



Social

## **CHARACTERISTICS AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITY**



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### **ABSTRACT**

*In every class there are probably some children with learning difficulties. Perhaps the child can-not learn to read fluently or may not be able to learn multiplication tables by heart. He or she may be slow at mental calculation or finds learning new motor skills problematic – there are many types of difficulties. During their career, every teacher meets several children for whom learning is laborious and even children who think that they cannot learn. Teaching these children is a challenge for the instructor. In fact, it is a challenge for the entire school. This article explain what are the characteristics of students with learning disability, how to identified the learning disability, assessment of learning disability and to guide them in helping students to overcome the challenges of learning difficulties.*

### **Keywords:**

*Learning disability, learning difficulties, children, Teaching.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Learning disability is a hidden handicap that affects almost every aspect of life such as school relations, mobility and employment. The term “learning disability” is used to describe the specific group of children, adolescents and adults who have problems in learning. Learning disabled children are those children who suffer from serious learning disabilities.

## **2. MEANING**

Samuel Kirk (1963) coined the term ‘learning disabilities’ for the first time on April 6, 1963 at Chicago. Learning disability is a term used to denote a neurological handicap that interfere with a person’s ability to receive, process, store and retrieve information. Individuals with learning disability are generally average or above average intelligence. Learning disability can affect

one's ability to read, write, speak or compute math; and can impede socialization skill. Because it is often a hidden handicap learning disability is not easily recognized accepted or considered serious.

### **3. DEFINITION**

“Learning disability is used to describe a specific type of exceptional child, it is not generic term for all children who have learning problems in school”

-Myers and Hammill(1969)

“A learning disabled child behaves as he does due to forces beyond his control and with proper attention has the potential for normal development and successful school achievement”

-Gearheart(1973)

### **4. NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS**

The following common characteristics have been identified as widely prevalent in individuals with learning disability by Clements (1966):

- Hyperactivity
- Perceptual impairment
- Emotional lability
- General co-ordination deficits
- Disorders of memory and thinking
- Inattentive
- Fidgety
- Bed wetting
- Specific learning disabilities in the areas of reading, arithmetic, writing and spelling.

### **5. PRESCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS**

- May talk later than other children
- May have difficulty with rhyming
- Difficulty pronouncing words
- Poor auditory memory for rhymes
- Slow to add new vocabulary words
- Trouble learning numbers, days of the week, colors, shapes, and how to spell and write his or her name.

### **6. MIDDLE SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Dysgraphia (slow, non-automatic handwriting that is difficult to read).
- Limited vocabulary
- Terrible spelling
- Poor written expression
- Large discrepancy between verbal and written

- Difficulty reading printed music
- Poor grades in many classes

## **7. CAUSES OF LEARNING DISABILITIES**

The learning problems in a child arise because of associated factors. Some of the factors are within the child and the other are in the environment.

### **7.1. PHYSIOLOGICAL FACTORS**

Brain damage / injury, minimal brain dysfunction and damage to central nervous system are considered as primary or basic causes of learning disabilities.

### **7.2. GENETIC FACTORS**

There is some evidence to suggest that learning disability and hyperactivity tend to run in families. Hallgern (1950) found that 88% of families of dyslexic children showed similar learning problems.

### **7.3. DEVELOPMENTAL FACTORS**

Developmental disabilities begin anytime during the developmental period and usually last throughout a person's lifetime. Most developmental disabilities begin before a baby is born, but some can happen after birth because of injury, infection, or other factors. Most developmental disabilities are thought to be caused by a complex mix of factors. These factors include genetics; parental health and behaviors (such as smoking and drinking) during pregnancy; complications during birth; infections the mother might have during pregnancy or the baby might have very early in life.

### **7.4. EDUCATIONAL FACTORS**

Learning disability may be caused as a result of certain educational factors, both on the part of the teachers as well as students. Unskilled and untrained teachers, inadequate and inappropriate teaching based attitude and very high or low expectations of teachers from students develop learning disabilities in children. Poor instructional programming, inappropriate teaching methods, lack of motivational practices may be considered as the causes of childhood learning disorders.

### **7.5. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS**

Maslow (1954) has fully outlined the need of environmental support in learning. There are many environmental factors that cause learning disability:

- Nutrition, health and safety.
- Sensory stimulation.
- Language stimulation.
- Emotional and social development

## **8. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF DISABLED LEARNERS**

The process of assessing student's special educational needs usually begins when a teacher or parent recognizes a need. Students who are exceptional also are assessed as part of their daily educational programmes to determine what they already know and to keep track of their progress. For students who are exceptional, assessment is especially critical because it helps educators decide who should receive special education service the specific nature of instruction and the extent to which students are making educational progress.

Testing plays a major role in assessment. The process by which teachers and other school person collect information to make decisions about students. The focus of assessment is on the adequacy of student progress toward instructional goals or outcomes and on the extent to which students need special program and related services. In addition to testing, we also gather data by observing students behaviors by interviewing students or those who walk with them and by reviewing collections of their work samples.

### **8.1.SCREENING**

Screening is the process of collecting data decides whether more intensive assessment is necessary.

### **8.2.EARLY SCREENING**

Children are screened before they enter kindergarten or first grade to determine their readiness in language, cognitive and motor development and in social and emotional development and in social and emotional functioning. They may also be given vision and hearing screening tests. Formal statistical standards for normality and abnormality may be used or school district. Some students are denied school entrance if they score low on screening test and sometimes low performance results in marking the child for observation and monitoring.

### **8.3.LATER SCREENING**

Cut off scores for this type of screening are based on the average performance of students at various ages or grade levels. When students' scores indicate a special need, they may be referred for psycho educational assessment. These tests are used to determine the specific reasons for a students' performance on a screening measure. It is assumed, for example, that a student might have a hearing difficulty or cognitive deficit that will go unrecognized without screening.

### **8.4.CURRICULUM BASED ASSESSMENT**

It is a procedure for determining the instructional needs of a student based on the students' ongoing performance within existing course content. This kind of assessment includes direct observation and analysis of the learning environment analysis of the process students' used to approach tasks, examination of students. It is a efficient, valid and reliable basis for making decisions. It helps teachers decide what to teach.

### **8.5. INSTRUCTIONAL ANALYSIS**

It identifies the extent to which a student's poor performance is caused by poor instruction and indicates possible remedies for the problem. It consists of systematic analysis of the requirement of instruction including the kinds of demands put on the learner.

### **8.6. PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT**

It involves gathering data on pupils' performance directly by having them work singly or in groups to perform tasks. Data are gathered on the quality with which tasks are completed as well as on how students work together to perform tasks.

### **8.7. SENSORY ACUITY-TESTING VISION AND HEARING**

Tests of visual acuity are regularly in assessment of students who are having difficulties in school. An adaptation of the Snellen chart, the Snellen E is used to assess preschool students and those who are unable to read. The Timers vision Tester is also used to screen school-age children.

An audiometer is used to assess hearing acuity. A pure-tone audiometer generates pure tones at different frequencies and at varying degrees of loudness. Teachers also make informal assessments of sensory acuity by watching how they act when asked questions and by asking them about how they approach tasks.

## **9. WHAT A TEACHER CAN DO FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

- Learn about the child and the learning disability
- Use multiple learning styles and multiple forms of communicating instructions
- Avoid lengthy directions
- Use strategies to help students remember
- Break down tasks into smaller steps
- Provide additional time for schoolwork and tests
- Allow the student with reading problems to use textbooks on tape or similar devices
- Allow the student with listening difficulties to borrow notes or use a tape recorder
- Allow the student with writing difficulties to use a computer with spell check, grammar checks, or speech recognition

## **10. CONCLUSIONS**

Assessment reform in the special education in India has been discussed for last two decades. Intractable problems in the current assessment structure shape the delivery system and detract from the implementation of effective interventions for children and youth with learning and behavior problems. Changes are needed to focus attention on effective interventions and evaluation of outcomes. The current knowledge base and assessment of learning disability supports the development of effective educational programming.

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