



UNDERSTANDING THE LEARNING DISABILITIES AMONG CHILDREN: A SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: *The present article is a systematic examination of the available literature on Learning Disabilities with an emphasis on children. An attempt has been made in this article to comprehend the general notion of learning disabilities and its remedies from a literacy perspective. The concept of special education has been strengthened in recent years as part of a larger strategy to universalize education, but there is still a lack of public understanding. People still distinguish between the major sorts of unique children, such as osteoporosis, hearing impairment, and visual impairment, among others. However, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about mental retardation, learning disabilities, and insanity, among other conditions. A social work profession is a comprehensive one that seeks the welfare of children holistically. Social work has always emphasized solutions over problems, and in this regard, social work plays a key role in rehabilitating and alleviating the severity of learning difficulties among children.*

Key Words: Children, Disabilities, Education, Learning.

I. INTRODUCTION-LEARNING DISABILITY

The term learning disability is made up of two different terms learning and disability. The word learning refers to learning and disability refers to lack of ability or absence of ability. Learning disability in ordinary language refers to the lack or absence of learning ability or ability. In order to understand learning difficulties, we must assess the factors influencing a child's learning. Strong motivation, positive self-image, and appropriate study practices and strategies are prerequisites for effective learning (Jere-Folotiya et al., 2014).

The term learning disability was first used by Samuel Kirk in 1963 AD and it was defined in the following words. learning disability may be defined as retardation, distortion or stunted development in one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, writing, arithmetic, and may be the result of brain function

disorder and/or emotional or behavioral disturbances and not of mental retardation, sensory disability or cultural instructional factor. (Kirk, 1963)

A federal definition developed in the United States defines a specific learning disability as a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in the use and understanding of written and spoken language, which completely or partially impairs a person's thinking, speech, reading, writing, and arithmetic calculations. It includes sensorineural disabilities, brain damage, minimally abnormal brain function, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. It does not include children who suffer from learning problems as a result of visual, hearing or motor impairments, emotional disturbances, mental retardation, cultural or economic impairments (Federal Register, 1977).

In the year 1994, the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities of America (The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities) defined learning disability as a general term, which is supposedly not the proper functioning of the central nervous system in humans. Refers to a heterogeneous group of internal malformations caused by doing, including difficulties with speaking, hearing, reading, writing, reasoning, or using mathematical abilities. It can arise at any stage of life. Although maximal disability is caused by other types of disabilities (such as sensory impairment, mental retardation, severe emotional disturbances) or the effects of cultural variation, inappropriateness or inadequate instruction, these conditions do not directly affect learning disabilities (Abrams, 1987).

Crookshack developed a 40-word dictionary in 1972. In this sequence, the work done by Kurt Goldstein in 1927 AD, 1936 AD and 1939 AD, will find that the learning problems of brain damaged soldiers who were working in World War I were mentioned by him. Yes, that is the pillar of learning disability. According to him, it takes more effort to get response from such people. They have a figure background illusion, they are hyperactive and their actions are stimulating.

Strauss (1939) in his study had given some symptoms which mainly emphasized on the children with learning disabilities who had below normal IQ on the IQ test. He said that if the intelligence of a child is low as well as attains the minimum educational qualification, then the reason for his low educational qualification is the low intelligence. Samuel Kirk made these studies on the basis of that learning disabilities are not just educational deficiencies. It is a group of qualities such as minimal brain damage, problems with reading skills, hyperactivity, etc. He also said that the child who is suffering from all these qualities combined is a child with learning disabilities.

II. India's Situation about Learning Disabilities

The work in this regard has started in India for a very short time, today it is comparable to the work being done on learning disabilities in the West. In India, children with learning disabilities were identified by foreigners but gradually awareness is increasing among Indians as well. Presently in India government and non-government organizations are working in this sector. But, even today learning disability has not been recognized as a legal disability in India. It is not included in the seven types of disability mentioned in the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights, and Full Participation) Act, 1995. It should be known that this act is the largest law in the field of disability in India.

Since learning disability is not legally recognized and learning disability is not taken as the basis in census. Therefore, it is very difficult to provide accurate data regarding the children with learning disabilities present in the country, but according to an estimate, it can be said that the number of such children in the country is more than the number of other types of children with disabilities. This number can be as high as 1-42 per cent of the total school population available in the country. In the year 2012, an international conference on Inclusive Education and Vocational Options, learn 2012, held in Chennai, experts said that about 10% of children in India have learning disabilities (Times of India, 2012).

Table No 01: Nature and symptoms of Learning Disabilities

S. No	Nature	Symptoms
1	Learning disabilities are intrinsic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act without thinking • Not behaving properly
2	It is of permanent nature, that is, it remains present in a particular person for life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of judgmental ability • Self-carelessness
3	It is not a single deformity but a heterogeneous group of deformities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily distracted from the goal • Attraction to ordinary sounds and scenes
4	Many types of behavior and characteristics are found in people suffering from this problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor focus or distraction • Emotional instability • Poor memory
5	Since this problem or is related to malformation of the central nervous system, so it is a biological problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to remain calm • Still in one position • Obstruction of gamut
6	It can be accompanied by other types of disorders, such as learning disabilities and emotional disturbances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-progression • More active than usual • Observational defect.
7	It arises as a result of distortion in the psychological process involved in hearing, thinking, speech, reading, writing and arithmetic calculation, hence it is also a psychological problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow working speed, • Trying more than once to edit a simple task • Not participating in co-curricular activities • Being unable to participate in other activities without outside interference

III. Classification of Major Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities have been differentiated on a wide range of grounds. All these differentiations are suited to their purposes. Its major differentiation is given in the book Supporting Students with Learning Disability A Guide for Teachers, published by British Columbia (2011) and the UK Ministry of Education, which is as follows –

Table No: 02 Classification of Major Learning Disabilities

S. No	Type	Nature	Symptoms
1	Dyslexia	The difficulty in processing the numbers representing the letters of the alphabet or numbers representing the sounds of the language and sign codes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Difficulty in learning the alphabet ➤ Difficulty learning letter sounds ➤ Difficulty in concentration ➤ Loss of vowels while reading ➤ Reversing words or reversing the sequence of letters ➤ Suffer from spelling error ➤ Not recognizing sounds with similar pronunciation ➤ Lack of dictionary ➤ Lack of meaningful use of language and ➤ Impaired memory

2	Dysgraphia	Dysgraphia is a type of learning disability that affects writing ability. This is known as spelling difficulty, poor handwriting, and difficulty writing down your thoughts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Talking to yourself while writing. ➤ Misspelling and writing letters with irregular form and shape readable ➤ Weak grip on writing material or holding stationery too close to the paper unreadable handwriting ➤ Taking up and down lines and leaving irregular spaces between words and write incomplete letters or words
3	Dyscalculia	It is a broad term used for incapacity of mathematical skills, from inability to understand the meaning of numbers and numbers to inability to use formulas and principles in solving arithmetic problems and all types of mathematical incompetence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Difficulty recognizing names and faces of arithmetic operations ➤ Difficulty understanding signs ➤ Getting wrong results of arithmetic operations ➤ Use fingers to count ➤ Difficulty making financial plans or budgets ➤ Difficulty in using check book ➤ Lack of direction ➤ Fear of cash transfer or payment ➤ Experiencing difficulty in making time-tables due to improper understanding of time.
4	Dysphasia	It is a language and speech disorder that makes it difficult for children to express ideas during lectures. Brain damage is believed to be primarily responsible for this disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Struggling to find words (anomia) ➤ Speaking slowly or with great difficulty. ➤ Speaking in single words or short fragments. ➤ Omitting small words, such as articles and prepositions (telegraphic speech) ➤ Making grammatical errors. ➤ Mixing up word order. ➤ Substituting words or sounds. ➤ Using nonsensical words.
5	Dyspraxia	This mainly refers to a visual impairment. Children suffering from this find it difficult to write and draw pictures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Poor balance ➤ Poor posture ➤ Fatigue ➤ Clumsiness ➤ Differences in speech ➤ Perception problems ➤ Poor hand-eye coordination
6	Dysarthrographia	Spelling disorders (Dysorthographia) are typically defined by spelling problems. They are caused by a lack of knowledge or recollection of linguistic structures and the letters that make up words.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cramped grip, which may lead to a sore hand ➤ Difficulty spacing things out on paper or within margins (poor spatial planning) ➤ Frequent erasing ➤ Inconsistency in letter and word spacing ➤ Poor spelling, including unfinished words or missing words or letters ➤ Unusual wrist, body, or paper position while writing
7	Auditory processing disorder	Auditory processing disorder is a broad term that refers to a variety of conditions that impair the way the brain processes or interprets what it hears, even when the student has normal hearing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unable to Processing information if the speaker is speaking quickly ➤ Not Understanding what is said ➤ Fails to Recalling what they have heard or following a sequence of directions ➤ Not Recognizing and interpreting distinct sounds or attributing meaning to sounds in words ➤ Using phonemes incorrectly when speaking ➤ Applying phonics, encoding (spelling) and decoding (sounding out) words

8	A visual perception disorder	A visual perception disorder is characterized by problems with making sense of what is being seen, despite the fact that vision is intact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unable to Recalling and using visual information, e.g. remembering ➤ Unable to order or meaning of symbols, words, or pictures ➤ Fails in Differentiating similar colors, letters, or numbers ➤ Not Recognizing objects or parts of an object ➤ Unable to Noting and comparing characteristics of different items ➤ Distinguishing a particular shape from its background and/or understanding how objects are positioned in relation to one another ➤ Writing inside margins or on lines, or aligning numbers in math problems
9	Sensory Integration Disorder	Sensory Integration Disorder is a condition that affects the capacity of the body's sensory systems to integrate information (visual input, auditory input, olfactory input, taste, tactile input, vestibular input (balance/motion), and proprioceptive input (position)).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong preference for or aversion to movement: e.g. Avoids or craves movement, startles easily, appears clumsy, careless, or very physical ➤ Strong attraction to or dislike for getting messy ➤ Unable to Knowing where one's body is in space ➤ Not Knowing how much physical pressure to apply to something ➤ Unusually high or low activity level, or rapid transition between the two ➤ Calming oneself or unwinding
10	Organizational learning disorder	Organizational learning disorders can manifest as difficulty managing an excessive amount of inputs or information at one time, thinking logically and orderly, discerning direction, or arranging materials and time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unable to time allocation or organization ➤ Not able to organizing or locating the beginning, middle, and end ➤ Unable to Prioritizing, time management, and estimating time ➤ Adhering to schedules and meeting deadlines ➤ Resolving problems in stages ➤ Organizing desks or notebooks, locating materials ➤ Settling down and functioning effectively when settings or expectations change ➤ Remembering what they are required to do

IV. Learning Disabilities and Mental Retardation

The terms learning disability and mental retardation are synonymous in layman's language and confusingly they use both the terms in the same sense. There is a clear difference between learning disability and mental retardation. Learning disability can be defined as a defect in one or more of the psychological processes involved in the use of written or spoken language, while mental retardation can be defined as a stage of mental development in which the intellectual development of children is below average.

Table No 03: Differences Between Learning Disabilities and Mental Retardation

S. No	Learning Disabilities	Mental Retardation
1	Average or above average IQ score	IQ score of 70 or less
2	Normal functioning of the brain is not disrupted or is average	Below average brain function
3	Clear distinction between ability and achievement	Totally incapable of meeting the necessities of daily living or experiencing difficulty
4	It is not necessary that the person with learning disability is suffering from mental retardation	Mentally retarded persons necessarily suffer from learning disabilities
5	It can happen in anyone	It is found more in men than in women

V. Learning disabilities and slow learners and backward children

The term learning disability is confusingly used for slow learner children as well. Even in the present scenario, a very large population uses both these terms in the same sense. This is an inappropriate use of both these terms. Both the terms are completely different from each other.

Slow learner: A slow learner is a child of below average intelligence whose thinking ability is less than the criterion fixed for children of that age group. Such children go through all the stages of development that are meant for him but at a significantly slower rate than normal children in that age group whereas a learning-disabled child is of average or above intelligence who has some specific problems that make learning very difficult. Thus learning disability is a different concept from slow learning.

The Backward Child: The term backward child is a relative term which is interpreted in terms of education, economic status, mental status, social status etc. In the context of education, it refers to a specific class of children who, for whatever reason, perform less than other children of their age. They may suffer from mental retardation or may be backward due to learning disabilities or weak economic condition. All these will be called backward children.

VI. Social Work Approach Towards Children with Disabilities

- Social workers are uniquely qualified to assist individuals with learning difficulties in participating fully in communal life. Social workers are uniquely qualified to develop a thorough grasp of the difficulties affecting handicapped people on a daily basis through working across systems and at the individual, community, and policy levels.
- Social workers might refuse positions that compel them to operate as gatekeepers to resources and services, instead positioning themselves as agents of change in the best interests of handicapped people.
- Collaboration requires social workers to analyse their own circles of influence and their ability to support deficient children in their quest for full participation.
- From a Social Work perspective, professionals working with poor children and their families can provide early intervention to assist children in acquiring language skills, hence lowering their risk of developing learning challenges later in life.
- Professionals work with children on a daily basis can assist parents and other caregivers in identifying children's vulnerabilities through screening tools and promoting the establishment of home literacy environments that foster the development of foundational language skills associated with literacy.
- Social workers can help develop integrated services that support collaborative practice and resource sharing. These services are prepared to work with other organizations and connect with their communities in new ways. These programmes are devoted to partnering to eliminate the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from accessing resources and participation opportunities.

VII. Conclusion

In the present Paper, the discussion is made about learning disability and also discussed how learning disability is different from other difficulty. Early intervention, in general, involves highly methodical procedures

that monitor student reaction to instruction and document challenges in order to make timely, appropriate intervention decisions. Academic abilities are the result of a lifetime of language development that begins in childhood. Low birth weight and delayed early language development can predispose children to learning issues, altering the course of language development. It is common for students with literacy and numeracy issues to get early intervention in the form of tailored education based on their present functional level, along with accommodations to ensure that these difficulties do not interfere with progress in other areas.

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