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# Learning Disability in Special Children in Special Schools

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**ABSTRACT:** Learning disability (LD) is a general term that describes specific kinds of learning problems. A learning disability can cause a person to have trouble learning and using certain skills. The skills most often affected are reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, and doing math. Learning disabilities vary from person to person. One person with LD may not have the same kind of learning problems as another person with LD. One person may have trouble with reading and writing. Another person with LD may have problems understanding math. Still another person may have trouble in each of these areas, as well as with understanding what people are saying (National Dissemination Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities [NICHCY], 2004). LD is a group of disorders that affects people's ability to either interpret what they see and hear or to link information from different parts of the brain. These limitations can show up in many ways: as specific difficulties with spoken and written language, coordination, self-control, or attention. Such difficulties extend to schoolwork and can impede learning to read, write, or do math.

A learning disability is a neurological disorder that affects the brain's ability to receive, process, store, and respond to information. The term learning disability is used to describe the seemingly unexplained difficulty a person of at least average intelligence has in acquiring basic academic skills. These skills are essential for success at school and work, and for coping with life in general. "LD" does not stand for a single disorder. It is a term that refers to a group of disorders.

Interestingly, there is no clear and widely accepted definition of learning disabilities. Because of the multidisciplinary nature of the field, there is ongoing debate on the issue of definition, and currently at least twelve definitions appear in the professional literature. There are several technical definitions offered by various health and education sources. Overall, most experts agree on the following descriptions:

- Individuals with LD have difficulties with academic achievement and progress.
- Discrepancies exist between a person's potential for learning and what that person actually learns.
- Individuals with LD show an uneven pattern of development (language development, physical development, academic development, and/or perceptual development).
- Learning problems are not due to environmental disadvantage.
- Learning problems are not due to mental retardation or emotional disturbance.
- Learning disabilities can affect one's ability to read, write, speak, spell, compute math, and reason. They also can affect a person's attention, memory, coordination, social skills, and emotional maturity.
- Individuals with LD have normal intelligence, or are sometimes even intellectually gifted.
- Individuals with LD have differing capabilities, with difficulties in certain academic areas but not in others.
- Learning disabilities have an effect on either input (the brain's ability to process incoming information) or output (the person's ability to use information in practical skills, such as reading, math, spelling, etc.).

Research suggests that learning disabilities are caused by differences in how a person's brain works and how it processes information. Children with LD are not stupid or lazy. In fact, they usually have average or above average intelligence, but their brains process information differently. A learning disability affects the way kids of average to above average intelligence receive, process, or express information. Even if the person learns to compensate and, in effect, overcomes the disorder, the difference in brain processing lasts throughout life.



## I. INTRODUCTION

Special education is directed towards students with special needs or with disabilities such as: communication challenges, learning challenges, physical disabilities, emotional or mental disorders, behavioral disorders or intellectual giftedness. Special education differs from the regular type of education through the format and the delivery of the knowledge that are both designed in such a way that suits the particular needs of the student that is involved in the process. [1]

Students of special education learn about specific instructional strategies and about alternative teaching methods that suit the category of students that the education addresses. They will develop skills like: creativity – as they will have to apply creative ideas in learning activities, good interpersonal skills, the ability to identify emotions and physical and psychological needs in order to adapt or change teaching strategy. Special education students are desirable to have native qualities, such as: patience, intuition, understanding, flexibility and adaptability. It is critical to treat the emotional aspects of learning disabilities and special needs. The interaction of emotional concerns and learning disabilities and their impact on the child's functioning is one to take note of as it affects many areas of the child's life. In order to determine the best intervention strategy, the different types of interaction must be recognized. However, it is important to keep in mind that there is no clear cut relationship between emotional functioning and learning disabilities. [2]

There are five basic ways to conceptualize this relationship: learning disabilities can lead to emotional distress, learning disabilities can aggravate already existing emotional concerns, emotional issues can conceal a learning disability, emotional issues can aggravate already existing learning disabilities, and emotional health may actually improve the academic performance of a child with learning disabilities. Teachers and other professionals can help children deal with emotional distress, peer relationships, and defiant behaviors by intervening on a situational basis. When dealing with emotional distress, a teacher can employ teaching strategies such as educational accommodations, interventions, positive feedback, and self-confidence boosting activities.

Encouraging peer interactions can be done by involving the student in group activities which can help build social skills. Defiant behaviors can be addressed through a behavioral analysis, alterations in routines, or psychoeducational testing.[3]

### Objectives and learning outputs

- raise teachers' awareness of attitudes towards teaching learners with special educational needs
- help teachers identify and overcome their own biases and prejudices
- inform teachers about a range of special educational needs and how they affect teaching and learning
- give teachers a set of teaching strategies which promote inclusive learning and benefit all pupils
- guide teachers in developing an inclusive approach in their classroom or school
- support teachers in becoming a more confident teacher when dealing with learners with special educational needs.[4]

## II. OBSERVATIONS

### 5 Most Common Learning Disabilities

#### 1. Dyslexia

Dyslexia is perhaps the best known learning disability. It is a learning disorder that impedes the student's ability to read and comprehend a text. There are a variety of ways in which this disability can be manifested. Some people struggle with phonemic awareness, which means they fail to recognize the way words break down according to sound. Similar problems can occur with phonological processing, wherein students cannot distinguish between similar word sounds. Other issues relate generally to fluency, spelling, comprehension and more. Students may experience one reading issue or multiple issues when struggling with dyslexia.[5]

#### 2. ADHD

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder has affected more than 6.4 million children at some point. While there is some debate as to whether or not ADHD is a learning disability in the most technical sense, there is no doubt that it is a



common learning impediment. Students who have ADHD have difficulty paying attention and staying on task. These students can be easily distracted and often have difficulty in traditional school settings. Experts link ADHD with the structure of the brain, and there is evidence that ADHD may have a genetic component as well. Unlike typical learning disabilities, which need instructional interventions, ADHD can be successfully treated with medications and behavioral therapies.[6]

### 3. Dyscalculia

Math is another major area of concern when it comes to learning disabilities. While difficulty with reading can affect a student's ability in math, some students also suffer from dyscalculia, which is a disorder that specifically affects one's math capabilities. Dyscalculia can range from an inability to order numbers correctly and extend to limited strategies for problem solving. Students with math disorders may have trouble performing basic math calculations, or they may have difficulty with concepts like time, measurement or estimation.[7]

### 4. Dysgraphia

While reading disabilities receive the most attention, writing disabilities can be equally difficult to overcome. These disabilities are known as dysgraphia. Dysgraphia can be related to the physical act of writing. These students often cannot hold a pencil correctly, and their posture may be tense while trying to write. This leads them to tire easily, causing discouragement that further inhibits progress. Dysgraphia can also refer to difficulty with written expression. With this type of disability, students have trouble organizing their thoughts coherently. Their writing may be redundant or have obvious omissions that affect the quality and readability of the text. Dysgraphia may also cause students to struggle with basic sentence structure and grammatical awareness.[8]

### 5. Processing Deficits

Learning disabilities are also connected to processing deficits. When students have a processing deficit, they have trouble making sense of sensory data. This makes it hard for students to perform in a traditional classroom without instructional supports. These deficits are most often auditory or visual, and they can make it hard for students to distinguish and remember important information that is needed to succeed.[9]

These five learning disabilities can manifest with varying degrees of severity, and some students may struggle with more than one. By understanding these disabilities, it is possible to find workable solutions so that every student can succeed in the classroom.

## III. DISCUSSION

In India a learner with SEN is defined variously in different documents. For example, a child with SEN in a District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) document is defined as a child with disability, namely, visual, hearing, locomotor, and intellectual (DPEP, 2001). However, the country report in the NCERT/UNESCO regional workshop report titled Assessment of needs for Inclusive Education: Report of the First Regional Workshop for SAARC Countries (2000) states that SEN goes beyond physical disability. It also refers to, ... the large proportion of children—in the school age—belonging to the groups of child labour are, street children, victims of natural catastrophes and social conflicts, and those in extreme social and economic deprivation. These children constitute the bulk of dropouts from the school system (pg.58). The SSA Framework for Implementation covers children with Special Needs (SN) under the section on Special Focus Groups. While separating children with disabilities from other groups like girls, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and urban deprived children, it makes provisions for these children under the section on SEN. [10]

The Department of Education of Groups with SN in the NCERT itself, initiates programmes for meeting the learning needs of the disabled and the socially disadvantaged and marginalised, such as the SCs, STs, and minorities. According to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97) (UNESCO, 1997), the term Special Needs Education (SNE) means educational intervention and support designed to address SEN. The term "SNE" has come into use as a replacement for the term "Special Education". The earlier term was mainly understood to refer to the education of children with disabilities that takes place in special schools or institutions distinct from, and outside of, the institutions of the regular school and university system. In many countries today a large proportion of disabled children are in fact educated in institutions under the regular system. Moreover, the concept of children with SEN extends beyond those who may be included in handicapped categories to cover those who are failing in school, for a wide variety of reasons that are known to be likely impediments to a child's optimal progress. Whether or not this more broadly defined group of children is in need of additional support, depends on the extent to which schools need to adapt



their curriculum, teaching, and organisation and/or to provide additional human or material resources so as to stimulate efficient and effective learning for these pupils. However, only in a few instances and documents, across the various States of the country, has SEN been accepted in its broad perspective. On the whole, the focus has remained on learners with specific disabilities. Inclusive Education Scheme (MHRD, 2003), available on the website of the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD), [www.education.nic.in/html\\_web/iedc\\_sch\\_draft.htm](http://www.education.nic.in/html_web/iedc_sch_draft.htm) (accessed on February 15, 2001), which addresses the needs of learners with disabilities, focuses on the following categories of disability: visual disabilities (blind and low vision), speech and hearing disabilities, locomotor disabilities, and neuromusculoskeletal and neuro-developmental disorders, including cerebral palsy, autism, mental retardation, multiple disability, and learning disabilities. Keeping this reality in mind the main focus of this position paper is on learners with such disabilities.[11]

Integrated Education In the 1970s, the government launched the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC). The scheme aimed at providing educational opportunities to learners with disabilities in regular schools, and to facilitate their achievement and retention. The objective was to integrate children with disabilities in the general community at all levels as equal partners to prepare them for normal development and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence. A cardinal feature of the scheme was the liaison between regular and special schools to reinforce the integration process. Meanwhile, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) joined hands with UNICEF and launched Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (PIED) in the year 1987, to strengthen the integration of learners with disabilities into regular schools. An external evaluation of this project in 1994 showed that not only did the enrollment of learners with disabilities increase considerably, but the retention rate among disabled children was also much higher than the other children in the same blocks. In 1997 IEDC was amalgamated with other major basic education projects like the DPEP [12] and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) [13] The IEDC scheme provides for a wide range of incentives and interventions for the education of children with disabilities. These include preschool training, counselling for parents, allowances for books and stationery, uniforms, transport, readers and escorts, hostel facilities, and other assistive devices. The scheme provides one special teacher for every eight children with disabilities, community involvement, and a resource room in a cluster of eight to 10 schools. A number of voluntary organisations are implementing the scheme in the various States.[14]

#### IV. RESULTS

##### 7 Types of Schools for Children With Special Needs

##### Public Schools

##### Public schools may be a good match for your child if:

- Your child is comfortable in their public school and is not struggling with problems such as bullying or marginalization.
- Your child's particular needs fit nicely into the school's strengths: most schools can provide for students with common challenges, but unusual needs or abilities may be too challenging.
- Your schools are well-funded so that teacher training, aides, therapists, specialists and support programs are available.[15]

##### Pros

- Public school is free!
- Public schools are required by law to teach your child, provide appropriate supports, and pay for many services and therapies.<sup>1</sup>
- Public schools are right in your own backyard, which means your child will know people locally and you will be able to get involved with her education.
- Your child will have the chance to be included in a wide range of in-school and after-school activities.

##### Cons

- Public schools are consistently underfunded and are easily overwhelmed by the needs of special students.<sup>2</sup>



- Public schools can be large and complex places where bullying, marginalization, and other issues can be hard to manage.
- Public schools may not have the expertise or flexibility to help your child if she has abilities or challenges that don't fit into existing programs [16]

#### Charter and Magnet Schools

Charter and magnet schools are also publicly funded, which means they are also free and are also required by law to serve your child's needs. In some cases, they are smaller than typical public schools, and they may also be a better fit for your child. Some charter and magnet schools offer a more hands-on, service-learning educational model which can be great for a child with hyperactivity or autism.[17]

#### Pros

- Charter and magnet schools may play to your child's strengths and learning style in a way that typical public school doesn't.
- Charter and magnet schools offer the same free and appropriate education as your local public school.
- Smaller schools are often a better fit for special needs students.<sup>3</sup>

#### Cons

- Charter and magnet schools are often quite a distance from your home.
- They may have a less flexible program and fewer resources than your local public school.
- You may find it harder to work with the school to be sure your child gets the support he needs.

#### Waldorf and Montessori

Waldorf and Montessori developed teaching techniques that are quite different from those used in typical public schools, but which work well for many students. Instead of using words as the primary teaching tool, they use specific types of experiences that allow students to learn visually and kinesthetically. For quite a few students with special needs diagnoses, these types of schools can be a godsend.[18]

There are, however, a few caveats. First, Waldorf and Montessori schools are intended for children with normal or above normal IQs who are capable of managing in a small but socially intense setting. Second, such schools are not required to provide any kind of support or therapy for your child.

#### Pros

- If your child does thrive, chances are good that he will find friends and a solid social group.
- If your child's needs and abilities make her a good match for a Waldorf or Montessori school, chances are you'll find one or the other within a reasonable driving distance.
- Your child will receive a quality education in a small setting while also being included with typical peers.

#### Cons

- It is very unlikely that you will be able to find funding for a private school intended for the general population, though you may qualify for a scholarship.
- If your child really does need more support than is available at the school, there is a good chance the school will ask her to leave.
- You may find that your child's challenges make it very difficult to keep up with the curriculum.[19]



## Homeschool

Homeschooling is increasingly popular, especially among families of kids with special needs.<sup>4</sup> Homeschool gives you ultimate control and flexibility, making it easier to create an ideal educational program and setting for your child.

Sometimes, your district will help you out financially, provide computer-based learning tools, or send tutors. You may also be able to tap into public after school programs, homeschool community programs, and a slew of other local resources.[20]

### Pros

- You control your child's educational experience and environment and can design it to be a perfect fit.
- It is possible to completely avoid problems with educational roadblocks, bullying, test anxiety, and other school issues.
- You have a tremendous opportunity to help your child build skills by focusing on areas of need and building areas of strength.

### Cons

- If you work full time, it may be impossible to homeschool.
- Homeschooling can be isolating, and finding the right homeschool groups can be difficult (particularly in rural areas).
- Many parents find homeschooling to be overwhelming and difficult, especially if their child's special needs include significant emotional, intellectual, or cognitive challenges.

## General 'Special Needs Schools'

As the number of children with "special needs" has grown, so too have private schools that cater

to such children. Often, these schools are very expensive, but if you can show that your public school district cannot provide a free and appropriate education they may be obliged to pay the cost of a private setting.[21]

This is only the case, though, if the special needs school is accredited (which means tiny start-up schools will not be an option).<sup>5</sup> General "special needs" schools often list a whole slew of diagnoses on their websites (everything from dyslexia to autism to sensory challenges, for example).

But because the schools are private, they have the option of selecting the students they feel they can serve. Thus, even if your child seems to fit the criteria, the school may turn you down because her symptoms are different from or more severe than their ideal student.[22]

### Pros

- All staff at special needs schools are ready, willing, and able to work with children like yours.
- Because all the children have special needs, there is a better chance that your child will be socially accepted.
- Special needs schools are designed to provide programs such as social skills training, remedial reading, etc., so there is no need to ask that such programs be created for your child.

### Cons

- Because they are outside your local community and families may live quite a distance away, it can be hard to get to know the community or your child's friends, teachers, and therapists.
- If you are paying for a special needs private school, you will be paying a lot.



- The law does not require private schools to follow all of the same laws and procedures required of public schools.<sup>6</sup>

### Condition-Specific Schools

Whether your child has autism, ADHD, OCD, "language-based learning challenges," anxiety, cognitive disabilities, or mental health issues, there is almost certainly a school out there that specializes in her diagnosis. That means that somewhere in the United States (and possibly in your metropolitan area) there is a "perfect" learning environment for your child.[23]

The word "perfect" is in quotations marks, though, because every child is unique and so is every school. If your child has high functioning autism, for example, a school for children with severe autism will be a disaster.

If your child has ADHD along with other mental health issues, you may need to look closely to be sure an ADHD-specific school's student body has the same challenges.

### Pros

- As in a special needs school, teachers and therapists are highly trained, but in a condition-specific school, they may also have a large "toolbox" of teaching options to use with your child.<sup>7</sup>
- You, as a parent, will have much less of a challenge in explaining your child's particular issues or getting teachers and staff to say "yes" to well-regarded therapies or teaching strategies.
- Your child is likely to meet peers with similar interests, strengths, and challenges, which may be a great way for them to find like-minded friends.

### Cons

- Condition-specific special needs schools are relatively rare; as a result, your child may have to travel a long distance or even become a boarding student in another state.
- You may be quite disconnected from your child if he or she is not living nearby.
- Your child will be exposed ONLY to children with his particular diagnosis, which means he will be quite isolated from the general population (this is true to some degree even if the school is eager to take your child on "outings" into the community).

### Therapy-Specific Schools

Digging even further into specialized schools, it is possible to find private schools that are built around individual therapeutic philosophies. In the world of autism, for example, you can find ABA schools, SCERTS schools, Floortime schools, RDI schools, and so forth.

If you are an advocate of a particular therapeutic or philosophical approach to special needs education, this kind of school may be a good fit for you and your child.[24]

### Pros

- Because you already understand and love the school's approach, there is a good chance you'll feel comfortable with the teachers and staff.
- If you already know that your child does best with a particular therapeutic or philosophical approach, you have found the ideal school setting.
- Virtually all therapy-specific schools are tiny, which means your child will get very personalized support.

### Cons

- It is almost impossible to get funding for a therapy-specific school, so you'll be paying out of pocket.



- It is quite unlikely that a therapy-specific school will be around the corner from your home OR able to have to your child board. As a result, you may need to actually move your residence or do a great deal of driving.
- Very small schools have very small staffs and are unlikely to provide a range of programs such as art, gym, music, or sports.[21]

### Can Music Really Boost Kids' Brainpower? A Word From Verywell

Before deciding that your child needs a non-public school, be sure you've explored all the nooks and crannies of your local district. While you may not have been offered all the services you feel you need, there's a chance that those services are available.

In general, public school officials will give you what you ask for, but will not go out of their way to mention other options. Here's why a public school should really be your first choice:

- **Money:** Public school is free.
- **Inclusion:** This is a biggie. Once your child leaves public school it's unlikely that he'll get to know anyone in his own community except you. The more exclusive the school, the smaller the chance that he'll know or be known by neighbors, local friends, peers, librarians, rec directors, or any of the other people and groups that make up the world he lives in.[22]
- **Resources:** Public schools are required by law to provide the teachers, resources, and therapies your child needs to move forward in her education and growth. Private schools are not. And, because they're so much smaller, private schools are rarely able to justify the cost of, say, a chorus director or sensory integration therapist.

## V. CONCLUSION

Having a disability can be one of the most marginalizing factors in a child's life. In education, finding ways to meet the learning needs of students with disabilities can be challenging, especially in schools, districts, regions, and countries with severely limited resources. Inclusive education—which fully engages all students, including students with disabilities or other learning challenges, in quality education—has proven particularly effective in helping all students learn, even while challenges to implementing inclusive education systems remain. This guide provides suggestions for developing inclusive education systems and policies, especially for low- and middle-income countries that are moving from a segregated system toward an inclusive system of education. We specifically address the needs of countries with limited resources for implementing inclusive education. However, our strategies and recommendations can be equally useful in other contexts where inclusive education practices have not yet been adopted.[23]

To support community participation, USAID (2011) has developed five steps to engage communities in education programs; these also apply to engaging the community in inclusive education programs:

**Step 1.** Conduct a participatory assessment of the current situation, attitudes, concerns, opportunities, and aspirations related to education.

**Step 2.** Strengthen or form formalized structures for engagement.

**Step 3.** Assist school management committees, parent teacher associations, or other coordinating bodies in setting goals and developing plans.

**Step 4.** Build capacity to strengthen community-level human resources.

**Step 5.** Conduct continuous monitoring and follow-up.

Communities also benefit from having inclusive schools. For example, an inclusive education project in Vietnam showed that communities with inclusive education programs “become more open minded, creating a more favorable environment for people with disabilities in the future”



## VI. FUTURE SCOPE

Countries are increasingly moving toward adopting inclusive education systems that are supported by policy and best-practice legislative frameworks. Although there is an increasing number of success stories in this area, substantial challenges related to implementation persist. For example, even in situations where quality inclusive education legislation exists, a large gap between policy and practice often remains. In some cases, this gap results from a lack of budget for general education can serve as a barrier to implementing inclusive education policy. Additionally, persistent prejudicial views or questions regarding the value of inclusive education can impede progress and result in gaps between in policy and practice.[24]

UNESCO states that the “concept and practice of inclusive education have gained importance in recent years. Internationally, the term is increasingly understood more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 4). For educational reform to be successful within a country, political will must be combined with support from teachers, administrators, parents, and the community. Additionally, the false belief that some children have more value than others and, thus, deserve more opportunities to succeed must be eliminated. All children and youths have the right to receive a quality education and reach their full potential. For students with disabilities to receive the best possible education, governments must commit to providing education in inclusive settings. As stated by the CRPD Committee, “only inclusive education can provide both quality education and social development for persons with disabilities...[and] it is the most appropriate modality for States to guarantee universality and non-discrimination in the right to education” (United Nations, 2016a). Although challenges in implementing inclusive education reform exist, they are not insurmountable, and changes made through such reform will only strengthen the educational system by addressing the needs of all students.

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