

**UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT**

**“HOW TO ADDRESS ATTENTION DEFICIT – HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER
(ADHD) CHILDREN IN PRIVATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL”**

**UNDERGRADUATE WORK PRESENTED TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF
LICENCIATURA EN INGLES
OPCION ENSEÑANZA**

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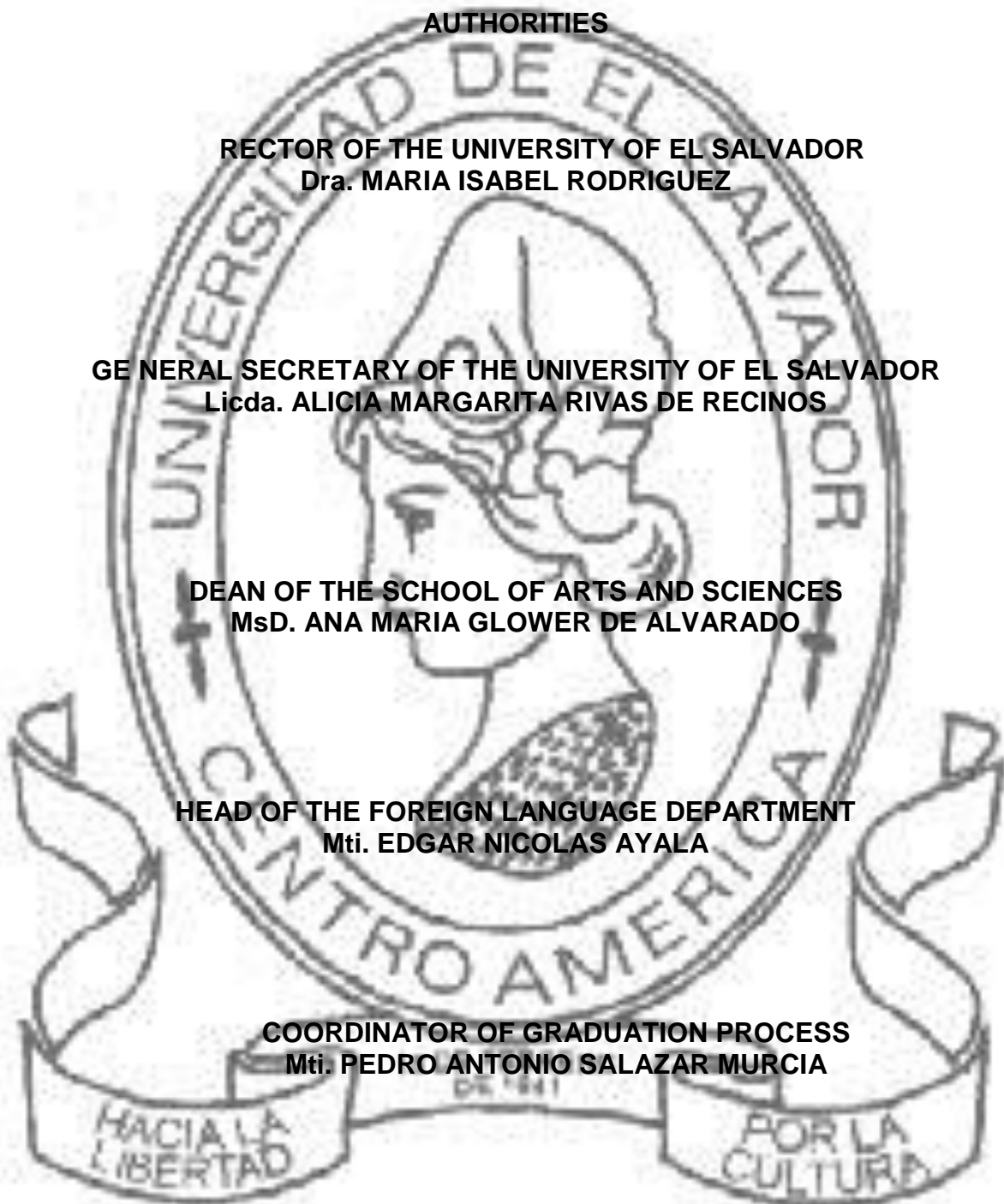
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I. THESIS STATEMENT

At the University of El Salvador in the Foreign Language Department (FLD), future teachers of English are prepared to carry out formal instruction in a traditional way because the mission of the FLD states that professionals are prepared to teach at mid and superior level education when they major in English from the “Licenciatura en Inglés” program. However, when future teachers of English face real life situations when teaching children in the classroom, which is the only available market for them, they deal with different types of students’ behaviors, learning disabilities, specially Attention Deficit – Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) children and so on; so they are not taught how to address children who fall into this category due to several factors: The “Licenciatura en Inglés” Didactics syllabus does not include a content which at least trains the future teachers of English on how to address ADHD children. Moreover, the staff of teachers in charge of the Didactics syllabus does not plan in order to modify this curriculum to fit the unique characteristics of the English students as future teachers at the time they have to take into account children’s needs and abilities like: readiness, independence, attention span, disabilities and self-control when planning and delivering instruction. What they do is to teach contents required in the Didactics syllabus, contents they are comfortable working with since they are not specialised in

delivering instruction to teach children. Finally, Didactics teachers that are in charge of the curriculum design have not done a research about what the real students needs are. Consequently, future teachers of English do not have a sense of command and personal ownership over the teaching act to ADHD children.

II. FRAMEWORK

Attention Deficit – Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurobehavioral disorder that interferes with a person's ability to stay on a task and to exercise age-appropriate inhibition (cognitive alone or both cognitive and behavioral domains). It is a brain disorder that causes underachievement and poor behavior in children that is not related to intelligence, brain damage, or poor parenting ; and it is diagnosed during primary school age when the need to concentrate, follow rules and finish work.

ADHD affects both sexes although far more boys than girls are diagnosed as girls tend to be less disruptive with their behavior. The essential feature of ADHD is a persistent pattern of inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity, and it is estimated that between 3 and 5 percent of children have ADHD. This means that in a classroom of 25 to 30 children, it is likely that at least one will have ADHD.

When the teacher notices that a student is struggling to meet the expected learning outcomes, a systematic process should be followed. This process should include collecting information about the student, planning and trying different instructional strategies, and evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies selected. In some cases, the instructional adjustments made by the teacher will effectively assist the student to achieve success in the classroom. In other cases,

in spite of the teacher trying a number of different instructional strategies, the student continues to struggle. In these cases, other professionals – teachers, principal, parents, psychologist, and resource specialist – might be able to assist in planning effective programs for students with ADHD.

The child's teachers, past and present, are asked to rate their observations of the child's behavior on standardized evaluation forms, known as behavior rating scales, to compare the child's behavior to that of other children of the same age.

HOW TO ADDRESS ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD) CHILDREN IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a condition that becomes apparent in some children in the pre – school and early school years. It is hard for these children to control their behavior and/or pay attention. A child with ADHD faces distractibility, poor concentration or impulsivity which affects social relationships with other children, behavior at home or performance in school.

ADHD children face a difficulty which is a brain disorder that causes under achievement and poor behavior that is not related to intelligence; “the essential feature of ADHD is a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that is more frequent and severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development” (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Physicians have always known that the emotional state during the pregnancy period can affect the fetus. Statistics show that the pregnancy period between the twelfth and twenty second weeks is particularly crucial in terms of increasing the risk of having an ADHD newborn child. The mothers’ anxiety this period is associated with the highest

risk that child might develop different symptoms in terms of hyperactivity, behavioral problems, and their own anxiety problems. Pregnancy in adolescents is a problem of high magnitude in El Salvador. It not only involves the age , but also socio – economic problems. Statistics show that the adolescent patient has six times more of the possibilities to present risk factors in pregnancy, and twice the probability of having delivery complications in newborns with pathology than the general population. Nevertheless, in order to achieve their full potential they should receive help, guidance from counselors, understanding from parents, and from the public education system, and teachers. These latter people are the ones who must be prepared to have a thorough understanding of ADHD management strategies and resources focused exclusively on how to address the special needs of students with ADHD in order to plan and provide day – to day – activities that successfully involve these students into the classroom. However, Future teachers of English at the Foreign Language Department (FLD) are taught upon general standards in order to teach students at Mid and Superior level education; in spite of this fact, when they major, the only labor market available for the majority of them are academies and private elementary schools where at least, a single or several students show this disorder. Graduated teachers and future graduated ones can not access to the public

educational system because they are required to have the “escalafon” which only can be given to teachers of English graduated from the “Profesorado en Ingles program”.The escalafon (a document which identifies a teacher already registered at the Education Ministry, and allows him/her to work in the public area according to the years of service, and gives him/her the chance to be promoted) is not required in most of the private institutions while the public educational system requires it to all professionals. The fact of teaching general contents in the “Licenciatura en Inglés” program only provides future teachers of English methodological aspects which do not tackle some of the students’ special needs. Therefore, graduated teachers from “Licenciatura en Inglés” program at the FLD, in the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of El Salvador are not prepared on how to address children with learning disabilities – mainly ADHD – because the Didactics syllabus does not include a content related to learning educational techniques, strategies and methods to address ADHD children in the classroom; if a content were included in the syllabus, it would at least train the future teachers of English on how to address ADHD students, it would also help teachers to identify students’ learning strengths, weaknesses, and needs; besides that, ways to set realistic expectations to assess ADHD children would be developed.

Didactics is the art or science of teaching, and according to an FLD Didactics teacher's opinion it is devoted to provide theoretical tools, practical issues, and/or background knowledge for students to do a good job as teachers of English. In the FLD, Didactics is considered as an axis for education and it is divided into four different subjects. Didactics I is a general course that firstly pretends to conceptualize the Didactics and its varied approaches to reflect about the educative act and the role played by the people who are involved in it: students, teachers, and children's parents. Thus, the evolution of the contemporanean educative phenomenon is analyzed through theories, educative events and changes that have made possible the actual reality of education. Secondly, Didactics I course pretends to train its students to plan technically. It also lets students know about the different educative strategic methods, and helps students analyze them critically and apply them into the classroom when teaching. Finally, concepts about educative planning are studied and carried into practice by taking into account the basic elements as well as its steps: diagnosing students, setting proper objectives, selecting contents, methodology and activities, creating and using didactics materials, and assessing the process of learning as well as teaching; it is important to mention that this subject is taught in Spanish.

Didactics II is oriented in language learning methodology in which students study and understand the concept of "Proficiency" as described in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines and study a methodology oriented towards developing the English proficiency in adult learners in classroom settings as a first stage. Second, students study and analyze theory on classroom management. Finally, students get familiar with planning activities, going from a general view of curriculum –syllabus design and landing in the most immediate planning task that is lesson planning. An opinion from an FLD teacher related to the Didactics III delivering process states that it is a subject where the contents (syllabus design, parts of the curricular program) are usually changed. Each semester the teachers assigned to this subject, change the contents of the Didactics syllabus based on their own criteria which always causes a clash of interests among the FLD teachers because the contents to be covered depend on the teacher in charge of the subject. For instance, only a teacher tackles in a briefly way –in one or two weeks- the process of teaching children; in spite of that fact, this is not enough for future teachers of English to address children when they face reality, because what is taught only includes methodological aspects like creating a proper environment, presenting different strategies to adapt

games to the contents being studied, and using resources related to students' age (flashcards, and / or songs). Therefore, contents taught in Didactics III do not consider the reality future teachers face when teaching English to children in private elementary school since this focuses on providing them bibliography on useful methodology to teach children English by means of group discussions, written reports, short presentations, pair work, etc. It is important to mention that the objective of these courses is to prepare students for their teaching practice.

Didactics IV is designed to prepare students for higher education teaching. This course has mainly three components: Planning, evaluation, and a research project. In this subject students discuss theory about lesson planning, and elaborate their own lesson plans. Also, there is a component of classroom management and practice. Finally, students study evaluation by analyzing the different kind of tests, their characteristics, the steps in making a classroom assessment, and their elements of exams. As observed at the FLD, the "Licenciatura en Inglés" Didactics syllabus does not include a content related to learning disabilities which at least, trains the future teachers of English on how to identify students' learning strengths and needs, develop strategies to address students' learning, develop realistic expectations, and much less assess ADHD students. The course of ADHD problems in

school may improve or deteriorate from year to year depending to some extent upon a given teacher's instructional style and attitude. Moreover, as demands for academic performance increase with each grade in school – the problem of private elementary school – aged child with ADHD can multiply. The estimated incidence of ADHD varies widely, depending on the studies read and the tools used. It is estimated by experts that 3 to 10 percent of school-age children are affected. However this is very likely an underestimation due to the fact that many girls often go undiagnosed. ADHD is far more common in boys than girls. Hyperactivity affects about a million boys in El Salvador. Girls more commonly have Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) with out Hyperactivity (“Instituto de Colaboración y Educación Familiar”, ICEF). All this means that as the work load increases in school, it requires a greater teacher's preparation, concentration, organization, and motivation since Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder becomes more pronounced in the classroom (Parker 1994). So that, a content related to fulfill ADHD students' needs is necessary to be included in the Didactics Syllabus in order to identify the learning disabilities, and to provide learning educational techniques, strategies, and methods to address ADHD children in private elementary school.

According to the theory, planning is one of the basic steps in the instructional process, its purpose is to modify the curriculum to fit the unique characteristics of their particular pupils. Conduct disorder and learning disabilities are disorders that sometimes accompany ADHD. About 20 to 40 percent of ADHD children may eventually develop conduct disorder, a more serious pattern of antisocial behavior. In El Salvador there are a lot of students who are expelled or dropped out from different schools because they show some kind of behavioral problems; however, the educational authorities do not realize that those problems have to deal with ADHD a real issue that affects children mainly in elementary school and has to be addressed not only in three private schools where observations to fourth, fifth, and sixth grades to ADHD students have been done, but also in all elementary schools of the Salvadorean Educational System. In El Salvador there is a high percentage of children whose parents are addicted to alcohol and drugs and these facts affect the child's fetal development while the mother is pregnant. A great amount of pregnant young girls (74%) have a factor of reproductive risk from the very moment of conception, contrasting with the 32% observed in the general population. On one hand, when the mother drinks alcohol during pregnancy the baby is affected. Alcohol can cause the Fetal Alcoholic Disorder causing in the baby a small head and

heart disorders, and learning disabilities. On the other hand, smoking while a woman is pregnant can cause the mother and her baby lack of oxygen, and as a result, the baby can manifest learning disabilities or another health problems while growing up.

As it was mentioned previously, among all Salvadorean private and public institutions only three out of the rest addresses learning disabilities. For instance, in the “Laura Lehtinen” private school, the majority of students have been expelled from other institutions (Colegio Los Robles, Augusto Walte, Lamatepec, Santa Cecilia, etc.) because those teachers are not aware and methodologically prepared to address ADHD children since they do not know how to overcome challenges when having children with learning disabilities due to these teachers address / manage students with ADHD in the same way they manage students who do not present this disorder. Besides, it has been found out that some of these teachers of English have been graduated from the University of El Salvador (UES) which proves that graduated teachers of the UES are not taught on how to address children, specially, ADHD children. Therefore, teachers need to be concerned with long – range curricular goals, and ideally, should be involved in both the planning and the evaluation of the curriculum in their own institutions, since observations done even in these private schools where

ADHD students are addressed show students' misconduct and this students' behavior becomes a challenge not only to the teacher, but also to their classmates. Also, these ADHD students did not agree nor obey the rules presented by the teacher into the classroom, and they always did the opposite of what the teacher was saying. Furthermore, they were interrupting other students when they were working, speaking, or doing other activities while the class was being delivered. Finally, it was noticed that a child shouted directly to his teacher while she was giving some directions to the rest of students. All of these children, by the time they were accepted in the former school they had already been diagnosed with ADHD, for the school firstly requires the student's profile, and the medical and psychological record through interviews and appointments for parents, school system and teachers to be aware of the students' disabilities. In addition, it has been said that these children frequently lie or steal, fight with or bully others, and are at a real risk of getting into trouble at school or with the police; they violate the basic rights of other people, are aggressive toward people and/or animals, destroy property, break into people's homes, commit thefts, carry or use weapons, or engage in vandalism. These children are at greater risk for substance use experimentation, and later dependence and abuse. Thus, planning firstly involves deciding what pupil should learn from

instruction, and the techniques to use in assessing pupil's learning. It also, must be related to an overall curricular plan if it is to be effective. Consequently, analyzing the curriculum, enhancing areas of the curriculum that are poorly designed, considering creative ways students with disabilities can access the curriculum; and include minor to major modifications of outcomes, are the three-step process in which educators can determine the setting where access to the curriculum for a given student can best occur. When quality decisions and responsive actions occur as a result of using the three steps, setting or placement decisions may include the education as a viable option in an increasing number of instances (Giangreco, 1993). If all of the aspects related with planning and the curriculum mentioned previously were done, the problems that students show in the classroom would be reduced. However, the staff of teachers in charge of the Didactics syllabus does not plan in order to modify the curriculum to fit the unique characteristics of the English students as future teachers at the time they have to take into account children's needs and abilities like: readiness, independence, attention span, disabilities and self-control when planning and delivering instruction. So, what they do is to teach contents required in the Didactics syllabus (Didactics I includes approaches and theories in order to plan technically. Didactics II covers classroom management; while

Didactics III does not have specific contents. Didactics IV involves planning, evaluating, and a research project), and contents they are comfortable working with – specially in Didactics III where the contents vary according to the teacher in charge of the subject – since they are not specialised in delivering instruction to teach children because their specialisation has been done in other areas such as Linguistics, Data analysis, investigation, etc. Additionally, some Didactics teachers only have experience in teaching at superior level education yet some of them have studied abroad to know theories that are not precisely the ones related to teach children in school. Consequently, the selection of materials, methods and approaches, the design of testing programs and the appropriate use of program-evaluation procedures are important syllabus design aspects that effective teachers need to be familiar with. In spite of the fact, when FLD teachers are delivering instruction, they modify the Didactics Syllabus because they want to improve and/or update the contents for teaching English in a traditional classroom based on a communicative way. In addition, contents related to their knowledge on the subject, experience, capacity, and resources available rather than taking into account the future teachers' needs which are important aspects that can not be let aside. Indeed, what Didactics teachers are used to doing is teaching the same

contents – methods, approaches, curriculum design, and assessment – in the four Didactics without making relevant changes that are not useful at all for future teachers of English who are not teaching at superior levels but at private schools and / or academies where the methodology received in their instructional process contrasts with their reality in teaching children in primary or elementary school, and also it does not match with the methodology they need, and the one they have to use in order to address ADHD children in primary school.

According to experts, while not two students with ADHD are exactly alike and need precisely the same type of learning environment, there are some general principles which seem to make sense to follow when teaching children with ADHD. For example, Maintaining a structured classroom, training organizational skills, modifying presentations of lessons and assignments, using teacher attention to motivate, seating students close to the teacher, planning ahead for transitions, identifying the students' strengths, using effective commands, warnings and consequences to improve compliance, and teaching self-monitoring. Help teachers to successfully achieve ADHD children's learning, but opinions from graduated teachers of English have shown that they do not succeed in addressing students with behavioral problems, such as no-self-control, easily disturbance, disturbing other

children, lack of attention, not following instructions, and talking a lot. Because they have not been taught to do it so; therefore, addressing learning and behavioral differences in the classroom is a must due to the necessity to develop an outstanding performance in elementary school since it is the basis for students to move and succeed throughout their educational process; inasmuch as Didactics teachers at the FLD must know that ADHD becomes a disadvantage to future teachers of English while teaching and meeting their students' needs because they have not been prepared to address this problem. Teachers graduated from the UES showed that they only got full attention of the class, used commands and warnings, and set rules in the classroom (authoritarian teacher). At the same time, they used ideas to stimulate children (such as providing each student with learning activities that recognize and value a diversity of backgrounds and experiences; activities that provide challenge and success, promote growth, involve the student as an active learner, activities that were age appropriate, and enhance self – concept), and encouraged children to be organized in order to address ADHD students (guiding teacher). When both possible solutions failed, teachers concluded that the best way to address behavioral problems in class was by talking to children's parents (threatening teacher); but indeed, these

students received an incredible amount of negative feedback which also worsened the problem.

For educators, understanding the special learning needs of a student who has ADHD plays a critical part in designing an appropriate educational program for that student and providing needed behavioral support, information on many instructional practices and accommodations that have proven effectiveness with ADHD students can also help educators maximize these students' possibilities of social, behavioral access, and academic success (Giangreco & Iverson, 1998). But in reality, graduated teachers of English only reproduce the same input they received through their learning process, this according to FLD teachers' opinions. So, the selection of materials and teaching approaches, the design of the testing program, and the appropriate use of program and evaluation procedures are important syllabus design aspects that effective teachers need to be familiar with.

A well – designed course syllabus is a necessary component of a successful language program from both the teachers' and the students' points of view. For teachers, the course syllabus provides direction and guidance in the scope, sequence, and pacing of classroom activities; for students the syllabus provides at a glance the profile of the semester's work and the expectations for successful completion of that work (Ommagio, 1993).

In some cases, the instructional adjustments made by the teacher will effectively assist the student to achieve success in the classroom; in other cases, in spite of the teacher who tries a number of different instructional strategies, the student continues to struggle. In these cases, other professionals might be able to assist in planning effective programs for students with ADHD. This will also help students improve their motivation, enhance awareness of their language needs, integrate skills practice, and conceivably a more stimulating and satisfying learning and teaching experience for students and teacher alike.

Effective delivering instruction must include identifying students' strengths and needs, developing strategies to address the student's learning and behavioral needs at home and school, developing realistic expectations for the student, and accessing community resources for students with possible mental health needs; for the reason that many children with ADHD—approximately 20 to 30 percent, according to data presented in a workshop on ADHD by the “Institute de Colaboración y Educación Familiar” (ICEF)—also have a specific Learning Disability. In pre – school years, these disabilities include difficulty in understanding certain sounds or words and/or difficulty in expressing oneself in words. In school age children, reading or spelling disabilities, writing disorders, and arithmetic disorders may appear. Also, theory

states that a type of reading disorder, *dyslexia*, is quite widespread; and reading disabilities affect up to 8 percent of elementary school children.

Thus, according to theory, checklist, samples, and rubrics guide teachers in analyzing and assessing those dimensions of the curriculum that enhance success for learners with mild to moderate disabilities, suggestions for strengthening the curriculum and considering creative avenues for modifications are also provided. Special educators who use this process and collaborate with general educators to enhance weak curriculum emphasize improving learning for students with mild to moderate disabilities as well as typical students and students at risk for school failure, and making placement decisions for students with disabilities; as two major benefits that are more methodical and individualized which may result in the education setting being the least restrictive environment. (Kameenui & Camine, 1998).

The three main characteristics of ADHD – inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity—can interfere with academic performance. Children with ADHD pay attention to what is novel or stimulating and may have trouble focusing on important information rather than on extraneous details or background noise. They may be unable to sustain attention, specially during repetitious, rote or prolonged tasks, or in

situations of decreasing novelty. Hyperactivity—motor or verbal—will probably be seen as misbehavior when children are expected to sit quietly. Finally, impulsivity causes difficulty in any task requiring a delay, raising hands to answer questions, reading or listening to directions, asking questions to clarify information, planning, and organizing. So, these three characteristics (inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity) must be taken into account when planning in order to counteract or neutralize students' main difficulties.

Based on observation done in specialized schools classrooms that address ADHD children, the results show that teachers work with behavioral modifications charts which help students to obtain more attention in classes, to reduce hyperactivity and also, to help teachers of English to control students' behavior. Furthermore, these charts give the chance to students to have rewards for their effort such as: extra points in their exams, free hours, trips, toys' day, not to wear uniform, etc. Some other teachers use different techniques in order to control and reduce the hyperactivity disorder. But the use of these charts fails when a high level of no – self control and anxiety is displayed when classes are almost over and the medication has lowered its effect. So, the most effective activities can be made almost useless if the teacher does not organize them properly, and inattention, impulsivity,

and hyperactivity (disruptive behavior) can spoil the best classes if delivering instruction is not carefully planned.

Education, by its very nature, is aimed at the improvement of individuals lives and societies. Furthermore, research in education is often directed at children and other vulnerable populations and the main objective of this code is to remind that teachers should strive to protect these populations, and also to maintain the integrity of the research. In regard to the language teaching profession, it is through data based research studies that improvements can be made on curricular modifications and in the instructional process, as well, by taking into account the needs of future teachers of English since the labor market demands available are schools and academies when they major. However, Didactics teachers that are in charge of the curriculum design have not done a research about what the real students needs are; and other FLD teachers, not merely Didactics ones, have conducted researches whose findings have not been reported and as a result those researches have become desk research papers.

Moreover, some other FLD teachers criticise too much and do not propose anything to fulfill the real needs of the future teachers of English, eventhough the FLD vision aims to be the rectory academic unit in El Salvador in the teaching learning field of the Foreign Languages with an updated

curriculum, qualified teachers of services to foreign languages students are also required. Additionally, the FLD looks forward to preparing and forming humanistic and competent professionals in the foreign language field adopting constructivist postulates, focusing on a communicative teaching learning process according to the current profession and labor market demands. That is why one of the biggest challenges of the FLD is to change the FLD teachers' attitude towards conducting researches since educational researches warrant the standards of the theoretical and methodological perspectives in order to be well informed in both, their own and the competing paradigms. Consequently, future teachers of English do not know how to deal, manage, and teach English to ADHD children in private elementary school.

Theory states that a research provides leadership in cultivating and expanding the public fundamental knowledge and understanding of education. Moreover, it aggressively promotes the application of such knowledge to improve practice in the classroom. So, teachers are to be involved not only in education but also in research. It is, therefore, essential that they continually reflect on researching to be sure that it is not only sound scientifically but that it makes a positive contribution to the educational process.

In conclusion, graduated teachers' performance, mainly in private elementary school, is not being outstanding eventhough the FLD looks forward to preparing and forming humanistic and competent professionals in the foreign language field because the Didactics syllabus is not being planned to prepare teachers of English with a sense of command, and personal ownership over the instructional process mainly because there is no responsible sense of discussion and debate, as well as based research studies, from the staff of teachers in charge of the Didactics syllabus towards the students' needs. However, a special content related to learning disabilities in order to prepare future teachers of English to address ADHD children would be brought to light, and curricular improvements would be only made if the staff of teachers in charge of the Didactics syllabus developed more effective ways to infuse significant educational techniques, strategies, and methods to address ADHD children in the classroom – mainly in primary school – into the curriculum. So, a research at FLD is urgent to be done in order to know what the real labor market for graduated teachers of English is in order to strive for excellence as focusing approaches on language teaching into childrens' needs in private elementary school.

