

## CLINICAL APPLICATIONS OF DA: LATER DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING POTENTIAL OF „NON-GAINER” CHILDREN WITH AUTISTIC FEATURES

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Feuerstein’s LPAD represents one of the earliest attempts to create a comprehensive battery of tools to explore learning rather than measuring current performance. In the 1960’s when Vygotsky’s social constructivist theories and the concept of ZPD arrived to the West, different methods of dynamic assessment (DA) began to be developed as complementary or alternative methods of assessment. Despite the differences in interaction with the learner, all DA models share certain features, one of them, the most remarkable, is the following: the search for areas of positive isles in the ZPD (ie., revealing true learning potential) in contrast to the measurement of current performance. Our paper presents the empirical results of dynamic assessment of children with special needs in the following areas: attention, memory, receptive/expressive language, cognitive operations (analogy, comparison, classification, inferential-hypothetical thinking), metacognition and behaviors while learning. Our participants (N=40) all have mild to moderate cognitive delays (mental retardation) with very different etiology (genetic syndromes, cerebral palsy, perinatal brain injury or metabolic diseases). The participants have been assessed within the framework of Mediated Learning Experience as a way of interaction with the batteries of LPAD-Basic and Tzuriel’s Cognitive Modifiability Battery. The time of assessment was from 16–20 hours in each case. After the assessment phase a very thorough remedial process (intervention) was planned and carried out for 2 years.

During the course of assessment there were „gainers” and „non-gainers” – those who could benefit from the teaching (mediational phase) of the assessment and showed modifiability; and those who showed very low abilities to learn. However, even amongst the non-gainers, there were five cases who showed remarkable modifiability over the two-year intervention period when intervention was given with great intensity (12 sessions per week). All of these originally non-gainers had autistic features or sensorial intergration disorders (SID).

We should definitely not predict future performance on the basis of current performance in case of the clinical population. (All gainers showed remarkable development later.) However, even in some of the cases, despite low modifiability during dynamic assessment procedures, a very remarkable modifiability has been experienced later, when future intervention has been carried out.

Systematic and intensive mediated learning can create delayed trigger effects in learners with autistic features or SID, and reveal delayed learning potential in the future development of the SEN child. Further questions are: do we find this delayed trigger effect in other types of etiology? What factors are responsible for the delayed improvement of the learning potential?

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