



## Role of social issues and HRD in specific learning disability (SLD) dyslexia

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### Abstract

Specific learning disabilities (SLDs) are interpreted as group of conditions in which there is a deficit in processing language, spoken or written, that may obvious itself as a difficulty/problem to comprehend, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations and includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and aphasia. Educating students with dyslexia is a active field of inquiry and practice; each year proposes new findings about this condition. Parents and education system are the greatest advocates, empowering the children having specific learning disability can bring about major changes in processes and policies that would be beneficial for all children with SLD. In this article the author has tried to focus on different issues and Government Policies regarding the children with SLD.

**Keywords:** Specific learning disability (SLD), social issues, legislative previsions

### Introduction

According to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) meet in November, 2001, "We know that high quality classroom instruction is a way to meet many of the educational needs of individuals with learning difficulties".

(Cook L, *et al.*, 2001).

Language is a vehicle of communication, expression of thoughts, ideas, needs etc. It is a medium of learning, and a tool for social interaction. Language can be developed through a period of time with allowance for errors during developments. Children, especially from less privileged socio economic status do not have much exposure to language. Their language develops mainly through school experience.

The school insists on perfectly correct answering skills in rote fashion, right from the entry stage. The child does not develop any independent expressive skills, language which should be a joy is nothing short of drudgery and without language, and all other learning is restricted. Specific Learning Disability being language based, this has disastrous effects. Hence children having even less refinement deficiencies have considerable difficulty in learning and attaining desirable goals. If these children are allowed free expression with less stress on errors, there is a enormous motivation to express and write. In addition their grades show appreciable improvement.

### Social issues

Schools play a crucial and formative role in the spheres of

cognitive, language, emotional, social and moral development of a child (Kapur, 1995) (Johnson B, 2002) Academic skills such as reading, writing and mathematics form the foundation upon which a student's performance at school is assessed. A learning problem may therefore to give rise to feelings of anxiety, inadequacy and shame, leading to behavioral disturbances in children of school age. Any negative feedback from school is likely to have a negative effect on the emotional, social and family functioning of a child. A review article by Johnson (2002), has thrown light into the significant association between learning disabilities and behavior problems. Many other studies including a retrospective study at Child and Adolescent unit at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore found that 79% of children with learning disabilities had co-morbid psychological disorders, in which 32% had internalizing disorders such as anxiety, depression, 28% had externalizing disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) and Conduct Disorder (CD) and 19% had other disorders.

### Major Difficulties

#### Labeling

Many of these children are branded as "stupid", "lazy" or/and "slow learners". The Exposing symptom being behavioral, the children get labeled as "trouble makers", a label that sticks because the performance and the behavior continues without

appropriate help and interventions. The child may come to believe the label, and may act up to his/her reputation.

### **Failure and non-achievement**

Frequent failures lead to harm the self-respect of the individual, low motivation, further failure and Rejection. In today's world where academic achievements are the gateway to success in life, the children are under tremendous pressure to excel in the examination, their parents under great stress to see their child make their places in this competitive world, and the teachers are equally pressurized to produce results in the examinations. The academic (examination) achievement's load affects the families and the teachers, takes away the joy of not just learning and teaching but the joy of teacher/child interaction as well.

### **Emotional development**

Both failure and labeling will not only affect the emotional development of these children; they also lack the ability to express their feelings due to the difficulties in expressive language which compounds the problem.

### **Parental difficulties**

Since Learning Disability is not an obvious disability, it generally takes time for the parents of a child with Learning Disability to accept that the child has different needs and requires certain accommodations. "My child is just okay, why can't he/she learn/grasp/grow and achieve like other children. Why am I being constantly called by the school to be told how my child is difficult and will not study, is badly behaved and inattentive?" Parents find it hard to understand.

### **Vocational Opportunities:**

Despite of their learning problems in academic areas, many children with Learning Disability are creative and very good with their skills like drawing, mechanical skills, etc. unfortunately, in our present school system, there is no space for such skills.

### **Need for Trained Personnel:**

If we are to genuinely include children with Learning Disability in our education system, there is an urgent need for capacity building of trained personnel in the field of Learning Disability. It is necessary to train psychologists, special and regular school teachers in comprehending and assisting these children.

### **The Indian Context:**

Learning Disability being a developmental disorder, it must be viewed from both health and educational perspectives. At Government level, it is looked at as both a health (disability) and education (education for all) issue. In India, we are going through a crucial phase in the historical development of Learning Disability. As awareness about Learning Disability is just in its infancy, there is no stigmatization attached. This is a great opportunity to solve the problem. For example, sending children to Hospitals and Psychiatric Institutions is more likely to lead to stigmatization whereas assessment in schools after following thorough pre-referral processes is more children friendly.

### **The Legislative Action**

The last decade of the 20th Century dropped in the rectification of three legislations for the rehabilitation and welfare of people with disabilities. All the three legislations, namely, The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995; The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992; and The National Trust Act, 1999 are comprehensive in spirit, and together deal with all aspects pertaining to rehabilitation, from prevention, training, employment, long-term settlement, human resource development and research, and documentation (SSA, 2003). However, Specific LD is not included in any of these acts. The difficulty in diagnosis of Specific LD has made the formulation of a National Policy for these children no easy task. As a result, selected states have tried to provide for children with LD by bringing in their own legislations.

### **Government of Maharashtra**

Maharashtra Government has provided concessions for children with Learning Disabilities from Standards I to XII viz; The Maharashtra board of secondary and higher secondary education provides (i) Extra time- 30 minutes for SSC and 1 hour for HSC students; (ii) Exemption from second and third language (Hindi/Marathi) for HSC and SSC students respectively. Students may take a vocational subject instead; (iii) Exemption from paper II in Mathematics (Algebra and Geometry) for SSC students; (iv) students may take a vocational subject of 75 marks in lieu of Mathematics paper II; and (v) a writer may be provided as per the rules of the board. For students of class I–IX, the school may apply to the Deputy Director of Education through the Divisional Inspector for similar provisions. Maharashtra remains the only state where children having SLD are trained to take examinations, incorporating the provisions, from primary classes onwards. Similar provisions exist for students having LD attending schools affiliated to the ICSC and CBSE education board.

In Maharashtra, The state board recognizes certification only from three hospitals – Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College, Sion, Mumbai (Sion Hospital) and Nair Hospital; KEM Hospital, Mumbai also certifies children having SLD or from The Government Surgeon General in Mumbai.

Other states too that are aware of the problem, are struggling to take decisions that will provide for children with LD. The Delhi High Court, for example, recognizing dyslexia as a form of disability, has ordered Delhi University to grant admission to dyslexic students under a three percent quota for people with disabilities (The Tribune, June 22, 2004).

In Karnataka, Candidates with SLD need to be certified as dyslexic from either the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore, St John's Hospital, Bangalore; All-India Institute of Speech and Hearing, Mysore; any psychiatrist working in a government hospital; any clinical psychologist with an M.Phil. Qualification and attested by a government doctor (not below the rank of a district surgeon).

In the state of Kerala, until sometime back SLD certificate with a LD assessment and IQ assessment report from a psychiatrist above rank of Asst. surgeon in any Govt. Hospital was valid. The report needed to specify the deficit i.e. students with dysgraphia/dyscalculia/dyslexia and be countersigned by the District Education Officer (DEO). The request for assessment and later submission for provisions is to be made by the school Principal. Due to some discrepancies, this system is being

reviewed.

In Delhi, till some time ago, pediatricians, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, special educators were all certifying SLD. Special educators and clinical psychiatrists have stopped certifying- they only assess and provide their assessment report to the clients referred to them. The children are referred to the Institute of Human Behavioral and Allied Sciences (IHBAS).

### **The national curriculum framework**

The National Curriculum Framework, 2005 also recommends an inclusive curriculum that ensures full participation of all children including first generation learners, learning disabled, slow learners and children from SC and ST (NCERT, 2005) [9].

### **National Policy on Education 2020**

“Barrier-Free access to education for all **children with disability**” is the latest provision made in the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 [3], approved by the union cabinet of India, in July this year. This provision is done by the Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thawarchand Gehlot. Education Policy in India was first formed in 1986 and was last modified in the year 1992.

### **Conclusion**

Taking a developmental approach, there is an ongoing need to create awareness about SLD (specially about Dyslexia) in schools and if children are to be certified, in other words, school should not wait for formal identification of a specific learning disability, but instead start providing targeted interventions early on and this must be done within the school setting by educational psychologists.

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