

Overcoming Learning Disabilities among Children in Primary Schools

Musa Halilu

Library Department

Abu Ali Library

Aminu Saleh College Of Education, Azare

Musahalilu64@Gmail.Com

Sagir Ahmed

Psychology Department

School Of Education

Aminu Saleh College Of Education, Azare

Sagirahmedbello@Gmail.Com

Abstract

Children with learning disabilities have difficulties in comprehending, retraining, processing and retrieving information. They particularly have problems in area of reading skills, reading comprehension, written expression, oral expression, language spelling, mathematical reasoning and calculations. The paper provided a comprehensive definition of learning disabilities and it described the causes of learning disabilities as well as showing the way of identification of learning disabilities children. The paper also only offers the ways of developing reading and writing skills and focused structural lesson presentation to be applied by teachers and finally offered recommendations to classroom teachers.

Introduction

Some children, who in most ways seem normal, have difficulty in learning or remembering. They have difficulty in educational performance: copying, writing, listening, understanding, number speech and communication. These children have disorders in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written which may show itself. In an imperfect mathematical calculations. They also show some signs of behaviour problems, and problems in visual and auditory perception-problems in understanding what is seen or heard. Schools and their teachers have to understand these problems, and plan and adopt their programmes and curriculum in such a way that the children will be able to overcome their learning problems and achieve at their optimal levels.

Different methods and principals of good teaching that will assist schools and teachers to achieve this are recommended and encouraged.

Who are children with learning disabilities?

Panda (2007) who are children with L-D defined learning disability “the child exhibits a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations.

The term learning disabilities discovered by Samuel Kirk (1963) can be used to describe children “who have disorders in development in language, speech, reading, and associated communication skills needed for social interaction.” Kirk (1963) noted that he did not include in the category of

learning disabled those children, whose primary handicap was generalised mental retardation or sensory impairment (blindness or deafness). National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) define learning disabilities as a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning and mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction and may occur across the life span. Problems of self-regulatory behaviour, social perception and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but not in themselves constitute in learning disability, although a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping condition (e.g Sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance) or with intrinsic influences (such as cultural difference, insufficient/inappropriate instructions) they are not the result of those conditions or influence.

Identification of Learning Disabled Children

Individual are assessed usually as learning disabled after they start having problems in school. The screening test are administered to identify children with learning disabilities normally right from primary school when discrepancy between their actual achievements and assumed potentials becomes increasingly obvious. This is expatiated below:

Steps of Identify Learning Disabled Children in Classroom

- a. **Individual Test:-** this test enhances classification and placement of the earning disabled children. The teacher can predict the child's problems because he sees the child in different settings and tasks and has the normative effectiveness of all other children he has taught.
- b. **Group Test:-** this involves copying, writing and drawing to test for motor ability for children in lower primary school. The test should also involve reading from books, writing their names etc.

Causes of Learning Disabilities

They are many factors that could contribute to the occurrence of Learning Disability. Ohanado (2002) categorizes the causes of learning disabilities into three:

- 1- **Brain Damege:** Brain damage is believed to be among the causes of learning disabilities. Medical diagnosis of this condition often reveal abnormal brain functioning. Herward and Orlansky (1992) estimate that as many as 20% of children with learning disabilities have sustained a prior brain injury either before (prenatal), during (perinatal) or after birth (postnatal). Brain damage is not noticeable in all cases of learning disabled children. In this case, the term minimal brain dysfunction is used.
- 2- **Biochemical imbalance:** this factor has also been advanced as contributing to learning disabilities. Herward and Orlansky (1992) Claim that artificial colouring and flavourings in many of the food children eat can cause learning abilities and hyperactivity. Evidence of research on this, however, inconclusive.
- 3- **Environmental factors:** these are categorized into three: emotional disturbance, lack of motivation and poor instruction. Learning problems can give rise to emotional disturbance. Frequent failure could lead to emotional disturbance. Emotional disturbance can on the other hand give rise to learning problems. This will in turn lead to lack of motivation.

Teaching strategies for Children with Learning Disabilities

Reading

It has been estimated that approximately 80% of children with learning disabilities have reading problem ((Lyon, 1999 and Shaywitz, 2003). Children, who are not efficient readers will have trouble in school, therefore have poor academic achievement. These include mispronunciation, skipping, adding or substituting word (Hallahan, Kauffman and Llyod, 1985) as well as problem in memory, reversing letters or words and blending sounds together. They display both oral reading and comprehension problems (Hallahan et al (1985).

Observing Reading Performance: an effective teacher of children with learning disabilities will observe children performance on a variety of reading tasks (Mercer, 2005) provide questions you should consider:

- What is the child attitude toward reading?
- What specific reading interest does the child has?
- Is the child making progress in reading?
- What strengths and weaknesses in a reading does the child exhibit?
- During oral reading does the child read word by word or with fluency?
- What kinds of errors does the child make consistently?
- What word analysis skills does the child use?
- Does the child have a good sight vocabulary?
- Does the pupil use context clues to recognise words?
- Does the pupil appear to pay attention to the meaning of the material when reading?

Teaching Strategies: some of the strategies that a teacher can use in the classroom for specific rea of reading (Chadha, 2008) are as follows:

- New concepts and vocabulary should be introduced gradually
- While reading, ask questions from the child to enhance his/her understanding of the content.
- Worksheets are useful in strengthening reading skills
- Read aloud to pupils regularly
- Provide meaningful reading material such as dictionaries, categorized lists of words
- Let the child read aloud (Oral Reading). If the child makes mistakes, they can be easily identified by the teacher and corrected.
- Reading can be done with peers or with parents (paired reading). This will enhance the confidence of the child.
- Read as a group (choral reading). Here the pupils get both auditory and visual stimulation to correct themselves.
- Use of colour also helps in providing some useful limits to pupils, who have problems with reading. For example, if the child confuses between b, and d, could be coloured with green and d with red.
- Have the whole class also read aloud in a large group.

Spelling

Panda (2008), Spelling errors are quite common among learning disabled children. Therefore a systematic work-study technique is .used in the following sequence.

“Look at the word-say the word-say the word-look at the word-cover the word-Write the word-Check your spelling-Repeat”. Some of the remedial techniques involve-writing the word on the chalk and then trace it in fingers until it disappears tracing in sand, write the first letter of the word when one listens the word and then pronounce. Ask the children to spell the word properly and clap softly for each vowels sound, if possible by looking at the word.

Panda, K.C.(2008). Education of exceptional children: P A basic text on the rights of the handicapped and the gifted. New Delhi, Vikas publishing house PVT ltd.

Writing

Children with learning disabilities frequently have difficulty with handwriting. They may have fine motor problems that interfere with their ability to hold a pencil or pen properly. They may have visual. Perceptual motor difficulties that prevent them from copying and/or marching what they want to write with what they actually produce. Limited attention and memory may also interfere with their ability to produce legible writing.

Johnson and Myklebust (1967) used the term dysgraphia to describe a specific disorder that results from difficulty with visual-motor integration. Children with learning disabilities write slowly and have uneven handwriting were attributed the letters q,j,z,u,b and k. when they examined the products solely for illegibility. Five letters accounted for more than half of the difficulties: q,z,u,a and j. children, less smoothly, more variably, and less legibly than their peers (Graham and Weintraub, 1996).

Teaching strategies for children with writing disabilities

- Sufficient time should be given for writing activities
- Expose pupils to a broad range of writing materials
- Pupils should be given that writing activity which gives them an opportunity to express themselves.
- Teachers should encourage the children to write more in a non-threatening environment. This helps the children to gain confidence over themselves.
- A holistic approach should be used to enhance the writing skills in a child. It should be integrated with other academic subjects.
- Help pupils focus on those processes that are required for good writing. Pupils should also be exposed to the different stages of writing such as pre-writing, writing and re-writing.
- The teachers in their lessons should also inform the students about the characteristics of good writing.
- Peers with good writing could also become models for those children, who manifest problems with writing.
- After the child has completed a written exercise, he/she should be encouraged to edit it also. His helps the child in recognising his/her mistakes.
- The teacher should also watch the posture, pencil grip and position of the paper when a child is writing.
- Encourage the child to draw patterns. This helps the child in dealing with his/her inability to track.
- The arm movement of the child should also be closely watched.
- The arm movement of the child should also be closely watched.
- Tape alphabets form to the floor. Have pupils play with them in any manner they like
- Have pupil's form letters in clay.
- Use coloured cues in writing such as blue signs and orange dots.
- Help pupils to form an association for a letter they have difficulty in remembering.
- He pupils describe the formation of the letter as it is being written. This kind of memorizing provides auditory re-enforcement.

General factors Responsible for writing Disabilities

“Many pupils with learning disabilities are deficient in writing skills. These children perform significantly lower than their peers on most written expression task, especially in spelling, punctuation and word usage.

Numerous factors contribute to handwriting difficulties: Motor problems, faulty visual memory, poor instruction, emotional problems, and lack of motivation.

Fine motor problems can also interfere with handwriting and thus with school work. For example, a child might know how to spell a word, but be unable to write the spelling. This some situation might exist in copying material from the checkboard and working on seatwork. Unfortunately, many parents and teachers view the pupil as academically show when, in fact, the variety of handwriting problems: slowness, incorrect direction of letters and numbers, too much or too little slant, shaping problems (letters too oral or too in shape), messiness, inability to stay on a horizontal line, illegible letters, too much or too little pencil pressure, and mirror writing. These children do not have the correct idea of the size of letters while writing. The size of the letters might be too large or too small.

Most commonly, people (i) failed to close letters, (ii) closed top loops in letters like e (such as writing e like i), (iii) looped strokes that should be looped (such as writing I like e), (ii) used straight up strokes (such as writing n for u), and (v) exhibited problems with end strokes. Thus, the majority of handwriting errors involve the incorrect way of writing of a few letters. Common number malformations include writing 5 like 3 (5), 6 like 0 (*b*), 7 like 9 (7) and 9 like 4 (4)” (Marcer, 1991 in panda, 2007).

Arithmetic’s

Ashlock (1972) made certain specific remedial instruction step for removing arithmetic errors of learning disabled children. Some of the step are as follows:

Use manipulative such as buttons and chips to teach number. Use visual material and give reinforcement. Use graph paper for alignment difficulties. Time line, coloured chalks, markings are helpful for attention to cues. A sample problem can be given for each assignment. The size of numbers can vary to indicate more or less. Reduce distractions as far as possible. Reduce number of examples in the assignment and eliminate copying. Use of display charts, abacus, playing cards, calculator and language master are quite useful.

Recommendation

- 1- All teachers of primary schools should be trained in area of learning disabilities, so that they can be able to identify, assess and remediate pupils with difficulties in learning.
- 2- School counsellors and teachers should explain to the affected pupils about their difficulties and encourage them to strive harder in order to perform better.
- 3- Teachers must provide adequate structure to the learning disabled children to help them carrying out a writing assignment in order to achieve meaningful academic progress.
- 4- The teachers should always offer extra assistance to the child with learning disabilities.
- 5- Teachers should teach their specific problem
- 6- Every child with learning disabilities need individualized educational programme.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the issues of learning disabilities were identified by expert. Teacher have significant role in overcoming this problem, many strategies were adopted by teachers of children with learning disabilities. In order to overcome disabilities in children they are to be identified. Teachers can do their best to help these children to solve their reading and writing problem.

References

- Chadha, Anupriya (2008), A guide to educating children with learning disabilities. New Delhi: Vikas publishing House PVT Ltd.
- Graham, S. and Weintraub, N. (1996), A review of handwriting research:
- Hallahan, D. Kauffman, J. and Llyod, J. (1985). Introduction to learning disabilities, (2nd ed.) Englewood clufts NJ: prentice hall.
- Herward, W.L. and Orlansky, M.D. (1992) exceptional children (4th ed.). New York: Macmillan Publishing co.

- Johnson, D.J. and Myklebust, H.R (1967), Learning Disabilities: Educational Principles and practices. New York: Grune and Stratton.
- Kirk, S.A. (1963). Behavioural diagnosis and remediation of learning disabilities. Conference on the exploration into problems of the perceptually handicapped child. Evanston.
- Lyon, G.R (1999). The NICHD research program in reading development, reading disorders, and reading instruction. Retrieved January, 21, 2004, from <http://www.neld.org/research>.
- Ohanado, S.E. (2002) Learning Disabilities in Education Limited.
- Panda, K.C. (2007). Education of exceptional children. New Delhi: Vikas publishing house PVT Ltd.
- Shaywitz, S.E (2003). Overcoming dyslexia. New York: Alfred A. knoff.