LEHAVA Program Steps-Up Student Functioning

Abstract
LEHAVA program is a unique Learning Strategies Course (LSC) developed by the researcher upon her accumulative experience with LD & ADHD students. It was designed to accommodate and help students to compensate for their disabilities. Therefore it deals with both organizational skills and learning strategies. The research focuses on the contribution of the LSC to high school students; adolescents with dyslexia and/or ADHD disorders from their point of view. The research is a case study research consists of six high school students having dyslexia and/or ADHD, all participated in LEHAVA program led by the researcher. The main research tool was in-depth open interviews with the participants, their parents and teachers. The research findings show that with proper guidance, practicing and training, the students significantly improve their academic achievements, become an efficient, successful and independent learner and cope better with real life situations.

Key words: Dyslexia, ADHD, Cognitive Modification, Learning Strategies Course, LEHAVA program.

Introduction
We live in a modern technology society that is characterized by expanding knowledge and rapid changes. These changes require making extensive modifications through learning. According to Binkley (2010) “success lies in being able to communicate, share, and use information to solve complex problems, in being able to adapt and innovate in response to new demands and changing circumstances, in being able to marshal and expand the power of technology to create new knowledge and expand human capacity and productivity” (Binkley, et al., 2010, P.1). Therefore any student should be equipped with thinking skills (Feuerstein, 2010).

Since literacy skills are the key to educational success in the western societies, children who are slow to acquire reading and spelling skills may be at high risk of underachievement during school years and beyond (Snowling et al., 2001). They are less likely to achieve formal qualifications by the time of the adult follow-up. Later, in employment they may have jobs with limited literacy demands and be below their skills and ability (Klein & Mannuzza, 2000; Hendrickx, 2010). Dyslexia and ADHD are syndromes that derive from a neuropsychological deficit, not from social or educational conditions (Frith, 1997; Barkley, 2000; Fischer, Bernstein and Yang, 2007). They occur along all ethnic groups and in all socio-economic levels. Dyslexia is basically considered as an academic parameter, yet like ADHD it affects the student and adults in daily life by having a negative impact on people’s ability to maximize their potential.

Although in almost every class in Israel there are students struggling with LD or ADHD, the education system is not yet prepared to give the assistance needed. Feuerstein (2010) claims that the common assumption among the teachers in Israel is that the student’s difficulties are fixed and unchangeable. Those teachers do not consider their everyday work with the students as a critical factor in the child cognitive and behavioral development. As a result, their teaching is mainly based on facilitate the learning materials instead of promote the struggling student towards his peers (Feuerstein, 2001).

The LSC – LEHAVA program
The researcher has developed the LSC for about 10 years till it comes to its final model. The program is called LEHAVA - a Hebrew acronym signifying Learning, Organization, Confidence and Success. The essence of the program is a combination of proper organization together with the acquisition of study methods helping to restore the learner’s self-confidence and self-efficacy, thereby constituting a springboard to success.

The LSC was first designed in order to give an appropriate solution to high school students with L.D. and ADHD that in spite of good behavior in class, high I.Q. and high motivation they were underachievers. The goal of this course is to change passive and dependent thinking into autonomous and independent thinking, to transform those students from underachievers to self and efficient learners by providing tools to handle successfully any academic tasks by themselves. Therefore it deals with variety of issues beginning with understanding what is learning, what is efficient learning, organizational skills, reading comprehension and improving written and oral expression skills.
The LSC is designed as 3-4 months intervention program within a small group of junior high, high school and university students, but it can take longer and issued in private meetings as well. All the work is done on the regular learning materials of class. The three primary elements of the workshop are: student activity, group discourses and self-monitoring procedures. It gives the individual the necessary tools to learn how to learn.

The conceptual framework
The conceptual framework that guided this research is of a full range of theories; learning style (Kolb, 1984; McCarthy, 2006; Tileston, 2010), development and learning (Vygotsky, 1962, 1986; Feuerstein, 1980, 2010; Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005), disabilities theories (Frith, 2002; Snowling, 2001; Barkley, 2000; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006;) together with social theories concerning living in a modern and technologic society (Binkley et al. 2010).

Each theory, from her perspective enlighten the syndromes, different situations and difficulties of adolescents with dyslexia and or ADHD and present the key for a better functioning in school and in general.

Research Design and Methodology
The aim of the research was to evaluate the results of participating in LSC program to adolescents with Dyslexia and ADHD in general functioning and academic achievements. Therefore a qualitative interpretative and constructivist paradigm was chosen. It tends to rely on the participants view of the situation being studied (Denzin, 2000, 2011; Creswell 2011).

The research approach and population: It was a case study research consists of six high school students having dyslexia and or ADHD. They all participate in LEHAVA program led by the researcher.

The research tools were in-depth open interviews with the participants, their parents and teachers. Their grades and teachers' assessments in parents-teacher conference were integrated as well.

Discussion of the research findings
The research findings are arranged in themes. The themes are clustered in different levels each reflects the insights of the participants, their parents and teachers.

The contribution of the LSC in the eyes of the participants supported by their parents is: Improving grades, higher self-esteem and self-confidence, higher level of self-awareness and breaking the circle of failure.

Improving grades: the research finding reflects improvement in the participants' exams scores in all subjects learned at school. For example: Alex “jumped” from 70 in social studies in the first semester to: 95 in the middle of the second semester.

Similar improvement was found with the other participants as well.

Higher self-esteem and self-confidence: all the parents emphasized the change in the self-esteem of their children. As Chris father said: “The minute he learned how to deal with his disabilities it was reflected in his scholastic achievements and his self-confidence grew. Now, the sky is the limit.”

Higher level of self-awareness: all the parents noticed at different occasions this particular change in their children. As Bob and Jack's mothers mentioned that they feel that their sons are much more aware of themselves, what they need and what they like.

Breaking the circle of failure: the analysis of the participants’ answers clearly shows that all of them, each in his way, have a belief in his ability to succeed. They have self confidence that there is always a solution to any problem. For example, one of the participants who is in the 12th grade and in spite of having dyslexia and ADHD he thinks of studying engineering in the university, said: “I’m well aware to my difficulties, but I’ll deal with all of them, not only concerning learning”.

Conclusions
1. Success in school has a crucial effect on the wellbeing of students with LD and ADHD and encourages them in other areas of life as well.
2. The LSC successfully resolves the special needs of students with LD and ADHD in the regular class.
3. Teachers are key figure in the child success. Therefore teacher training should be focused more on how to learn and how to react towards different behaviors of the students instead of mainly dealing with the materials.

Contribution to universal knowledge
A great deal has been written about the dyslexia and ADHD syndromes, but not enough researches have been done on their learning style and the probability for cognitive modification. Much has been written about those students’ failures in life in the modern society, but there have not been enough research dedicated to ways of helping them.

The LSC - LEHAVA program is offered as an easy, effective and not expensive tool to promote student functioning. The LSC biggest advantage is the way of teaching, based on student activity, group discourses and self-monitoring procedures. It can be successfully implemented worldwide at any place with all kinds of students because the method can be implemented with any issue learned. There is no need for new curriculum or for extra budgets. It is just about open mind and teacher training.
References


rutydekel@gmail.com