

The Unique Contribution of Mentors Participating in the Course "Strategies for Academic Learning Functioning," Offered at the "MAHUT" Center at the Kibbutzim College of Education During and After the Mentoring Year

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Abstract:

In recent years, higher education institutions have increasingly recognized the importance of academic support centers for students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD. The Mahut Center at the Kibbutzim College of Education is a prominent example of a model designed to strengthen these students' sense of capability and foster their development as independent learners through personalized support, accommodations, and the integration of functional learning strategies. Within this framework, a unique year-long course combining tailored mentoring with instruction in academic learning strategies is offered to the mentors themselves—pre-service teachers who support learners with disabilities. The course aims to cultivate functional awareness, academic self-efficacy, and pedagogical competencies as part of their professional preparation.

The present study examines the contribution of this course to the mentors who participate in it, both in their developing identity as academic learners and as future teachers. Its purpose is to evaluate the impact of the training on five key dimensions: awareness of independent learning strategies, sense of learning self-efficacy, communication skills and self-confidence, teaching abilities, and academic learning skills. To this end, eight semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with mentors who had completed the course. The interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify central themes reflecting perceptions, experiences, and processes of change.

Preliminary findings indicate a significant contribution of the course to the mentors' metacognitive awareness and to the development of effective, independent learning strategies. Participants reported notable improvement in academic self-efficacy, enhanced communication skills and personal confidence, and meaningful progress in teaching abilities and understanding of support processes for students with learning disabilities. They emphasized that the practical mentoring experience provided a strong pedagogical basis for shaping their professional identity as reflective educators.

This study offers an important contribution to understanding the reciprocal potential of mentoring processes in academic support centers—not only in empowering the students receiving support, but also in advancing the academic and professional development of the mentors themselves. The findings may inform the design of training processes in higher education and strengthen the integration of mentoring models as an essential component of teacher preparation.