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THE SPECIAL PUPIL REMAKES THE SPECIAL TEACHER

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Abstract

Most of the teachers admit they have a favorable, dear, special, challenging pupil. To study from your pupil, to feel a mutual transformation, is the pick of education. See a movie about relationship between a teacher and her special pupil who caused her a change in viewing herself not only as a teacher but as a human being. My research "Special patient among art therapists in Israel" deals with the therapists' counter transference toward their special patients. Therapists of the special patients tend to be more emotional, open and non-conformist. What about teacher- pupil relationship? The current research examines the phenomenon of the "Special Patient" as perceived by art therapists in the twenty first century. There are very few studies on the subject of the special patient in psychotherapy, as those of the special pupil. The evidence showed that the art therapists' special patient seems to be a patient whose characteristics, life story resemble those of the therapist. Thus therapy of the special patient tends to be more intense than usual, giving birth to the emergence of a close patient-therapist relationship. The special pupil forces the teachers to deeply probe their educational philosophy and their personal-professional self. The main contribution of this research is the development of a model SECRET which may summarise the special pupil phenomena. This new perception of the special pupil phenomena may contribute to reaching a better understanding of pupil-teacher relationship, the mutual teaching, as well the teacher's intra-personal world.

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1. Introduction

Although the term special patient was first mentioned about twenty years after Freud's death, in 1939, by Main in 1957, a backward glance seems to hint at the possibility that Freud might have had special patients. For example, in his patient descriptions, Freud reveals that he was very real and personal with them, to such an extent that some of his followers made efforts to conceal this significant information (Govrin, 2004). In the article "Advice to Physicians about Psychoanalytic Care" (1912, pp. 92 – 99 in Freud, 2005), he advises the psychoanalyst to regard the patient from an 'emotional distance', to remain a mystery to the patients, showing nothing but what is shown to him. Govrin shows there were cracks in the traditional psychoanalytical approach even by Freud himself. For example despite these pronouncements, Freud was prepared to deviate from the therapeutic boundaries; he served food to some patients and formed personal relations with others. Patients described Freud as a therapist who behaved with a great deal of freedom. Rather than just listening and interpreting, he sometimes joked with patients with one even reporting that Freud sang songs to him (John Dorsey, an American psychiatrist and neurologist treated by Freud). True love is giving not only receiving.

Neutrality versus flexibility is the main issue of human relationship. The therapeutic contradictions of Freud's era begin to lead us to the gap in knowledge. The question arises of how is it possible to maintain a relationship, which is personal and professional, intimate and subject to rules, open in content and time limited. Like psychotherapy education has been changed during the last decade.

The theories discussed in the research about the special patient pertain to the therapeutic relationship and expose the flexibility that is so typical of recent approaches to therapy, the therapists' openness and their relationships with their patients. Despite this flexibility of educational and therapeutic theories, the special patient/pupil phenomenon has not been researched and hardly appears in the literature.

The fact that the special pupil phenomenon is missing from the literature may arise from a number of reasons: hesitation about exposing the teacher's feelings, fear of the teacher's work being politically incorrect; fear of discriminating versus other pupils. More than any other pupil, the special pupil accelerates all aspects of relationship. (In France a research about the favorite of a teacher "Le shushu de professeur" is taking place lately.)

1.1. The teacher's compliance - A flow chart of the special pupil phenomenon*

1. The pupil (not yet special) asks for special conditions.
2. The teacher accepts the special conditions (help, meeting parents).
3. In spite of the teachers' compliance, the pupil is frustrated and becomes more demanding (arriving late to class, to talk...)
4. The teacher again accepts the new conditions and increases his / her giving
5. The teacher starts to realize that she/ he has a special attitude to the pupil.
6. A special connection is being created between the teacher and the pupil.
7. When education progresses, the pupil is satisfied, education becomes positive, deepens; learning advances.
8. When education impasses, the counseling helps understanding the process.

9. The teacher understands the enactment that the special pupil does. A picture of the pupil's background and its influences over studying becomes clear.

10. In the best scenario, reflection helps to advance teaching, which contributes to a change of the interpretation; teaching starts a new course.

2. The Symbolism of S.E.C.R.E.T

It appears from the findings that in the therapist-special patient the relationship, the hidden is greater than the obvious. Interestingly enough, the meaning of the acronym SECRET suits some of the findings.

From the findings, the literature, my experience, and this research, most of the therapists have SECRET patients/pupils. The above reasons create special relationships. The more the teachers share with supervisors their feelings about the SECRET pupil phenomenon the more it will help the teachers enrich the relationship for the well-being of the special pupil.

Contemporary theories discuss the therapeutic relationship, starting from the therapeutic experience through Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1980), the Self- Theory (Wolf, 1988), and the therapist who treats at eye-level and willing to learn from the patient (Casement, 1999. In Art therapy, (Betensky 1977, 1978) Dalley (1984) the artwork adds to the therapeutic relationship a nonverbal and unconscious discourse. Although the therapists have more knowledge, they are not above their patients. This leads to mutuality in the therapeutic relationship.

2.1. SECRET pupil

Similar to the teacher,

Empathy – elicitor,

Challenging the teacher

REsT structuring agent.

The above SECRET model may serve the teacher as a starting point for understanding the challenges and the risks involved in treating a special pupil. Awareness of this will help the teacher coping with the phenomenon.

By shedding light on the special pupil phenomenon, this research contributes to the development of awareness among teachers of the advantages and the disadvantages of the special pupil phenomenon. This increased awareness can help teachers to cope more effectively with their special pupils.

One of the main contributions to knowledge is changing the teacher's perspective. Teachers learn a lot regarding teaching their special pupil, they move from a detached point of view to authentic relationship.

Bugental (1987) suggests there are seven relationship levels from formal and detached through intimate to personal unconscious. Teacher's approaches vary: objective to subjective, apathetic, indifferent, efficient and objective to subjective: authentic, spontaneous, caring, devoted, friendly, and total. Teachers to special pupils are caring devoted and some of them total and created authentic and intimate relationships with their pupils.

The term SECRET predicts intensive teaching, an enormous investment of the teacher, an emphasis on faith and willingness to help, similarity and correspondence between the teacher and the pupil, learning

from the pupil, timing, synchronicity, resonance, intuitions, increasing the teachers presence, empathy, a sense of the teacher's suitability to the pupil, strong affinity, intimate space, an array of significant moments, sometimes a sense of a mission or faith; most of these phenomena exist when treating the special patient/pupil.

The findings reveal welfare cases, a few posttraumatic patients or a case of environmental retardation. Treatment is usually inconvenient, not at ease; on the contrary, there is a discrepancy between the efforts that the therapists invested and what he gains. The improvement in treatment does not come easily, it may be a prolonged and exhausting, but the teacher dedicated to his work, is challenged by his/her student.

The SECRET pupil benefits from the teacher's willingness and the giving. In this manner a pupil looking for a place and an attachment figure receives a special attitude from the teacher, an attitude which is essential for the continuation of education.

On the part of the teacher, the compensation for treating the SP is human a good deed'. The secondary gain from the SECRET is that a special affinity is created. Teaching is fascinating, and in a certain sense, treatment for the teacher and the SP is like a new creation. The pupil begins to stimulate the teacher and presents the teacher with dilemmas, regarding the pupil's abilities. In many cases the pupil arrives at a unique timing. For the total teachers special pupils are not a part of the usual pupil population.

Strengthening the teaching relationship with empathy and flexibility is a must for special pupils. This research's further implication for similar situations in the field of education is awareness of the special pupil needs which is very crucial for their positive reinforcement and healing process. As special approaches and strategies were created for the benefit of pupils with special needs my main belief is this approach should be adapted to education. Some educational fields started to make deviations from the conservative approach that will help special pupils to find an answer to their needs. My main belief and argument as a therapist and teacher is that a deeper understanding of the role of the teacher, adopting a tolerant point of view, will contribute to the understanding the special pupil and the human wish to heal oneself. Recommendations for further research: getting feedbacks from the special pupil's point of view, in order to examine the effectiveness of the educational process.

Understanding the special pupil phenomenon and the special pupil/teacher relationship is important. While dealing with intensified emotions; enthusiasm and/or fatigue, helplessness and/or omnipotence feelings, the special pupil enables the teacher/educator while coping with this phenomenon, to clarify fundamental issues related to the teaching process it leads to professional growth.

Receiving supervision, peer groups will help teachers deal with the phenomenon of special pupil. Further research is needed to investigate the delicate boundaries between teachers and their special pupils. Accepting and understating the 'special pupil phenomena' remakes a better teacher and a better future for us all.

3. Conclusion

The main terms concerning the special pupil phenomenon are: attunement, mutual teaching and mutual transformation.

Attunement is what the teacher feels when the pupil strums on one of his/her cords. When the empathy the teacher feels for his patient is deep, real education starts.

Mutual Teaching - Modern approaches emphasize the teacher's role in the process. In good teaching the teacher treats the pupil and him/herself.

Mutual transformation - Alchemy becomes a pertinent metaphor when we consider the relationship of teacher student. Jung emphasis on the dialectical process and on the issue of mutual transformation can be illustrated from alchemy.

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