

Learning Disabilities Programme in Inclusive contexts to elevate students' learning outcomes and social performance: Execution and Challenges



Prof. (Dr.) Renu Nanda^{1*}, Dr. Sheetal sharma²

^{1*}Professor, Department of Education, University of Jammu, Email id: listenrenu@yahoo.com

²Assistant Professor, Department of Education, University of Jammu, Email id: drsheetalsharma123@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The convergence of learning disability initiative represents an essential field of inquiry that focuses on the educational entitlements of children with disabilities. This paper seeks to investigate the effective implementation to assist students with learning disabilities in inclusive educational settings and assuring fair access to high-quality education. The research study in this area is noteworthy as rooted in its ability to guide policy development, improve educational methodologies, and foster inclusivity in educational settings. The focus is to explore the challenges and opportunities present in today's educational landscape, specifically in relation to children with learning disabilities to advance students' learning outcomes and social development. The results could serve as a foundation for creating more effective strategies that provide aid to the needs of students with learning disabilities. It also contributes to raising awareness about the rights of children with learning disabilities in diverse areas. The outcomes of this study may lead to recommendations that enhance the overall educational experience for students with learning disabilities. Ultimately, this research seeks to promote a more inclusive educational environment that values diversity and supports all types of learning disability viz. dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia & dyspraxia. Through this exploration, the researcher anticipated to pave the way for meaningful changes in educational policy and practice towards students having learning disability in different areas in the present era.

Keywords: Learning Disabilities, Learning outcomes, Social Performance, Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia & Dyspraxia

Introduction:

Learning Disabilities (LD) encompass a wide range of disorders that influence how individuals acquire, retain, comprehend, or utilize both verbal and nonverbal information. These disabilities can present in multiple forms, affecting a person's capacity to read, write, solve mathematical problems, or participate in social interactions. Over the last few decades, there has been general progress in recognizing and supporting individuals with learning disabilities. This evolution has been particularly marked by the establishment of legislative measures designed to assure equal access to educational opportunities for diverse needs of children. No doubt, the impact of learning disabilities can vary greatly from one individual to another. Thus, highlighting the need for tailored support strategies and effective intervention that can significantly enhance the educational experiences of those with learning disabilities in diverse areas. It has been found that collaboration among educators, parents, and specialists are crucial in addressing the needs of individuals with learning disabilities. The journey towards inclusivity in education for individuals with learning disabilities is ongoing and requires collective effort from society.

As mentioned by Gerber & Reiff, 1994 ; Learning Disabilities generally include a broad range of learning challenges and are characterized as a

diverse set of neurobehavioral disorders that result in significant, unexpected, specific, and persistent difficulties in acquiring and utilizing effective reading (dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia), or mathematical (dyscalculia) skills, despite receiving standard instruction, having intact sensory functions, normal intelligence, sufficient motivation, and appropriate socio-cultural opportunities . LD comprises various interpretations across multiple domains, such as environmental factors, neurological dysfunctions, perceptual processing issues, genetic influences, and biochemical imbalances. In contrast to other disabilities like paralysis or blindness, learning disabilities are often concealed and do not manifest visible signs that would prompt others to understand or provide assistance (Chadha, 2001).

There is no single cause for learning disabilities in children. In many instances, these disabilities are hereditary. A child with a learning disability often has a parent who faced similar learning challenges, possibly undiagnosed. Learning disabilities can also be linked to issues in brain development. Factors contributing to this may include premature birth, infections, lack of oxygen, and exposure to drugs or alcohol during pregnancy. Postnatal factors include head injuries, poor nutrition, and contact with harmful substances that disrupt normal brain growth. Children with learning disabilities face

challenges in learning and skill acquisition, similar to those with physical or mental disabilities. For too long, these children have been overlooked, confined within homes where they are either neglected or overly protected by well-meaning parents. They may also find themselves confined within institutional settings (Rozario, 1991).

Research on learning disabilities in India has only recently begun. For a long time, students with learning disabilities faced academic challenges that went unnoticed in overcrowded classrooms (Ramaa, 2000). The investigation into learning disabilities is slowly gaining traction as more students encounter issues in both academic and non-academic settings. Currently, approximately 12% of the student population is diagnosed with learning disabilities, with most of these students integrated into regular, non-specialized schools.

Learning Disability Programme in Inclusion framework:

The aim of inclusion educational settings is to involving students with disabilities into normal classrooms, encouraging social, academic and emotional development for every learner, including students with learning disabilities. A prime eminence is placed on how inclusion affects academic achievement, social performance of students with learning disabilities in diverse areas. The study by Abdullah (2023) and Patel & Vaghrodia (2022) validate that inclusive environments improve social ties, self-worth, and academic success for students with special needs. Studies by Alnahdi et al. (2022) and Basmah (2022) reveal that effective inclusive strategies employed by teachers, which include appropriate training and the cultivation of a nurturing classroom environment, result in favorable academic, social, and emotional outcomes for all students. No doubt, hedges to successful inclusion still exist.

This encompasses specialized teaching techniques, individualized education plans (IEPs), and access to trained professionals who can support their learning path. Research reveals that early detection and intervention are critical in aiding students with learning disabilities and for this purpose successful programs often utilize multi-sensory methods, differentiated instruction, and collaborative efforts among teachers, parents, and specialists. Furthermore, teacher training is essential in providing educators with the necessary skills to identify and tackle the specific challenges these students encounter.

Education is regarded as one of the most important aspects of human resource development. Thus, the unique learning needs of children with LD, who comprise 5–15% of the school-going population, can no longer be ignored. Also, children

with LD should receive quality education and complete it in regular mainstream. Alongside legislative measures, numerous organizations and advocacy groups strive to enhance awareness of learning disabilities, aiming to diminish stigma and foster understanding among peers and educators. Children with LD will be significantly impacted and in order to give an equal chance to reach their full academic potential and find a place in society as educated, self-assured adults, we have emphasized the urgent need to effective execution of learning disability program in inclusive settings.

Significance of the Study:

Children with learning disabilities have historically encountered systematic obstacles in accessing education. These challenges include inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of trained educators, and limited financial resources. Many schools lack the necessary facilities to meet the specific requirements of students with learning disabilities due to a deficit of specialized personnel and resources. Societal stigma related to disabilities frequently results in discrimination within educational environments, hindering efforts towards inclusivity. Many of these children were either excluded from mainstream educational settings or referred to segregated institutions that were often under-resourced and lacked qualified teachers. Learning disability program represented a significant shift towards inclusivity, affirming that these students are entitled to quality education, irrespective of their learning problems in diverse area as per **Encyclopedia of Special Education, 2012**. By requiring schools to accommodate children with learning disabilities, there is need to establish a legal framework that obligates educational institutions to implement inclusive practices. This encompasses teacher training initiatives centered on special needs education and curriculum modifications designed for diverse learners **Special Needs Education: A Resource for Teachers, 2020**.

The importance of this paper goes beyond mere legal adherence; they have significant consequences for various stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, and policymakers. For students with learning disabilities, access to suitable educational resources can lead to better academic performance and improved self-esteem. Policymakers are encouraged to prioritize funding and resources for inclusive education, ensuring that all children receive the support they need to succeed.

Currently, in the J&K Union Territory, there is a scarcity of programs aimed at addressing learning disabilities programs. There is a significant lack of proper planning and criteria identification for the upliftment and rehabilitation of children with

learning disabilities. The general population has minimal awareness regarding the concept of learning disabilities. In this context, this paper emphasizes the urgent need to execute learning disabilities programs within inclusive framework. Furthermore, the paper proposes appropriate measures and recommendations for the benefit of school children with learning disabilities. The findings will contribute to enhancing awareness and support for LD children. This study seeks to fill the existing gaps in knowledge and resources related to learning disabilities. It aims to promote better educational outcomes for children facing these challenges.

Review of Related Literature:

The literature surrounding learning disability programs is extensive, reflecting ongoing research into effective interventions, identification methods, and educational strategies tailored for individuals with these challenges. This review synthesizes key findings from recent studies and reports on the development and implementation of learning disability programs.

Learning disability programs involves tailoring teaching methods, materials, and assessments to accommodate the diverse learning needs of students. This approach allows educators to provide customized support to students with learning disabilities while ensuring that all students are challenged and engaged (Tomlinson, 2001). Collaborative program involve collaboration between general education and special education teachers to plan, co-teach, and assess students with diverse learning needs. These models promote shared responsibility, expertise, and resources, creating inclusive learning environments where all students can thrive (Friend & Cook, 2016). Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are personalized plans developed for students with learning disabilities to outline educational goals, accommodations, and specialized services. By addressing students' unique strengths and challenges, IEPs facilitate access to appropriate supports and interventions classrooms (IDEA, 2004). Inclusive Challenges in Inclusive Education Attitudinal Barriers Negative attitudes and misconceptions about disabilities can hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education practices. Educators, parents, and peers may hold stereotypes or lack awareness about the capabilities of students with learning disabilities, impacting their educational experiences and social inclusion (Forlin, 2010). Resource Limitations Inclusive education requires adequate resources, including funding, specialized personnel, assistive technologies, and professional development opportunities for educators. Limited resources can

restrict the implementation of inclusive practices and affect the quality of support provided to students with learning disabilities (Sailor, 2022). Policy and legislative frameworks play a crucial role in promoting inclusive education practices. Laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) internationally emphasize the right to inclusive education and provide guidelines for ensuring equal access and opportunities for students with disabilities (UNESCO, 2017). Orea (2018) examines how certain states have developed innovative programs that effectively integrate students with learning disabilities into mainstream classrooms while others lag behind due to systemic issues.

Kumar & Sarang (2020) highlights issues such as inadequate teacher training, lack of resources, and insufficient awareness among parents regarding their children's rights under the act. These challenges hinder effective execution and limit access for students with learning disabilities.

Basmah (2022) in the study, "Interaction Between Students with and without Learning Disabilities in an Inclusive School from their Teachers' Perspective Saudi Arabia" explore teachers' perspectives on interactions between students with and without Learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom. Teachers observed generally positive interactions between students with and without disabilities, highlighting the importance of fostering social relationships and support networks.

One significant gap lies in the actual implementation of policies related to learning disabilities. While the legislation provides a framework for inclusion, there is limited research examining how the learning disability programs translate into practice within classrooms. This emphasizes inclusive education, which aims to integrate children with disabilities, including those with learning disabilities, into mainstream schools.

Statement of the Problem:

It is crucial to address the needs of children with learning disabilities (LD) to ensure their upliftment on the basis of learning outcomes and social performance. Thus, the problem is stated as:

"Learning Disabilities Programme in Inclusive contexts to elevate students' learning outcomes and social performance: Execution and Challenges"

Objectives of the study:

The following research objectives focus on understanding and enhancing learning disability programs in inclusive settings:

- To assess current execution of learning disability programs within inclusive educational settings for enhancing learning outcomes and social performance.
- To identify the challenges faced by educational institutions in implementing Learning disability programs within inclusion framework.
- To formulate actionable recommendations that can enhance learning disability programs.

Research Questions of the Study:

- How will the learning disability programs execute within inclusive educational settings?
- What are the key challenges faced in implementing learning disability programs in inclusive classrooms?
- Is it possible to formulate actionable recommendations that can enhance learning disability programs?

Research Methodology:

A comprehensive examination of policies was conducted for this study and to examine the current literature regarding the learning disabilities programs.

Analysis & Interpretation of Results:

Research Objective 1: It has been found that the current execution of learning disability programs within inclusive educational settings based on:

- **Determining the guiding concepts:** All students, including those with learning disabilities, should have equal access to high-quality learning opportunities. Inclusive education aims to provide each student with the specialized support they require to reach their full potential, not just to put them in the same classroom. This is demonstrated by regulations that support thorough Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and proactive parent consultation to identify suitable placements and services.
- **The execution of IEPs, or individual education plans:** The IEP, which is a key component of these programs, must be created quickly after a student's particular needs are determined. IEPs guarantee that instruction is tailored to each student's needs in order to facilitate progress toward curricular standards. They also contain regular assessments, support services, and well-defined goals.
- **Ongoing and Comprehensive Evaluation:** For effective implementation of LD programme in inclusion settings, continuous observation and evaluation must be included into regular classroom activities. Teachers can quickly modify their course by using assessment as a means of gathering evidence about student performance and learning strategies. In order to determine which areas pupils,

need more assistance, this integrated evaluation approach is crucial. This keeps support programs flexible and data-driven. The continuous cycle of formative, summative, and diagnostic evaluations makes it possible to provide precise, immediate feedback that is required for early interventions and ensuing program modifications.

- **Coordination of resources and cooperative teamwork:** Teachers, administrators, special education staff, and occasionally other experts (such as psychologists or speech-language pathologists) make up teams. In order to address social-emotional learning as well as academic demands, a collaborative approach is essential. This ensures that support services are integrated into the inclusive setting and are thorough.

- **The Appeals Process and Parental Involvement:** A key component of these programs' effectiveness is significant parental participation. Parents must be consulted, particularly when decisions are made that have a major influence on specific educational programs, including adjustments to placement or support models. Furthermore, established appeals processes, which are required under pertinent education legislation, offer protections that preserve the integrity of the student's entitlement to an equitable, customized educational program.

- **Allocating Resources and Continuously Assessing the Effectiveness of Programs:** Regular audits and review procedures are also a part of the current implementation. The ministry's audits and enrollment data reviews guarantee equitable resource distribution and each school's ability to fulfill its responsibilities under inclusive education. This continuous observation acts as a feedback loop to identify areas that require improvement, highlight best practices, and modify support services as necessary. Monitoring important metrics like prevalence rates and performance on standardized tests, which offer outside confirmation of the program's execution quality, is another way to analyze its success.

Overall Interpretation: Learning disability programs are being implemented in inclusive classrooms shows a strong dedication to equity, individualized support, and ongoing evaluation. Even though there are still issues that need constant attention and modification, these programs work to guarantee that every student receives the education to which they are entitled by utilizing thorough IEPs, integrated assessment procedures, cooperative teamwork, active parental involvement, and frequent audits.

Research Objective 2: A detailed analysis of the primary obstacles educational institutions encounters while putting learning disability

programs into place within the context of inclusive settings are as:

- **Policy ambiguity and gaps between law and practice:** Although the legislative foundation for inclusive education is established by international agreements and national laws (like the Persons with Disabilities Act, the RTE Act, and later amendments like the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act), a common problem is the disconnect between these legal frameworks and their practical application. Free and inclusive education is required by law, but putting these demands into practice is sometimes hampered by imprecise rules, uneven local enforcement, and a lack of accountability. As a result, without the required administrative and financial support, educational institutions find it difficult to effectively operationalize inclusive programs.

- **Insufficient Resources and Infrastructure:** Large infrastructural issues confront educational institutions, especially those in rural or under-resourced locations. It's possible that schools lack assistive technology, specialized learning resources, and accessible classroom designs. Physical accessibility and the availability of customized learning support for certain (sometimes "invisible") disabilities are both impacted by the fact that many institutions lack the necessary resources to provide accommodations, even when policies call for them (e.g., extra aid or concessions in assessments).

- **Pedagogical Obstacles and Teacher Training:** A large number of teachers lack adequate training in inclusive pedagogy. Teachers frequently find themselves ill-equipped to modify their lesson plans, adjust their teaching methods, or employ different evaluation methods to accommodate students with learning difficulties. Both the unintentional stigmatization of pupils and the failure to make the required modifications during instruction and assessment are facilitated by this lack of knowledge and expertise. The issue is exacerbated by the possibility that teachers are ignorant of local support networks and national rules, or they may perceive further assistance as "special treatment."

- **Learning disabilities' "invisible" nature and stigma:** Certain learning difficulties are characterized as "invisible," meaning that they are not as readily noticeable as more evident physical or sensory limitations. Because of this invisibility, children or families may be reluctant to self-declare out of fear of stigma or prejudice resulting from labels, under-identification, and a general lack of awareness within the educational system regarding the need to modify teaching methods. Students with certain learning difficulties may thus not be able to take advantage of the support resources that are offered because teachers and administrators may fail to acknowledge or downplay their needs.

- **Challenges in Administration and Coordination:** Finding support for children may be delayed or made more difficult by a lack of interdepartmental collaboration within schools and between educational authorities. For instance, many students are unaware of or reluctant to request the accommodations they are entitled to due to complicated application procedures for assessment concessions and unclear communication channels on available support. Staff and students are deterred from actively participating in assistance programs by this bureaucratic complexity.

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Research Objectives 3:

Drawing from existing research and the requirements as well as evidence from teacher-training interventions like those detailed in the study, educational authorities and school systems can implement the following practical recommendations to improve learning disability (LD) programs:

- **Establish Consistent, Comprehensive Teacher Training:** Establish and require frequent in-service training seminars that provide refresher courses throughout time in addition to introducing the basics of learning disabilities (definitions, symptoms, screening instruments and referral guidelines). These courses give participants practical experience distinguishing between normal learning variances and actual learning disorders. In keeping with the RTE Act's emphasis on early intervention, this will equip teachers with the screening and observational abilities required for the early detection of LD.

- **Create a Protocol for Collaborative Screening and Referrals:** Using standardized screening instruments, such as the Dyslexia Assessment for the Languages of India, establish precise procedures for early detection. Remedial/therapeutic services and specialized diagnostic facilities are connected to schools through a defined referral process. To ensure that children receive an interdisciplinary review, this referral procedure should involve collaboration between teachers, parents, school counselors, and local health providers. The

government's obligations to provide prompt interventions under the RTE Act are in line with this.

- **Incorporate Curriculum Adaptations and Inclusive Teaching Methods:** It must include encourage educators to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles so that classrooms are designed to meet the requirements of students with particular learning disabilities, modify instructional materials (e.g., by offering alternative formats or integrating assistive technologies) and create and implement a monitoring system that keeps track of how many children are screened, referred, and subsequently diagnosed so that educational institutions may compare progress and modify instruction as needed.

- **Assign Specialized Resources to Aid in Implementation:** Make certain that sufficient funds and personnel are set aside for LD initiatives. This could involve investing in assistive technology and remedial education resources, as well as hiring or training internal special educators or learning disability coordinators. To lessen the overall financial burden on particular schools, work with governmental and nonprofit organizations to find grants or subsidies targeted at expanding diagnostic and remediation services.

- **Encourage greater community and parental involvement:** Organise informational seminars and provide parents with easily readable documents that outline the symptoms of learning disabilities, the value of early screening, and the available support options.

Establish lines of communication that allow parents to be involved in recognizing possible learning difficulties and assisting with the referral process.

Form alliances with neighbourhood health and educational organizations to provide school initiatives with access to community resources and knowledge, such as specialist clinics.

- **Establish a System of Continuous Assessment and Feedback:** Establish a mechanism for tracking teacher knowledge and screening/referral results on a regular basis to ensure that the efficacy and quality of LD programs are continuously assessed and improved. As with the study's pre-experimental design, use assessments both before and after the intervention to gauge the increase in teacher competence and modify training materials as necessary. To identify issues (such as ambiguous screening criteria or problems with the referral process), get input from educators, parents, and kids. Then, address these issues in further training sessions.

- **Adapt Policies to the Frameworks for Disability Rights:** In order to publicly acknowledge the identification, referral, and support of kids with learning disabilities as a component of each school's commitment to equitable access to education, school

and district policies should be reviewed and updated. All policies clearly outline the school's legal duty to make reasonable accommodations (according with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act and the RTE Act) and the procedures for handling complaints and holding people accountable.

Overall Interpretation: Through the integration of these suggestions into a comprehensive approach, educational systems can improve teacher proficiency (and thus the early identification of learning disabilities) and establish a strong framework that facilitates prompt evaluation, referral, and continuous remedial assistance for kids with learning disabilities. This integrated strategy practically improves the educational outcomes and general well-being of the impacted children.

CONCLUSION

Despite the Government of India's and our UT's efforts to make primary education accessible to all, there remains a significant issue with the undetected learning disabilities among many children, rendering them invisible in society. The lack of surveys on these children may stem from the often overlooked and misunderstood nature of their disabilities. Consequently, these children continue to face challenges in mainstream schools without any recognition of their struggles. As the educational environment becomes increasingly competitive, those with hidden disabilities find it difficult to thrive, leading to a neglect of their potential talents. Alarming, research indicates that between 10 to 15 percent of the school population experiences learning difficulties, which undermines the ideals of universal elementary education and complete literacy (Pandey, 2003). In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, there is a notable absence of professional research focused on learning disabilities. It is imperative for the government to collaborate with various members of the academic community to create standardized assessment tools in all Indian languages for identifying specific learning disabilities. Additionally, there is a need for awareness programs that inform about the rights and resources available to individuals with these disabilities, along with the allocation of funds to support these initiatives. Therefore, it is crucial to highlight the challenges faced by learning disability programs and to address the rights and concerns of learning-disabled students at a national level, empowering them to advocate for their legal rights in education. In order to promote an inclusive society where all children have the chance to achieve academic success, the relationship between learning impairments and educational rights is essential. Recognizing these rights was made possible in large part by the policy makers; yet, continued work is

required to guarantee successful implementation and assistance for all students for their academic and social competences.

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