

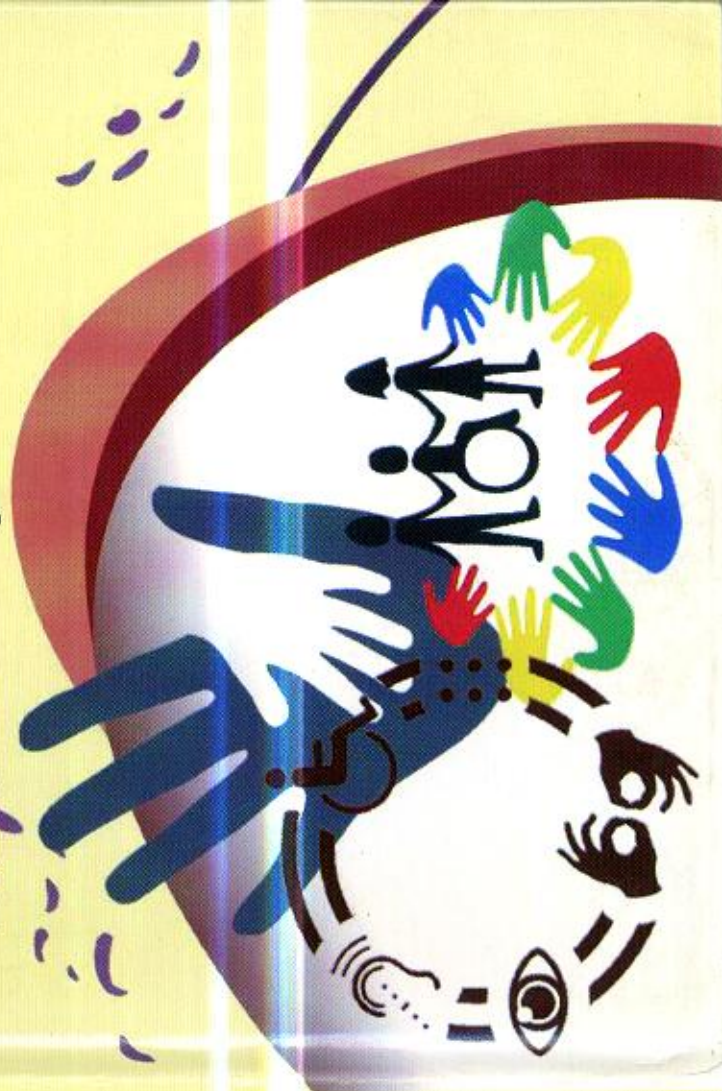
HUMANIZING THE EDUCATION OF DIFFERENTLY ABLED CHILDREN

Problems and Prospects

Editors

Dr. Seema Menon KP

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We would also like express our cordial gratitude to Kanishka Publishers for bringing out this publication. This book is presented with a hope of reflective accessibility by the readers.

Gratefully by Editors

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1

The Differentiated Instruction: An Effective Strategy for Learning Disabled

Dr. Sreekala K.L.

"I firmly believe that deep in their soul everyone has a champion that can overcome obstacles and do great things"

—Bruce Jenner, former Olympic Gold Medalist, Dyslexic.

Learners come to our classroom with unique individual differences. They differ in varied degrees of background knowledge, learning readiness, mental set, different life experiences and expectations, cultural orientations, languages, interests, potentialities, attitudes and different feelings about themselves as learners. Just as a doctor didn't prescribe the same medication to all their cases, teachers who differentiates instruction are mindful of the varied learning needs of their students and plan instruction accordingly. In simple terms differentiation/differentiated instruction is a method in which lesson planning and instructions are offered to students with a vast range of techniques to increase their study skills. Hence differentiated instructional strategies are necessary for the students to be able to learn.

possible cerebral dysfunction and/or emotional or behavioural disturbances and not from mental retardation, sensory deprivation, cultural or instructional factors.'

Teachers play an important role in any educational system. He/she is an artist who moulds and shapes up the physical, intellectual and moral strength in children. In any normal school one can find children with mild learning disabilities. Often, the children with severe disabilities take admission to special schools meant for them. But the children with mild learning disabilities get admitted at normal schools. These disabilities are unnoticed, unattended or ignored. Unless and until such needs of children are met either in regular classrooms or special classrooms within the school, we cannot achieve the targeted goal of universalization of elementary education and equalisation of educational opportunity to all. This situation definitely creates scholastic backwardness in these children. In order for the promotion equal educational opportunities, there is an urgent need to equip the existing and the 'would be' teachers with different ways and means of dealing children with learning disabilities. In fact, a teacher with good knowledge and attitude in the concept of learning disabilities, can characterise, identify and assess the children of their disabilities and they could be well-assisted and guided by the appropriate teaching-learning methods, guidance and counselling. For this, the teachers require specific competencies to perform diversified activities in various situations within and outside the school. The success of any teacher in educating the disabled is to a greater extent depends upon the infrastructure facilities and the attitude of non-disabled peers towards their disabled ones.

At primary and secondary levels, the teachers should take special initiative identify children with learning difficulties. A talented teacher of conscience with thorough knowledge and competencies can do justice to their children with learning difficulties than an ordinary teacher with general pedagogy backgrounds. It is important that the teachers require specific abilities to identify the different types of learning difficulties, causative factors and special attitude and skills to develop the instructional strategies, media and materials, adopting the developed remedial strategies, apart from giving guidance and counselling. The multidimensional roles played by the teacher warrants wonderful outcome in achieving the targeted goal.

3

Awareness on the Learning Disabilities among the Primary School Teachers

Dr. Aseel Abdul Wahid & Jabir K

Children having an average or above average level of intelligence have normally certain difficulties in acquiring the basic academic skills. Capabilities of good reading, writing, listening, speaking, understanding mathematics and information processing are the areas of difficulties for them. These difficulties might be the result of learning disabilities. Learning disorders are caused by certain factors in the brain that affects information processing and communication. Children with learning disabilities have problems with processing of sensory information because they see, hear and understand things differently. In fact, it is a neurological factor that prevents a pupil from the desired learning process in one or more academic areas, even though a pupil has an average or high intelligence. Under such situations the students' academic achievement would be much lower than the expected score even if he has the aptitude for learning.

Krik has defined, 'learning disability refers to retardation, disorder or delayed development in one or more of the process of speech, language, reading, spelling, writing or arithmetic resulting from a

The teachers are presuming learning disabilities of children as minor problems and quite often they are neglected to deal with them. Sometimes lack of knowledge about the consequences of learning problems causes for increasing learning disabled children. Since the learning disabilities adversely affect the growth and development of children, the investigator strongly feels that there is a need to study the subject of teachers' awareness towards learning disabled children.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of awareness on learning disabilities among the secondary school teachers.
2. To study the effect of secondary school teachers' awareness towards learning disabilities based on teaching experience and academic qualifications.
3. To suggest remedial measures to the teachers for handling children with learning disabilities.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. The general awareness of secondary school teachers about the learning disabilities is high.
2. There is significant difference in the overall awareness about the learning disabilities based on academic qualifications.
3. There is significant difference in the overall awareness about the learning disabilities based on teaching experience.

Method of Study

The sample for the present study constitutes 90 secondary school teachers from three districts viz Calicut, Malappuram and Kannur in Kerala the samples were selected under random sampling technique. The samples were given considerable representations to the factors like locale and type of the school management.

The researcher developed 'Teacher Awareness Scale' to assess the level of awareness of teachers towards children with learning disabilities. It has two parts. Part-1 includes general information of teachers and Part-2 having 120 statements in 11 dimensions of

teachers' awareness related to learning disabilities such as the concept of learning disabilities, causes, characteristic, language learning difficulties, difficulties in writing, speaking, reading, listening, comprehending and instructional strategies. There are 120 statements which consists of both positive and negative items. Scoring was given for a positive item, 'aware to great extend' is 3, 'aware to some extend' is 2 and 'not at all' is 1 and for negative items, the scoring is reversed. The appropriate statistical techniques such as percentages, mean, SD, t-test and f-test were employed.

Analysis of Data

The collected data for the present study have been subjected to statistical analysis and it is presented in tables. Demographic details of secondary school teacher's based on gender, teaching experience, academic qualifications, locality of school and type of management are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of respondents by demographic characteristics

Demographic Characteristics		Number of Respondents	Percentage
Teaching Experience	Up to 10 years	27	30
	11-20 Years	38	42.2
	Above 20 years	25	27.8
Educational Qualification	Graduation (UG/PG and B. Ed)	73	81.1
	Other professional degree in Education (M. Ed/MPhil/PhD etc)	17	18.9
Subject	Science	40	44.4
	Humanities	50	55.6
Location of School	Rural	38	52.1
	Urban	35	47.9
Type of Management	Government	37	45.7
	Private	40	54.8

Awareness of Teachers about Learning Disabilities

Awareness of teachers about learning disabilities was assessed by using Teacher awareness scale which is consolidated and presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Teacher's awareness towards children with learning disability

Level of awareness	Total Score	Number	Percentage
Aware to great extend	3026	25	28.01
Aware to some extend	3462	29	32.06
Not at all	4312	36	39.93

Table 2 shows the percentage of teachers who responded to different levels of awareness towards children with learning disabilities. It is clear that only 28.02 percent of teachers are aware to great extend, 32.06 percent of teachers are aware to some extend and 39.93 percent of teachers are unaware of learning disabilities of children. It is noted that almost 40 percent of teachers are not at all aware about the 'learning disabilities' in children. It means that majority of teachers do not know the actual causes, characteristics and different types of learning disabilities and how to handle these students in classrooms. It is observed that some of the teachers are getting awareness through movies, journals, other printed materials and mass media.

One sample t-test is applied to compare the level of awareness (obtained mean) of secondary school teachers with expected mean (mid value) and it is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Mean SD and t-value of teacher's awareness towards children with learning disabilities

Teachers N=90	Expected Mean	Obtained Mean	SD	t-value
Awareness Score	240	225.69	15.37	8.81*

*Significant at 0.01 level of significance

Table 3 reveals that the expected mean and obtained mean of the teacher's awareness towards children with learning disabilities are 240 and 225.69 respectively with standard deviation 15.37. The obtained mean score is less than the expected mean score, which indicate the awareness of teachers towards the learning disabilities is low. The calculated t-value (8.81) which is greater than table value (2.58) indicates the significant difference between the expected and obtained awareness scores of teachers at 0.01 level of significance.

Awareness of teachers regarding the various dimensions of learning disabilities were also calculated and it is compared with expected mean and it is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Mean, SD and t-value of teacher's awareness towards children with learning disabilities in various dimensions

Learning Disabilities Dimensions	Awareness		S. D	t-value
	Expected Mean	Obtained Mean		
Concept	28	29.34	3.22	3.96*
Causes	20	17.03	2.54	11.09*
Characteristics	24	16.8	3.17	21.57*
Difficulties in language	14	15.28	2.09	5.79*
Difficulties in listening	18	18.88	3.24	2.59*
Difficulties in comprehension	16	17.42	2.73	4.92*
Difficulties in writing	20	16.3	3.31	16.62*
Difficulties in reading	20	16.44	2.68	12.57*
Difficulties in speaking	20	23.81	1.81	19.96*
Difficulties in arithmetic	32	29.72	4.85	4.45*
Instructional strategies	28	24.67	3.68	8.59*
Total	300	225.69	15.37	8.81*

*Significant at 0.01 level

Table 4 shows that the teacher's awareness scores on expected means and obtained means for the concept, causes, characteristics, difficulties in language, difficulties in listening, difficulties in comprehension, difficulties in speaking, difficulties in reading, difficulties in writing, difficulties in arithmetic and instructional

strategies of learning disabled children are differ significantly at 0.01 level of significance.

On the whole, teacher's awareness of obtained mean scores are lower than the expected mean scores. By observing the table, it is clear that the obtained mean value for the dimensions like different causes of learning disabilities, their characteristics, difficulties in writing, difficulties in reading, difficulties in arithmetic and instructional strategies are lower than the expected mean score. It indicates that awareness of teachers towards children with learning disabilities of the dimensions causes, characteristics, difficulties in writing, difficulties in reading, difficulties in arithmetic and instructional strategies are low. Meanwhile the dimensions of awareness towards learning disabilities like concept of learning disabilities, difficulties in language, difficulties in listening, difficulties in comprehension and difficulties in speaking shown higher mean score than the expected mean score. That means, teachers are aware of learning disabilities in the dimensions of concept of learning disabilities, difficulties in language, difficulties in listening, difficulties in comprehension and difficulties in speaking. This may be because they are visible or overt in the individual.

Awareness of teachers towards learning disabilities is calculated and it is compared based on teaching experience and qualification. Test of significance of difference (t-test) is applied to compare the awareness of teachers towards learning disabilities based on their educational qualification and it is presented in table 5.

Table 5

Mean, SD and t-value of teachers awareness towards children with learning disabilities according to their educational qualification

Educational Qualification	Awareness mean	SD	t- value
Graduation (UG/PG and B. Ed) n= 73	223.45	14.89	3.14*
Other professional degree in Education (M. Ed/MPhil/PhD etc) n= 17	235.41	13.93	

*Significant at 0.01 level

Table 5 reveals that the mean score of graduation teachers (UG/PG with B.Ed) on awareness towards children with learning disabilities is 223.45 with standard deviation 14.89 and the mean score of teachers having other professional degrees (M.Ed, MPhil, PhD etc.) is 235.41 with standard deviation 13.93 towards awareness children with learning disabilities. It is found that there is a significant difference between graduation teachers and others in the awareness of learning disabilities, since the calculated t value (3.14) is greater than the table value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance.

Analysis of variance is applied to compare the awareness of teachers towards learning disabilities based on their teaching experience and it is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Mean SD and F-value of teachers' awareness towards children with learning disabilities according to their teaching experience

Teaching Experience	Awareness mean	SD	F- value
Upto 10 years (n=27)	230.44	15.81	6.434*
11-20 Years (n=38)	219.28	12.77	
Above 20 years (n=25)	230.36	15.54	

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 6 shows the teaching experience of the respondents and it reveals that the mean awareness score of the teachers having teaching experience upto 10 years is 230.44, above 20 years is 230.36 and 11-20 years is 219.28 with standard deviations 15.81, 15.54 and 12.77 respectively. It is observed that there is significant difference in the awareness of learning disabilities among secondary school teachers based on their teaching experience at 0.05 level of significance, since the F value (6.43) is greater than table value (3.11). It can be said that the teaching experience has significant effect on teachers awareness towards children with learning disabilities.

Post hoc test (Scheffe test) is applied to know the significant among the groups and is presented in Table 7

Table 7

Post hoc test result of comparison among teaching experience

Teaching experience & awareness mean	Upto 10 years	11-20 years	More than 20 years
Upto 10 years (230.44)	--	0.012*	0.999
11-20 years (219.29)	0.012*	--	0.015*
More than 20 years (230.36)	0.999	0.015*	--

*Significant at 0.05 level

There exist significant difference in the awareness of learning disability among the teaching experience groups (up to 10 years and 11-20 years) since the p value is less than 0.05, similarly significant difference exist between the teaching experience group 11-20 years and more than 20 years ($p < 0.05$). There is no significance difference in the awareness of learning disabilities between teaching experience groups up to 10 years and more than 20 years. Awareness of learning disability among the teachers having teaching experience upto 10 years and more than 20 years are significantly higher than 11-20 years of teaching experience.

As higher mean value indicate higher level of awareness. It is evident that the level of awareness in teachers above 20 years as well as upto 10 years is higher than that of 11-20 years of experience. This may be because of the topic 'learning disability' is included in the teacher education curriculum (B.Ed and D.Ed) few years back and many colleges/departments and other organizations are occasionally conducting workshops, seminars for teachers, teacher educators, academicians and student teachers now-a-days. Also the teachers above 20 years of teaching experience are aware of different types of learning disabilities by their own experience. But in the case of teachers having 11 to 20 years of teaching experience, they didn't get chance to understand the concept of learning disabilities at the time of B.Ed training programme, because it was not introduced in the curriculum during their course of study and hence these disabilities are unnoticed, unsaved and ignored.

Although the government has appointed part time resource teachers to assist special need children in schools. It is noticed that,

in many schools the resource teachers are ready to share the views on 'learning difficulties' and its remedial measures for the teachers, but the permanent teachers (especially 11-20 years teaching experience) won't co-operate with them. These teachers are considering learning disabilities as minor problem and neglecting them. The lack of knowledge about the consequences of learning problems increasing the number of learning disabled children.

Findings

1. The overall awareness of secondary school teachers about the learning disabilities is low. Hence the stated hypothesis 'the overall awareness of secondary school teachers about the learning disabilities is high' is rejected.
2. There is significant difference in the overall awareness about learning disabilities based on academic qualifications, since the calculated t value is greater than the table value (1.96) at 0.05 levels of significance. So the stated hypothesis 'there is significant difference in the overall awareness about learning disabilities based on academic qualifications' is accepted.
3. There is significant difference in the overall awareness about learning disabilities based on teaching experience. Since the calculated F value (6.434) is greater than the table value (3.11) at 0.05 levels of significance. Hence the stated hypothesis 'there is significant difference in the overall awareness about learning disabilities based on teaching experience' is accepted. Here awareness of learning disability of the teachers having teaching experience up to 10 years and more than 20 years are significantly higher than 11-20 years of experience.

Implications

1. School curriculum should be re-framed to meet the needs and interests of the learning disabilities of children.
2. There is a need to develop an essential three-stage teaching guide for children with learning disabilities consists of testing, teaching and preventive methods.

3. Compulsory training need be given to all teachers about the learning disability since an average classroom with normally have at least two or three children with learning disabilities.
4. Special educators need be appointed exclusively at normal schools to assist teachers in handling children with learning disability.
5. All teachers to acquire at least a diploma in 'learning disabilities' and the promotions should be based on these criterions.
6. By means of organising group work orientations, awareness camps, discussions, lectures, seminars and workshops, the awareness may be enhanced in teachers since learning disability is a complex phenomenon to understand and there are various types of disabilities.
7. Teachers require special training to identify and deal with children with learning disabilities at schools.
8. There must be a separate paper for B. Ed and D. Ed programmes about learning disabilities and it should contain identification and assessment of students with learning disabilities, their behavioural and emotional problems and their management, and principles of rehabilitations
9. Selection of appropriate teaching methods to meet the specific needs of the students is essential to overcome the learning disabilities.
10. Teachers dealing with the learning disabled children should give due importance to drill, practice and review which facilitate the comprehension and retention.
11. Arranging community service programmes, awareness can be created to reduce confusion in the minds of the general public and professionals. Mechanisms can be drawn for dissemination of information about learning disabilities to administrators and teachers by circulating manuals and pamphlets among them.

Conclusion

The study clearly depicts that the level of awareness about learning disabilities among secondary school teachers is low. Since secondary level teachers play a vital role in educating children, it is essential that the Education Degree or Teacher training programmes should equip the teachers with specific abilities to identify the different types of learning disabilities, causative factors, instructional strategies and adoption of the developed remedial measures along with guidance and counseling.