

Need of Training of Teachers to Tackle Students with Learning Disability

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Abstract

Education faculties are dedicated to preparing competent teachers. At the same time, they must provide reasonable accommodations in the teaching and evaluation of qualified students with disabilities, in compliance with the mandates of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Learning disability is one of the biggest hurdles in the way of effective learning. Since it goes undiagnosed and untreated in most cases. Students with learning disability are normally being treated as low achievers, because the teachers are not trained to diagnose and treat the learning Disabilities (LDs). This paper discusses some of the underlying legal and ethical issues encountered when working with students with LD in teacher education programs, as well as some ways to enhance success.

Key Words: Education, Teachers Training, Learning Disability, Teacher Educator etc

Introduction

Learning disability is not a specific term; it is a category containing many specific disabilities, all of which cause learning to be difficult. The following definition of "Learning Disability" is used for legislative, financial and educational purposes only. It is NOT a definition of dyslexia, which is one specific Learning Disability. Types of learning disorders include reading (dyslexia), mathematics (dyscalculia) and writing (dysgraphia) etc.

Many children and youth with diverse learning needs can and should be educated within the regular education classroom. This setting is appropriate *for some, but not all*, students with learning disabilities. More than 90% of students with learning disabilities are taught in regular education classrooms for some part of their school day. When provided appropriate support within this setting, many of these students can achieve academically and develop positive self-esteem and social skills. The regular education classroom is one of many educational program options but is not a substitute for the full continuum necessary to assure the provision of an appropriate education for all students with learning disabilities.

We don't impart this knowledge in B.Ed or M.Ed even through there may be a need for doing this "**Tare Zameen Par**" is the name of the film, which drew the attention of the Indian Teacher educators for the first time, about the problems of Dyslexia. Probably lack of knowledge and costly nature of LD teachings prevent us from imparting this knowledge during B.Ed or M.Ed. Learning

disability is the most common problem faced by most of the schools. It also affects the academic record of children.

Thus the major objective of education is effective teaching which is based on proper learning process and tackling any hurdles coming in its way. Learning disability is one of the biggest hurdles in the way of effective learning. Since it goes undiagnosed and untreated in most cases. Students with learning disability are normally being treated as low achievers, because the teachers are not trained to diagnose and treat the learning Disabilities (LDs).

NPE, 1986 emphasized to integrate the differently abled children with normal children as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence.

According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010: reaching the marginalized, children with disabilities remain one of the main groups being widely excluded from quality education. Disability is recognized as one of the least visible yet most potent factors in educational marginalization.

Learning Disability

In 2002, the Ministry of Education adopted the following definition of learning disabilities, consistent with the definition adopted by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada and the BC Association of School Psychologists.

Learning Disabilities refer to a number of conditions that might affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual disabilities.

Learning disabilities are neurologically-based processing problems. These processing problems can interfere with learning basic skills such as reading, writing and/or math. They can also interfere with higher level skills such as organization, time planning, abstract reasoning, long or short term memory and attention. It is important to realize that learning disabilities can affect an individual's life beyond academics and can impact relationships with family, friends and in the workplace.

Some Signs/Indicators of learning disabilities

Many children have difficulty with reading, writing, or other learning-related tasks at some point, but this does not mean they have learning disabilities. A child with a learning disability often has several related signs, and these persist over time. The signs of learning disabilities vary from person to person. Common signs that a person may have learning disabilities include the following:

- Difficulty with reading and/or writing
- Problems with math skills
- Difficulty remembering
- Problems paying attention
- Trouble following directions
- Poor coordination

- Difficulty with concepts related to time
- Problems staying organized

A child with a learning disability also may exhibit one or more of the following:

- Impetuous behavior
- Inappropriate responses in school or social situations
- Difficulty staying on task (easily distracted)
- Difficulty finding the right way to say something
- Inconsistent school performance
- Immature way of speaking
- Difficulty listening well
- Problems dealing with new things in life
- Problems understanding words or concepts

These signs alone are not enough to determine that a person has a learning disability. A professional assessment is necessary to diagnose a learning disability because each learning disability has its own signs. Also, not every person with a particular disability will have all of the signs of that disability.

Inclusive education should be integrated into *all* teacher training

Teaching is considered more effective if it is differentiated— that is, if the teacher adapts lessons and activities to suit different students in their class. A good inclusive teacher therefore learns how to: identify students' specific learning needs and any wider (cross-sectoral) issues that may be impacting on presence, participation and achievement; develop innovative ways to help students participate and learn; and seek appropriate extra help from colleagues or other professionals when their own knowledge/skills are not sufficient to fully address a particular problem (for instance if they need support with planning and delivering education for children with particular learning difficulties). Such a flexible and responsive approach to teaching may appear to be particularly challenging in under-resourced or other difficult circumstances, but nevertheless needs to be the standard that all education systems strive for.

It is vital for trainee teachers to learn about inclusive education from day one of their training, so that focusing on quality and inclusive teaching and learning is seen as a natural part of every teacher's job. It is equally important for existing teachers to participate in ongoing professional development that helps them to constantly reflect on their attitudes and practices and strive to improve the inclusiveness of their schools. Such professional development can include formal in-service training courses and ongoing learning opportunities, such as having access to relevant reading materials and being given the time for individual study, participating in action research initiatives and engaging in teacher discussion groups.

Reviews of Related Literature

Several studies showed different causes & reasons behind learning disabilities like William and Oransky (1980) think that if the child doesn't learn, it is really no one's fault; he has brain injury that prevents him from learning. In a comprehensive review of diet related studies, Spring and Sandoval (1976) concluded that there is a little evidence in support of this cause.

It was found in various studies that there is consistently relation between learning disabilities and behaviour problems like (Rutter et al, 1970; Rutter and Yule (1970); Berger et al (1975); Lewis et al, (1980); Faraone et al 1993; Vaughn et al 1993; Lyon 1996; Sanson et al 1996; Blumsack et al 1997; Prior et al, 1999; Spagna et al 2000; Tomblin et al 2000). Results of surveys have shown that between 24% and 54% of learning disabled children have behaviour problems (Mc Michael 1979; Schachter et al 1991). Khurana (1980) in a study conducted at Baroda, India; on 100 learning disabled children, reported behaviour problems in 84% cases. Ritter (1989) estimated the problem of behaviours of 51 adolescent girls with learning disability, using Child behaviour checklist and identified elevated problem behaviours in learning disabled group compared to adolescents without learning disability. Beitchman & Young (1997) described co morbidity of learning disorders with externalizing and internalizing behavior disorders. Grigorenko (2001) have also reported that both externalizing and internalizing behaviour problems are associated with learning disabilities.

Learning disability may be caused by slight brain damage also. However, research has not shown a direct cause and effect relationship between the two. In other words, there is as yet no solid evidence to indicate that a learning disabled child necessarily has any brain injury or malfunction. Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning. These include, but are not limited to language processing, phonological processing, visual spatial processing, processing speed, memory, attention and executive functions (e.g. planning and decision making). Learning disabilities vary in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following: oral language (e.g., listening, speaking, understanding) reading (e.g., decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehension) written language (e.g., spelling and written expression) mathematics (e.g., computation, problem solving) Learning disabilities may also involve difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, social interaction and perspective taking.

Objectives of the Study

This article identifies (a) some factors necessary for an effective educational program for students with learning disabilities, (b) some problems related to learning disabilities in the regular education class room, and (c) few suggestions/recommendations for actions required at the state, school district, and school building level to effectively educate students with learning disabilities within the regular education classroom.

Factors Related to Effective Education of Students with Learning Disabilities

Providing appropriate education for individuals must be the principle concept on which all educational programs and services are developed. Some factors related to effective education of students with Learning Disabilities are as follows:-

- The education, social, and emotional needs of the individual, the types of disabilities, and the degree of severity should determine the design and delivery of educational programs and services.
- A continuum of education placements, including the regular education classroom, must be available to all students with learning disabilities and must be flexible enough to meet their changing needs.

- Specialized instructional strategies, materials –specialized instructional strategies, materials should be provided for them.
- Due to the chronic nature of learning disabilities and the changes that occur across the life span of the individual, coordinated educational and vocational planning are required. Therefore, provisions must be made to facilitate transitions that occur at all major junctures in the student's education.
- Social acceptance has a significant impact upon self-esteem of students with learning disabilities. Social acceptance of these students requires the sensitivity of the entire school community.
- To ensure effective mainstreaming of students with learning disabilities, the building principle must set the tone for a positive and accepting learning environment for all children.

Some Problems related to the education of students with Learning Disabilities

The following problems related to the education of students with learning disabilities in regular education classrooms. Some of these problems are encountered by the teacher in the classroom while others are related to administrative policies and procedures. The regular education teacher is required to deal with multiple factors including an increasing number of students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, developmental variations, disabilities, family and social problems, and large class size. The co-occurrence of these factors compounds the situation.

- Many regular education teachers are not prepared to provide the kinds of instruction that benefit a wide diversity of students in the classroom.
- The characteristics of individuals with learning disabilities and the ways in which they interact with curricular demands are not understood by all school personnel.
- Teachers often are required to adhere rigidly to a prescribed curriculum and materials, and, therefore, may not have the flexibility to address the unique needs of students with learning disabilities.
- Adequate support services, materials, and technology often are not available for either the teacher or the student with learning disabilities.
- Time and support for the ongoing planning and assessment that are needed to make adjustments in students' programs and services often are inadequate.
- Coordinated planning is lacking for students with learning disabilities
- Communication concerning students with learning disabilities among administrators, teachers, specialists, parents, and students is often insufficient to facilitate the development and implementation of effective programs.

Few Suggestions/Recommendations

There is a need to establish system-wide and school-based plans for educating students with learning disabilities in the regular education classrooms. The responsibility for developing plans must be shared by regular and special educators, parents, and student consumers of the services. Once developed, a plan must be supported at all levels of the educational system.

- Establish mechanisms for the development of collaborative relationships among professionals, parents, and students.
- Establish instructional conditions and environments that allow teachers to capitalize on the strengths and remediate or compensate for the weaknesses of students with learning disabilities.
- **Minimizing potentially distracting stimuli.** Students with learning disabilities are easily distracted, we should minimize the presence of other stimuli likely to compete for their attention. For example, we might pull down window shades if other classes are working or playing outside, and we might ask students to keep their desks clear of objects and materials they don't need for the tasks on which they're working (Buchoff, 1990).
- Ensure the availability of services needed to support the education of students with learning disabilities in the regular education classroom, including:
 - appropriate related services for students;
 - consultation services for teachers;
 - teaching assistants/aides trained to work with students who have learning disabilities.
- **Provide time and support for planning and communication** among and between professionals and parents.
- Involvement and participation of the regular education classroom teacher in the development and implementation of the Individualized Education Program for students with learning disabilities.
- **In-service training programs for all school personnel** to give them the knowledge and skills necessary to provide education for students with learning disabilities in the regular education classroom.
- **Provide in-service programs for those school personnel** who have not previously had such training in the following areas: like child and adolescent development, individual differences, social and emotional development, spoken and written language development and disorders, nature of learning disabilities, classroom management etc.
- **Adapting suitable** Instructional strategies for students with learning disabilities must be tailored to students' specific strengths and weaknesses. Nevertheless, several strategies should benefit many of these students
- **Use multiple modalities to present information** because some students with learning disabilities have trouble learning through a particular modality (e.g., through vision or hearing), we need to be flexible in the modalities we use to communicate information (e.g., Florence, Gentaz, Pascale, & Sprenger-Charolles, 2004; J. W. Wood, 1998). When teaching a student how to read and spell a particular word, for instance, we might write the word, say its letters aloud,

and have the student trace or write the word while repeating its letters. And in lectures to secondary students, we might incorporate videos, graphics, and other visual materials, and we might encourage students to audiotape the lectures (J. W. Wood & Rosbe, 1985).

- **Analyze students' errors for clues about processing difficulties can be practiced by the teachers in the classrooms like when** a student solve a subtraction problem this way: $85-29=64$ This student may be applying an inappropriate rule—*always subtract the smaller number from the larger one*. Or a student who reads the sentence *I drove the car* as “I drove the *cat*” may be having trouble using context clues to decipher meaning. The following exercise can give you a taste of what error analysis might involve.
- **Teach study skills and learning strategies.** Many students with learning disabilities benefit from being taught specific strategies for performing tasks and remembering classroom subject matter (Eilam, 2001; Graham & Harris, 1996; Wilder & Williams, 2001; J. W. Wood & Rosbe, 1985). For example, we might teach them concrete strategies for taking notes and organizing homework assignments. We might give them questions to try to answer as they read a story or textbook passage.
- **Provide study aids.** Students with learning disabilities often study more effectively when they have scaffolding to guide their efforts (Brigham & Scruggs, 1995; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1992). For instance, we might provide study guides, outlines, or graphics that help students identify and interconnect important concepts and ideas.

The implementation of these recommendations/suggestions is challenging. For schools to succeed in educating students with learning disabilities in the regular education classroom there must be a careful analysis of the factors & training of teachers which contribute to effective education and attention to the problems and recommendations should be taken seriously.

Conclusion:-

The lack of training given to teachers today is a serious problem. A large number of children suffer from learning disabilities. As a result, these children may pull away from their friends and peers, suffer from emotional problems, experience low self-confidence, and act out in various ways. This can cause classrooms to become unmanageable and can affect all students and teachers. Teachers trained to recognize learning disabilities and manage the learning experience for those students will be more successful in the overall educational experience for all of their students. Training teachers to recognize learning disabilities early on can help prevent problems and keep all kids interested in learning.

Education for all by the year 2010 is the goal of Indian Education. It will be a great restraining factor if the problem area of LD is left in unresolved. It is therefore, necessary that the teachers are well trained to support the LD students, diagnose the LD reason & its factors and thereafter take necessary steps towards introducing remedial process. Teachers equipped with LD measures are most likely to become more confident, which could reflect positively in their personality and mental health. Remedial process given to a child also gives a major satisfaction to the teacher and acts as encouragement for tackling more and more of such cases. A healthy respect for such teacher among the teaching-fraternity

develops greater respect from the LD students and their family acts as a bonus for the teacher. On the other hand we can't deny few realities related to learning disabilities like Some of the famous "children" with learning disabilities who grew up to be geniuses, like "Albert Einstein, the mathematical genius, who did not speak till three, Nelson Rockefeller, who had a serious problem with reading, Thomas Alva Edison, who was mentally addled; and former US president Woodrow Wilson, who did not learn his letters till he was nine years old".

Thus there is a need for inclusion of adequate inputs on identifying, analyzing and tackling Learning Disability in the Teachers Training Programme, for serving the Objective of Growth of a healthy Society and to give them a better quality of life in this 21st century, ie. the age of information technology and globalization. It is a mission and challenge for the professions to tap the hidden talents and potentialities buried in the children with learning Disabilities. It can develop confidence, sense of freedom, self respect and dignity to stand on their own legs as well as enabling them to contribute their service to the society and nation.

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