

AWARENESS AMONG TEACHERS OF LEARNING DISABILITIES IN STUDENTS AT DIFFERENT BOARD LEVELS

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The movement towards more inclusive settings for children with disabilities is now gaining strength and it has become increasingly important to understand how general education teachers perceive the academic outcomes of these children. The largest groups of children with disabilities in special education programs are those with learning disabilities.

Learning disability is a complex phenomenon to understand. There are many connotations of learning disabilities thus even today it creates confusion in the mind of the general public and the professionals.

Learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written language. These may be manifested in disorders of listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling or arithmetic. They include conditions which have been referred to as perceptual handicap, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, developmental aphasia, etc... they do not include learning problems which are due to primarily to visual, hearing, motor handicaps or mental retardation, emotional disturbances or to environmental disadvantage.

For school purposes, the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** define learning disability in these ways:

(i) General. The term means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

(ii) Disorders not included. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Generally speaking, people with learning disabilities are of average or above average intelligence. There often appears to be gap between the individual's potential and actual achievement. This is why learning disabilities are referred to as "hidden disabilities".

Mainly there are three distinct types of learning disabilities which can be identified. They are:

- **Dyslexia:** is a disorder manifested by difficulty in learning to read despite

conventional instructional, adequate intelligence and socio-cultural opportunity it is dependant upon fundamental cognitive disabilities which are frequently of constitutional origin.

- **Dysgraphia:** acquired loss of previous ability to write resulting from brain injury or brain disease. It is usually difficulty in learning to write which is out of harmony with the other intellectual accomplishments and manual skills of the individual.
- **Dyscalculia:** is a structural disorder of mathematics which has its origins at a genetic or constitutional disorder...without simultaneous disorder of general mental functions.

The number of children identified as learning disabled [pertaining to the above mentioned type] has increased greatly in recent years. Thus to find out the awareness about learning disabilities among teachers becomes imperative. As this field of learning disabilities is gaining a lot of importance the researcher conducted a study to know the level of awareness about learning disabilities among teachers of different boards in Mumbai city.

The research study was based on finding the awareness level about the following:

- Concept of learning disabilities
- Dyslexia
- Dysgraphia
- Dyscalculia

The study was conducted in the following boards:

SSC

CBSE

ICSE

AIMS OF THE STUDY

1. To study the awareness among teachers of learning disabilities in students of different board levels.
2. To compare the awareness among teachers of learning disabilities in students of different board levels.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the awareness among teachers of learning disabilities in students of different board levels.
2. To compare the awareness among teachers of learning disabilities in students of different board levels.
3. To study the awareness among teachers of learning disabilities in students at primary level and secondary level of different board levels
4. To compare the awareness among teachers of learning disabilities in students at primary level and secondary level of different board levels.
5. To study the awareness among teachers of the
 - a. concept of learning disabilities
 - b. dyslexia
 - c. dysgraphia
 - d. dyscalculia in students at primary level and secondary level of different board levels.
6. To compare the awareness among teachers of the
 - a. concept of learning disabilities
 - b. dyslexia
 - c. dysgraphia
 - d. dyscalculia in students at primary level and secondary level of different board levels

FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH:

The major findings of the present investigation are as follows:

1. The study has revealed that there is a significant difference in the awareness level of learning disabilities in student's among teachers of different boards. Amongst the boards ICSE board teachers are more aware about learning disabilities as compared to the CBSE and SSC board. This was seen by a significant difference in their mean scores.

During data collection the researcher observed that more ICSE schools had special educators and also the school had organized workshops for their teachers. This could be one of the prime reasons for more awareness among teachers of ICSE board. Also the researcher noticed that the teachers of the ICSE board were able to identify a few cases of learning disabled students in their school. Due to the presence of the special educator in most of the ICSE schools the teachers have been having sessions with them, thus making them more aware. Also these special educators were found to be present all the working days of the school.

It is also seen that the SSC board is more aware as compared to the CBSE board of education. In the SSC schools it was observed that few teachers were aware about certain aspects of learning disabilities only. Few SSC schools were totally unaware about the term of learning disabilities. As there was a varying response the overall awareness was found less in the SSC boards. Very few SSC schools have a special educator. Maybe this could also be a

reason for their lack of awareness. Also on asking the teachers it was noticed that most of these schools have not had any special workshops for awareness about learning disabilities.

The least aware of all the boards is CBSE board. The researcher observed that none of the CBSE schools from which the sample was collected have had a workshop on learning disabilities. For many teachers the whole concept of learning disabilities was new. Many teachers of this board were confused with the types of learning disabilities and also with the identification. It was also found that this particular board had no special educator as such in their school. This could also be the prime reason why the teachers of this board were so reluctant to answer the questionnaire initially. Thus it shows why the awareness level in the CBSE board is less as compared to the SSC board and ICSE board of education.

There is a significant difference in the awareness about learning disabilities among teachers of different boards i.e. SSC, CBSE and ICSE since F value is found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance.

2. It is seen that the awareness level of learning disabilities among primary teachers differs in different boards of education. Amongst the boards ICSE board teachers are more aware about learning disabilities as compared to the CBSE and SSC board. This is seen by a significant difference in their mean scores.

It is also seen that there is a minor difference among the primary teacher's of SSC board and CBSE boards. There is

no significant difference in the mean scores of these two boards.

There is a significant difference in the awareness about learning disabilities among primary teachers of different boards i.e. SSC, CBSE and ICSE since F value is found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance.

3. It is seen that the awareness level of learning disabilities among secondary teachers differs in different boards of education. Amongst the boards ICSE board teachers are more aware about learning disabilities as compared to the CBSE and SSC board. This is seen by a significant difference in their mean scores.

It is also seen that there is a minor difference among the secondary teacher's of SSC board and CBSE boards. The SSC board is more aware than the CBSE board.

There is a significant difference in the awareness about learning disabilities among secondary teachers of different boards i.e. SSC, CBSE and ICSE since F value is found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance.

4. It is seen that the awareness level of the concept of learning disabilities among primary and secondary teachers differs in different boards of education. Amongst the boards ICSE board teachers are more aware about the concept of learning disabilities as compared to the CBSE and SSC board. This is seen by a significant difference in their mean scores.

The ICSE board seems to be more aware about the basic concept of learning

disabilities. This is because the teachers are exposed to workshops of learning disabilities. The teachers here are more alert as they have the basic knowledge which helps them in identifying children in regular classrooms incase they see any deviation in the academic performance of the child in class.

It is also seen that there is no difference among the primary teacher's of SSC board and CBSE boards. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of these two boards. The reason could be due to the absence of a special educator and also non exposure to workshops about learning disabilities.

It is also seen that there is a difference of scores among the secondary teacher's of SSC board and CBSE boards. The SSC board is more aware than the CBSE board. This shows that the SSC and CBSE boards have less knowledge about the concept of learning disabilities as compared to the ICSE board. This could be because of lack of exposure to these boards.

5. There is a minor difference in the scores of SSC and CBSE. It is seen that there is a minor difference in the values of mean, median and mode. The researcher observed that the teachers showed the same level of awareness concerning dyslexia. There are a number of articles which have been published in reputed newspapers like the Times of India, Midday, etc... especially concerning the dyslexic students. This could be one of the reasons for the similar awareness levels amongst the teachers of SSC and CBSE boards.

The ICSE board seems to be more aware about dyslexia as compared to the SSC

and CBSE board. One of the reasons is same as mentioned above. Secondly it could be because the school has identified students in the primary section with dyslexia.

It is also seen that there is a minor difference of scores among the secondary teacher's of SSC board and CBSE boards. The researcher observed that the teachers showed the same level of awareness concerning dyslexia.

6. There is a slight difference in the scores of SSC and CBSE. It is seen that there is a slight difference in the values of mean, median and mode. The researcher observed that the teachers showed nearly the same level of awareness concerning dysgraphia. But the teachers lacked knowledge about dysgraphia as compared to the ICSE board. This is evident by the difference in their mean scores.

The ICSE board seems to be more aware about dysgraphia. The reason for more awareness here could be because the teachers are aware about the different types of learning disabilities i.e. they understand that dysgraphia is not same as dyslexia. They are able to differentiate between a dyslexic child and a dysgraphic child. Whereas in the other two boards the teachers are not so aware about the different types of disabilities. Therefore there is a difference in the awareness level.

There is no significant difference in the scores of SSC and CBSE. It is seen that there is no significant difference in the values of mean, median and mode. The researcher observed that the teachers showed the same level of awareness concerning dysgraphia. But the teachers

lacked knowledge about dysgraphia as compared to the ICSE board. This is evident by the difference in their mean scores.

7. It is seen that the awareness level among primary and secondary teachers about dyscalculia does not differ in SSC and CBSE boards of education.

There is a slight difference in the scores of SSC and CBSE. It is seen that there is a very minor difference in the values of mean, median and mode. The researcher observed that the teachers showed the same level of awareness concerning dyscalculia. But the teachers lacked knowledge about dyscalculia as compared to the ICSE board. This is evident by the significant difference in their mean scores.

The ICSE board seems to be more aware about dyscalculia. The reason for more awareness here could be because the teachers are aware about the different types of learning disabilities i.e. they understand the three types of learning disabilities which are dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia. They are able to differentiate between a dyslexic child and a dyscalculic child. Whereas in the other two boards the teachers are not so aware about the different types of disabilities. Therefore there is a difference in the awareness level.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

At the end of the research the most important thing which one must have and keep is a positive attitude. Well some may ask:

Will a positive attitude solve all your problems? My answer would be No, but

it can open your eyes to the valuable opportunities within even the most difficult situations.

Is a positive attitude a way to escape from reality? My answer would again be No.

In fact a positive attitude is a very powerful and effective way to successfully deal with reality.

Thus the time has come now to make a new break through in our education system and this is only possible through the collaborative efforts of the Government, schools, teachers and parents. As the famous saying goes:

"Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars."

~ Les Brown

This is just the beginning.

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