention. What is also understood is the purpose of various, mainly pedagogical, institutions, such as the integration of people with disabilities such as autism, as a moral duty and the dynamic educational approach at all ages with timely and intensive

intervention. This is because it leads to the significant improvement in the functionality of children with autism by teaching them social communication and by comparing normal behavior to this developmental social pragmatic approach (Ingersoll, 2010). Of course, the film captures the scientific deficit between an educator and a child with autism, when the educator manages to create a distance between them due to his unrealistic expectations. After the end of the scene, "I realize how important it is to be in constant control of scientific conclusions." Perhaps the time frame of learning grammar is limited for Victor. However, according to the basic pedagogical principles of flexibility and adaptability as well as declassification and demineralization of special educational needs, which govern the principles and philosophy of the Framework of Analytical Curriculum' Special Education (FACSE), the philologist educator can create a unique one to one teaching relationship and meet the educational needs of his student (Christakis, 2011). The personal and interpersonal function of language in autism is reflected in the inability to build up the theory of mind, and due to the semiotic nature of language, in the understanding of the nature of autism. Victor finds it difficult to define himself and the other, just as it is difficult for him to give meaning to the teaching experience and his educator's instructions (Kardamitsi, 2007).

Conclusions

The interactive relationship during homeschooling between the parent doctor Itard and the young boy, the "savage", apart from its historical cinematic dimension, reflects the difficulties in understanding autistic behaviors in 18th-century French-speaking Europe. It also demonstrates the educational deficit in the pedagogical arrangement of that period, the timelessness of the educational problem and the ignorance of society, which is depicted in the complete absence of special education and training. The data includes the innovative process followed by the parent co-educator as he observes himself, taking notes, analyzing Victor's own mental processes and responsive behaviors while educating him in a historical era, where the medical scientific society ignores "autism". Pedagogical self-observation of a student with ASD, offers material for each similar case, which can become the basis of extended experiential special education and training that starts at home, with the parent co-educator (Schopler, 1995). Then, it is transferred to school and returns home to expand and continue the process of learning and understanding the pedagogical rules that facilitate integration into the environment. At the same time, it can provide information about the disadvantages of the environment in which the educational process takes place, so that the required, for the temperament of student with ASD, pedagogical changes and arrangements can be made that have to do with what can help this person learn and socialize. Perhaps Victor comprehends what he sees only when it has serial relevance as in the case of alphabetical linearity in a certain order. So we have to work based on this ability. We should observe in which object or situation he focuses each time and include them in the plan of the targeted, didactically structured and differentiated interventions with the pedagogical tool TISIPSET, (Drossinou-Korea, 2017). It may have been impossible or even unnecessary at this point for Victor to learn the alphabet through a process that is not dictated by our nature but is structured primarily by rules. On the contrary, in the modern pedagogical era he could internalize, through music or play, language rules that govern social skills, even if he has not learned the alphabet. Because, as for all children with disabilities, much more so for people with autism, participating in life in a natural way is the ideal way to compensate for the deficit in socialization.

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