

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Mahatma Gandhi **"By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit."**

Every individual is unique and hence Education should cater to the needs of all the Individuals.

The term Learning Disabilities was first used by Dr. Samuel Kirk of Chicago, USA in 1963. The term "Learning disabilities" became prominent in 1980s. According to Learning disabilities Association of America - Learning disabilities may be defined as a disorder in one or more basic psychological processes that may manifest itself as an imperfect ability in certain areas of learning, such as reading, written expression, or mathematics. People with learning disabilities are found across all ages. So basically it affects a child's ability to read, write or speak.

There is agreement that learning disabilities is neuro-biologically based. A study was conducted by Dr. Chawla of the Department of Psychiatry in AIIMS estimated that 6% children of school going age had learning disabilities. Estimate is quite large but no special service exists for education of children with learning disabilities as it is considered as hidden disability because the person looks completely normal. It results in difficulty in identification of such children with learning disabilities.

According to Merriam Webster dictionary-any of various conditions (such as dyslexia or dysgraphia) that interfere with an ability to learn and so result in impaired functioning in language, reasoning, or academic skills (such as reading, writing, and mathematics) and that are thought to be caused by difficulties in processing and integrating information called also learning difference.

The most formal definition is "Learning Disabilities" refers to a variety of disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization or use of verbal and/or non-verbal information. These disorders result from impairments in one or more psychological processes related to learning in combination with otherwise average abilities essential for thinking and reasoning.

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) and other Institutes of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) support research learning disabilities through grants to major research institutions across the country.

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) used the term 'learning disability' to indicate a discrepancy between a child's apparent capacity to learn and his or her level of achievement. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to Central Nervous System Dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g. sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance) or environmental influences (e.g. cultural differences, insufficient/inappropriate instruction, psychogenic factors) it is not the direct result of those conditions or influences.

In Canada, the first association in support of children with learning disabilities was founded in 1962 by a group of concerned parents. The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) was established to provide awareness and services for individuals with learning disabilities, their families, at work, and the community.

In the UK, terms such as specific learning difficulty (SpLD), developmental dyslexia, developmental coordination disorder and dyscalculia are used to cover the range of learning difficulties referred to in the United States as "learning disabilities".

The Department of Health (USA) (2001) describes 'learning disability' as:

- i. Reduced ability to cope independently which starts before adulthood with lasting effects on development.
- ii. Learning disability or neurobehavioral disorder is a classification including several areas of functioning in which a person has difficulty in learning in a typical manner, usually caused by an unknown factor or factors. In other words, Learning give rise to difficulties in acquiring knowledge and skills to the normal level expected of those of the same age, especially because of mental disability or cognitive disorder
- iii. Significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills.

In India, it is estimated that at least five students in every average-sized class has Learning Disabilities (Thomas, Bhanutej & John, 2003). But these students are often unrecognized in the crowded schools due to the invisible nature of the disability unlike other visible disabilities. Students with Learning Disabilities have problems in academic areas for a long time, but those problems are often unnoticed by the teachers in the crowded classrooms (Karanth, 1998). From the literature it is found that approximately 10-14% of the 416 million children in India have LD (Krishnan, 2007; Krishna kumar, 1999; Mehta, 2003). Dyslexia is one of the most common SpLDs (Specific Learning Disabilities), affecting 80% of all those identified as Learning Disabled (Karande, Sawant, Kulkarni, Galvankar, & Sholapurwala, 2005, p. 96). According to a study conducted in South India, the incidence of dyscalculia was reported to encompass 6% of all school-aged children (Ramaa & Gowramma, 2002).Sarojiny (2000),

conducted a study on the awareness of primary school teachers towards learning disabilities in English at primary stage.

The child having learning disabilities does not mean that he/she is stupid, lazy or dumb. It is just a different learning style. In general term when there is breakdown in the psychological process of learning it would lead to learning disability.

Learning disabilities, or learning disorders or Learning difficulties, are an umbrella term for a wide variety of learning problems. While these terms are often used interchangeably, they differ in many ways. Learning disability refers to significant learning problems in an academic area. The problem may range from mild to severe.

In recent years problems related to learning disabilities have been acknowledged and received recognition. In every class there always have been children who have displayed unusual difficulties in certain aspects of learning. This resulted in the increase in struggle to cope with demands of home, school, and society. Professionals, parents and teachers need to be involved in this area to gain more knowledge about the nature and interventions of learning disabilities. This will result in academic success of such children.

1.2 TYPES OF SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES

The following are the specific learning disabilities prevalent children:

1.2.1 Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a type of learning disability that impairs an individual's ability to read. The person faces difficulty in reading and reads at a very slow pace. The severity varies from person to person, but some of the common characteristics include finding it difficult to spell, confusion

between similar looking letters like b-p, p-q, q-b, m-w, n-u etc., understanding phonemes, pronunciation etc.

1.2.2 Dyscalculia

Dyscalculia is a specific type of learning disability that affects an individual and their ability to comprehend and learn mathematical skills. Dyscalculia has the ability to affect any individual, no matter the intelligence level. The person faces difficulty with understanding time, spatial reasoning, and measurement.

1.2.3 Dysgraphia

Dysgraphia is an inability to perform the motor movements required for handwriting. The term dysgraphia is at times interchangeably used for writing disorder.

In this new era, there has been a constant increase in the awareness about the hidden disability, Learning Disability. The recent Hindi movie Taare Zameen Par has sensitively and accurately depicted the plight of an 8-yearold boy battling LD (Karande, 2008). The movie has brought out the plights of the Learning Disability child in a mainstream school without getting proper recognition and accommodations into the lime light.

1.3 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1.3.1 Awareness

Awareness is the state of being aware or having knowledge of something and also as interested in and knowing about something. In the present study, the word 'awareness' referred to pre-service teacher's knowledge about various aspects of learning disabilities.

1.3.2 Learning disability

According to National joint Committee for Learning Disabilities (NJCLD)- ‘Learning disabilities are a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorder manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction ‘In the present study learning disabilities includes dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia. It is an imperfect ability to read, write, speak, spell, coordinate or to do mathematical calculation.

1.3.3 Pre service teachers

It refers to the students who are undergoing pre-service training in teaching learning process to get experiences for development towards teaching at school level.

1.4 RATIONALE /NEED AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

A major group of children are with learning disabilities. During internship program of pre service teachers they come across children with different learning styles.

It is the responsibility of pre service teachers to have the ability to recognize such children before going to real field. At the same time the student teachers must have minimum level of awareness about the causes, characteristics, teaching methods and identification of learning disability. The field learning disability is giving a lot of importance so the research to be conducted to study the awareness level about learning disability among pre-service teachers of DIET of Keonjhar district.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. *The study is confined to the final year students pursuing Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed) of DIET of Keonjhar District, Odisha consisting of 50 pre-service teachers only.*
2. Limited time period
3. Limited sample size

1.6 CONCLUSION

The present dissertation is organized under 5 chapters as follows. The first chapter deals about Introduction, meaning and types of specific learning disabilities, operational definition of variables, rationale and justification of the problem, limitation of the study and arrangement of chapter. The second chapter gives an account of some previous research studies conducted which is related to the present investigation. The third chapter describes about research method adopted for the study, construction of tools, sample, and administration of statistical techniques. The fourth chapter deals about the analysis of data, results and their interpretations. The fifth chapter presents summary of findings, discussion and recommendations for further research study.