

A Study on Teachers Efficacy, Instructional Strategies and Attitude towards Students with Learning Difficulties

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Abstract:

Over many years students with learning problems have been given a variety of labels, including 'dull', 'educationally subnormal', 'slow learners', 'low achievers', 'at risk', the 'hard-to-teach' and 'learning disabled'. It is to be hoped that 'Learning Difficulty' goes the way of other inappropriate terms since it implies that the fault lies with the learner.

In most countries the term learning difficulty is applied to students who are not making adequate progress within the school curriculum, particularly in basic skill areas covering language, literacy and numeracy. Their problems may be associated with just one particular school subject, or may be evident across all subjects in the academic curriculum. For a variety of reasons these students do not find learning easy in school.

This study examined the attributions, attitudes, teacher efficacy, and intended performance of teachers in relation to students with Learning Difficulties. Further this study investigated possible influential relationships that teachers' attitudes and teacher efficacy and instructional strategies for students with Learning Difficulties.

The study is limited to only Government and aided secondary schools situated in Belgaum revenue district. It is limited to a sample of 650 teacher's selected at random from 150 secondary schools.

Using survey questionnaires, data can be collected from a relatively large number of respondents across a large spectrum of areas.

The data were collected, they were entered into the 'Statistical Package for Social Sciences' (SPSS) software for analysis. The data were coded (and recoded), and the preparation for the formal analyses of the data. The statistical techniques used are Descriptive analysis, ANOVA & t-test.

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Introduction:

In most countries the term *learning difficulty* is applied to students who are not making adequate progress within the school curriculum, particularly in basic skill areas covering language, literacy and numeracy. Their problems may be associated with just one particular school subject, or may be evident across all subjects in the academic curriculum. For a variety of reasons these students do not find learning easy in school. The number of students with such learning difficulties varies across schools and across countries. Prevalence rate has been reported as varying anywhere between 12 per cent and 30 per cent of the school population (for example, Gupta, 1999; Silver & Hagin, 2002; Waldron & McLeskey, 2000; Westwood & Graham, 2000). Students with these problems are therefore quite common in schools; and because they are found to flourish almost everywhere the description 'garden variety' learning difficulty has been coined for them (for example, Badian, 1996). Often the intellectual level of these students is somewhat below average and disproportionate numbers come from lower socio-economic and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Learning disabilities were virtually unknown as a field until the 1960s (Coles, 1987). Although some researchers of the history of LD recognize work throughout the nineteenth century (such as Franz Gall, John Bouillaud and Paul Broca), the first major discussions, around what we now know as LD, were published in the late nineteenth century. James Hinshelwood, a Glasgow ophthalmologist, is cited as one of the first major figures in what would become the field of learning disabilities (Coles, 1987).

Review of literature :

1. Teachers' attitudes towards integration / inclusion: Elias Avramidis & Brahm Norwich :On the assumption that the successful implementation of any inclusive policy is largely dependent on educators being positive about it, a great deal of research has sought to examine teachers' attitudes towards the integration and, more recently, the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the mainstream school. This paper reviews this large body of research and, in so doing, explores a host of factors that might impact upon teacher acceptance of the inclusion principle. The analyses showed evidence of positive attitudes, but no evidence of acceptance of a total inclusion or 'zero reject' approach to special educational provision. Teachers' attitudes were found to be strongly influenced by the nature and severity of the disabling condition presented to them (child-related variables) and less by teacher-related variables. Further, educational environment-related variables, such as the

availability of physical and human support, were consistently found to be associated with attitudes to inclusion. After a brief discussion of critical methodological issues germane to the research findings, the paper provides directions for future research based on alternative methodologies.

2. Faculty Attitude and Students with Disabilities in Higher Education : A Literature Review.- Rao, Shaila: Attitudes toward disabilities as a topic is widely researched when it comes to published studies concerned with disability issues. ‘Attitudinal barriers’ is recognized widely as an impediment to success of persons with disabilities. However, this also happens to be the least researched variable in studies done with faculty and students with disabilities in higher education. This article presents review of literature on faculty attitudes towards persons with disabilities in four different parts: attitudes as a construct, views on attitudes towards disabilities, measurement of attitude towards disabilities, and studies done at colleges and universities with faculty. The fourth section discusses various variables that influence attitudes of faculty towards disabilities. Implications for future studies are discussed.

3. Gender Differences in Intelligence, Language, Visual-Motor Abilities, and Academic Achievement in Students with Learning Disabilities-[Susan A. Vogel](#)- A substantial body of research confirms higher verbal ability in normally achieving females and higher visual-spatial and mathematical abilities in normally achieving males. However, the specific nature of these differences varies by age, specific measure, magnitude, and variability within the groups. Re-analysis of earlier research showed that, although differences in visual-spatial ability were larger than verbal ability differences, gender differences did not account for more than 1% to 5% of the group variance. In the population with learning disabilities (LD), research must be interpreted cautiously because LD samples were drawn mainly from the system-identified population and may reflect selection bias. Findings indicate that system-identified females with LD are lower in IQ, have more severe academic achievement deficits in some aspects of reading and math, and are somewhat better in visual-motor abilities, spelling, and written language mechanics than males with LD. In mathematics, however, it is difficult to document consistent differences in computational skills in the elementary school ages. More consistent findings, however, indicate superiority in mathematical reasoning in males with LD. A limited number of studies on research-identified samples indicate that findings from studies of school-identified LD samples must be interpreted cautiously because females with LD identified in the schools may not be representative of females with LD in general.

4. Assistive Technology for Individuals with Disabilities: Alper, Sandra;

Raharinirina, Sahoby-Despite the emphasis on technology and the rapid proliferation of assistive technology devices, little is known about the specific uses of assistive technology with persons who vary in disability type, severity, and age. The present study conducted a comprehensive review and a systematic analysis of published reports of assistive technology and skill acquisition of persons with disabilities. Uses of assistive technology, its benefits and obstacles, are reviewed. The results provide indications why technology is often abandoned. Implications for practitioners and researchers are discussed.

5. Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies to Students With Learning Disabilities: A Review of Research-Russell Gersten: We review the body of research on reading comprehension for students with learning disabilities. First, we describe the factors that lead to the comprehension difficulties of these students. Next we describe our procedures for reviewing the literature on effective instructional methods for this population. Next we review the body of studies involving instructional methods for improving the comprehension of narrative text. This is followed by the research on techniques for improving the comprehension of expository text. We conclude with a discussion of ongoing issues in the field—in particular, (a) the increased use of socially mediated instruction, (b) the need to teach multiple strategies to students to improve comprehension, and (c) controversies in how important it is to explicitly teach specific strategies versus merely providing flexible frameworks to structure dialogue on texts read.

Purpose of the study:

This study examined the attributions, attitudes, teacher efficacy, and intended performance of teachers in relation to students with Learning Difficulties. Further this study investigated possible influential relationships that teachers' attitudes and teacher efficacy and instructional strategies for students with Learning Difficulties.

The purpose of this study is to review and analyse research and theory which relate to the research questions motivating this study. In order to do this, the study is organised into the following key areas:

- Learning Difficulties
- Teachers' efficacy
- Attitudes towards students with LD
- Social cognitive theory –Instructional strategies

This study aims to provide knowledge about teachers' perceptions,

understandings, and expectations of students with LD, which will assist and inform teacher training institutions in the way they prepare teachers for classroom teaching in classrooms.

objectives of the study:

Objectives of the present study was multifaceted.

1. To compare the use of Instructional strategies of teachers to students with learning difficulties and students without learning difficulties.
2. To study Teachers attitude towards students with learning difficulties.
3. To study the Teacher Efficacy towards students with learning difficulties.
4. To study the relationship between Teachers attitude and the impact of on use of Instructional strategies in the classroom.
5. To study the relationship between Teachers efficacious levels and impact on use of Instructional strategies in the classroom.

5. Hypothesis of the study : Given the previously discussed research and literature on students with LD and educators' attitudes, attributions, and efficacy, the following hypotheses were formulated.

1. Teachers would use different Instructional strategies at different frequencies for students with learning difficulties in comparison to students without learning difficulties.
2. There is a positive correlation among Teachers attitude towards students with learning difficulties, their attitudes towards differentiating the curriculum.
3. There is a positive correlation among Teacher Efficacious levels towards students with learning difficulties.
4. There is a positive correlation between Teachers attitude and the impact of on use of Instructional strategies in the classroom.
5. There is a positive correlation between Teachers efficacious levels and impact on use of Instructional strategies in the classroom.

Limitations of the Study:

1. The study is limited to only Government and aided secondary schools situated in Belgaum revenue district.
2. The study is limited to a sample of 650 teacher's selected at random from 150 secondary schools.

Research methodology:

The most appropriate way to examine below stated hypotheses, was to use a survey questionnaire. Most psychological measurements of attitudes and beliefs have employed survey questionnaires. Moreover, survey questionnaires are one of the most efficient research methods for collecting information from participants to describe, compare and explain their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors'. They are particularly useful when measuring multi-theoretical components, and testing multiple hypotheses. Using survey questionnaires, data can be collected from a relatively large number of respondents across a large spectrum of areas.

The instrument used to collect the data for this study derived from theory and from previous empirical research instruments. The instrument consisted of **four sections** for respondents to complete.

Section One contained the attitude questionnaire which was concerned with attitudes towards students with LD, and differentiation of the curriculum.

Section Two included the teacher efficacy scale questionnaire which incorporated statements addressing beliefs about personal and general teacher efficacy.

Section three comprised a variety of instructional strategies, teachers would use for students with and without LD.

Finally,

Section four comprised a variety of 9th standard science concept wise questionnaire for students with and without LD.

Data collection:

Pilot Study : Prior to administering the instrument on the sample, and even though each part of the instrument was used from previous studies that tested validity and reliability, it was necessary to administer the instrument to a pilot group. This was to ensure that respondents fully understood each question and response for each part of the instrument. The sample size for this pilot study was 40 teachers.

Administration of Instrument : Data was collected from 650 teacher's . The investigator personally visited the 150 school of Belgaum revenue District. To administer the attitude questionnaire, teacher efficacy scale questionnaire, instructional strategies and concept wise questionnaire to 3 teachers in each high school. Clear cut instructions will be given to fill up the questionnaires.

Data Analysis:

Data Coding Once the data were collected entered into the 'Statistical Package for Social Sciences' (SPSS) software for analysis. The data were coded (and recoded), and the preparation for the formal analyses of the data. The statistical techniques

used are Descriptive analysis, ANOVA & t-test.

Finally the teachers with greater positive attitude towards students with learning difficulties with a higher expectations of these students and reported greater use of higher cognitive instructional strategies in student centered climate.

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