

## **Assessment and Management of Students with Learning Disabilities: Intervention Strategies**

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### ***Abstract***

*Over the years, Learning Disabilities (LD) among learners has been identified globally as a major factor contributing negatively to student-teacher relationships in the classroom. Hardly are regular schools able to satisfy the requirements of children with learning disabilities in terms of meeting their unique academic needs. Students with learning disabilities are required to go beyond the usual classroom work and do extra work equated with their equals who do not have learning disabilities, so as to maintain their evaluations with their equals. Thus, this paper examined assessment and Management of Students with LD in Oyo township: Intervention Strategies research and theoretical considerations are presented for the following topic areas: meaning of Specific Learning Disability (SLD), disorders associated with SLD, sources of information for assessment planning assessment and management of students with LD, characteristics of children with learning disability (LD), intervention strategies in management of children with LD and major stakeholders' roles and psychological distress.*

**Keywords:** *Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Intervention strategies in management of children with LD, Assessment planning assessment and management of students with LD*

## Introduction

Over the years, students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) comprise the most populous category of eligibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, IDEA (2016). While students with SLD may share categorical eligibility, the category of SLD includes a very diverse, heterogeneous spectrum of learning challenges. Specific learning disabilities are the result of individual differences in neurological structure and function that affect an individual's ability to receive, process, store, and/or communicate information. Advances in brain imaging have allowed researchers to map characteristic challenges associated with SLD to various regions of the brain.

This study however is discussed under the following subheadings:al to make money and contribute to economic growth and social development of a country.

### Meaning of Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

While these advances have shed light on brain function and the location of various cognitive processes, our ability to diagnose SLD, as defined in IDEA (2016) in Baesler (2018) relies on observable behaviour. Here are some relevant definitions of Students Learning Disability.

Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, intellectual disabilities, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

A majority of students identified as eligible under Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) were found to have SLD due to the complexity of the “basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written”. When manifested as challenges with the ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, and/or do mathematical calculations, the impact on a student's academic performance defines the disability in educational settings. The literature describes a number of common types of learning disabilities that affect the academic areas of reading, mathematics, and written language. They may occur along with challenges in attention, language, and behavior, which require that school personnel look comprehensively at the needs of the individual when developing an evaluation plan (IDEA, 2016).

Attending school, studying, writing examinations, among other activities taken under school-life, is one of the most stress-inducing areas in the lives of young people (Khan, 2016). This is especially so among students with learning disabilities because their insufficiencies make their teaching and learning more tasking (Wiesner-Groff, 2021), hence, this requires more psychosocial support (Cavioni, Grazzani and Ornaghi, 2017). Students with learning disabilities usually fight with persistent incidents of frustration, anxiety,

depression and are treated as second-class students (Cataudella, Carta, Mascia, Masala, Petretto and Penna, 2021) in most parts of the world, especially in developing countries like Nigeria.

This has however brought negative self-concept, little motivation to invest more effort in their academics, thus, causing a weakening in their academic performance (Sahoo, Biswas and Padhy, 2015; Papanastasiou, 2017). According to Jobson-Mitchual (2018), learning disabilities are neurological in nature. They affect the processing of information, which in turn short-circuit fundamental learning abilities, and affect various subject areas like language, reading and Mathematics. In addition, learning disability thwart advanced skills like time management, inability to concentrate, impaired reasoning, especially when attention is needed for a long time.

Papanastasiou (2017) and Ehmke (2021) defined mental disorders as learning disability and condition in which individual's standard obtained in normal basic reading, mathematic abilities, and written tests are below standard expected in relation to age, education, and reasoning level. The most common forms of learning disabilities negatively affect writing, mathematical abilities and reading among students. These may be associated with other conditions like language problem, attention disorders, and behavioural problems. However, they are all unique on how their impacts are felt on learning (Cataudella, et al., 2021). Examples of learning disabilities include dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, auditory processing disorder and dyspraxia. It has been pointed that Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that disturbs reading and associated processing skills that depend on language. Even though its symptoms sometimes differ from individual to individual, it negatively affects the students' ability to read smoothly, write, spell words and remember things that has been learnt.

Meanwhile, Dyscalculia is a learning disorder that renders people incapable of understanding and recalling anything related to numbers and mathematics (symbols and formulas). In contrast, Dysgraphia is characterised by poor fine-coordination abilities and are unable to write. Similarly, students with Auditory Processing disorder (central auditory processing disorder) are unable to recognise the slight differences of sounds in words even in cases where the sounds come out very loud and clear enough to hear. These students are unable to tell the direction where sound is coming from (Sahoo, Biswas and Padhy, 2015). In rare instances, they can tell the direction a sound is coming from with extreme difficulty, coupled with difficulty in filtering out confounding noise.

Dyspraxia is associated with the struggle to control muscle, thereby making it difficult to move and bring the muscles under control. This causes problems in coordination, speech, language and can impede learning. This condition is often with dyslexia, dyscalculia, or attention deficit and hyperactive disorder (ADHD) (Jobson-Mitchual, 2018). Also, Avoke and Yekple (2006) have reported learning disabilities as the most prevalent type of school related problem among other difficulties (such as hearing impairments, visual impairments).

According to Walsh (2018), learning disability is the most commonly diagnosed disability that has the most negative impact on children, adolescents, schools and society at large. In reality, in the largest group of special needs students are those with learning

disabilities in North America (Whitley, 2008; Shukla and Agrawal, 2015). Learning disabilities has a negative effect on students-teacher relationships when unnoticed or when overlooked. Also, hardly are normal schools able to meet the requirements of children with learning disabilities in terms of meeting their unique academic needs (Shukla and Agrawal, 2015). Students with learning disabilities are required to go beyond the usual classroom work and do extra work compared with their counterparts who do not have learning disabilities, so as to maintain their grades with their equals (Jobson-Mitchual, 2018). Thus, most of them struggle with psychological distress, and require extra guidance and direction to enable them to accomplish a task successfully within a given frame of time in and outside of the classroom. This, however, does not mean lack of intelligence, but they require a different learning method (Jobson-Mitchual, 2018).

The self-concept of student has also been found to be influenced by students' intellectual aptitude. Unambiguously, students with learning disabilities have been found to have lower self-concept, when compared to their counterparts who have higher intellectual aptitude (Lindeblad, Nilsson, Gustafson and Svensson, 2019).

According to McKenzie, Murray and Derries (2020), self-concept is the manner in which an individual evaluates the awareness he or she has about himself/herself including his attitudes. Self-concept is also related to how an individual rates his worth which may include a general view of their social acceptance and their personal feelings about who they are (Bellmore and Cillessen, 2006). According to Sternke (2010), peoples' self-concept usually develops based on their experiences and how those experiences are evaluated. The self-concept of younger people is easily changed because their life is driven by self-discovery. The direct opposite applies to older people because their self-concept is more resolute and organised because their conception about who they are set (Cherry, 2017).

### **Disorders Associated with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)**

A number of disorders that involve specific areas of information processing are commonly associated with SLD. While these associated disorders are not specific subtypes of learning disabilities, they involve weaknesses in the ability of the individual to process information efficiently (receive, process, associate, retrieve, and express). These challenges with information processing often lead to frustration, poor self-esteem, and social withdrawal for individuals with SLD.

**Auditory Processing Disorder:** It describes a weakness in a student's ability to understand and use auditory information. Individuals with an auditory processing deficit may struggle with:

- i. Auditory discrimination (the ability to notice, compare, and distinguish distinct and separate sounds, critical for developing reading skills);
- ii. Auditory figure-ground discrimination (the ability to recognise a specific sound from a noisy background);
- iii. Auditory memory (short-term and long-term recall of orally presented information);
- iv. Auditory sequencing (the ability to understand and recall sound and word order); and

- v. Spelling, reading, and written expression.

**Visual Processing Disorder:** It describes a weakness in the individual's ability to understand and use visual information. Students with deficits in visual processing may have challenges with:

- i. Visual discrimination (noticing and comparing visual features to distinguish one item from another);
- ii. Visual figure-ground discrimination (the ability to distinguish a shape or printed character from a background);
- iii. Visual sequencing (being able to see and distinguish the order of symbols, images, or words);
- iv. Visual memory (the short-term and long-term recall of visually received information);
- v. Visual closure (the ability to recognise an object when not all of it is visible); and
- vi. Spatial relationships (the ability to understand the positioning of objects in space).

**Nonverbal Learning Disabilities:** These individuals may have unique learning and behavioural profiles that include elements of the subtypes of learning disabilities but differ in significant ways. Students with nonverbal learning disabilities may have pronounced strengths in verbal expression skills, vocabulary, reading, comprehension, and auditory memory. Often, they will struggle with:

- i. Mathematics computation and problem solving;
- ii. Visual spatial tasks and motor coordination; and
- iii. Understanding the concept of "body language" and social cues, which may cause struggles in social and academic contexts.

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):** Students with ADHD struggle with inattention, hyperactivity, and/or distractibility in varying degrees. According to The State of Learning Disabilities, 3rd Edition (2014), as many as one-third of students identified as having SLD may also have ADHD, which like SLD is linked to heredity, brain structure and function. Unlike learning disabilities, ADHD is attributable to neurochemical imbalances in the brain, and has been treated effectively with individually developed intervention plans that may include a combination of behavioral and pharmacological therapies.

**Sensory Processing Disorder:** Some students with SLD may have sensory processing issues resulting in oversensitivity to sights, sounds, textures, flavors, smells as well as other sensory input.

**Speech and Language Impairment:** Given that the definition of SLD refers to a disorder in the basic psychological processes associated with understanding and using language, both

spoken and written, it is not uncommon for students with SLD to also meet the criteria for speech and language impairment. Poor academic performance may be the result of challenges with language processing, and may require supports for overall improvement.

**Emotional Disturbance:** Students with SLD may have emotional and behavioural concerns resulting from deficits in social skills, social information processing, and self-concept. However, these emotional and behavioural issues cannot be the primary cause of the student's learning difficulties. When these issues have existed over a long period of time, and to a marked degree that adversely affects the student's performance, the team may want to consider eligibility as a student with an emotional disturbance.

**Giftedness:** Students who possess above-average intellectual ability in the range of giftedness may also have some areas of pronounced weakness in their ability to process information. Therefore, teams need to recognise the possibility that a student with high intellectual abilities may also have a SLD.

### **Sources of Information for Assessment Planning for Students with SLD**

According to Baesler (2018), the goal of the assessment plan should be to provide an accurate, current description of a student's achievement levels as compared with same age peers and academic content standards. These sources may include, but are not limited to:

**Classroom Performance:** These include work samples, attendance records, curriculum-based measurement, unit tests, diagnostic probes, rating scales and progress monitoring data.

Classroom observation (minimum of one required for each suspected disability, where appropriate.): This observation may have occurred during intervention process.

**Input from Parents (via interview):** Strengths and challenges.

**Developmental History:** This includes ability to follow directions, attention skills, academic skills, social and behavioural skills, relevant medical or psychological information, family and culture and economic and environmental impacts.

Input from Teachers (via interview): This consists of student's areas of interest. Participation in class, ability to attend to task, academic, social, and behavioural strengths, preferred learning styles, work initiation and completion, academic, social, and behavioural concerns.

**Data from Evidence-based Interventions:** This includes progress monitoring data.

Data from other programmes: It includes (EL, low-socioeconomic), EL intervention data, proficiency rates in first language and English, verification of dominant language, consider need for bilingual services, dominant language assessments and dynamic Learning Assessments.

**Standardised Assessments:** These are criterion referenced tests (for example NWEA or MAP), state, district, and school assessments (such as NDSA), achievement assessments (such as Key Math, Woodcock Reading) o Intellectual assessments (such as Weschler, Stanford Binet), curriculum-based measurement (CBM).

**Assessment and Management of Students with LD**

Assessment forms one part of the pedagogic process and this is well reflected by a literature which is underpinned by a number of different theoretical perspectives. These approaches are not presented here however as discrete and separate, but as providing complementary insights into classroom practice.

The work of Brooks and Brooks (1993) highlights the active role of teachers in encouraging student involvement in classroom assessment activities. Though the focus of their work is on pupils without learning difficulties being taught in mainstream educational settings, their recommendations would appear to have an application to the work of all teachers, and are resonant with Black's view (1996) that skilled and sensitive teaching is needed if pupils are to make progress that builds on their current performance. Examples of active teaching to encourage student involvement in the full breadth of classroom assessment would include:

- i. acceptance of student autonomy and initiative;
- ii. responding to students' current interests;
- iii. allowing enough wait time for student responses;
- iv. encouraging dialogue and valuing the social aspects of learning;
- v. encouraging questioning by students;
- vi. requesting elaboration of students' responses;
- vii. exploring students' conceptual understanding;
- viii. the use of primary sources and materials that students' can interact with; and
- ix. the nurturing of curiosity through use of the 'learning cycle' on a regular basis.

These, what might be termed principles of effective teaching, are of the kind that Black and Wiliam (1998) identify as vital to the process of formative assessment. The effective application of such principles has been described by Watson (1999), who has shown them to be effective in work with students experiencing difficulties in learning in both specialist and mainstream school settings. Of particular note, is the way that such an approach can be used in group learning situations (Bennett, 1991) and in the way that it actively supports emotional engagement and an increasing social awareness in students' (Watson 1999). It also clearly shows the interdependent nature of sensitive and reflective teaching, key features of which are, responsiveness to student views, and carefully considered teacher talk.

A small scale survey by Rose, McNamara and O'Neill (1996) identified a number of difficulties that schools faced in achieving greater involvement of those pupils with more significant difficulties. Nevertheless, in recent years, schools have made significant progress along a route which will eventually involve all pupils in a more active partnership role in the classroom. It cannot be assumed however, as Bennett, Wood and Rogers (1997) note, that teachers have all of the necessary skills to work with in such ways, and therefore careful attention should be given to their continuing professional development in the areas of teaching and learning that focus on constructivist approaches.

### **Characteristics of students with specific Learning Disability (LD)**

Children with Specific Learning Disabilities (LD) vary in their presentation, needs and functionality.

#### **Poor Academic Performance**

Students with SLD may experience difficulties, academic performance, but also present problems in psychosocial functioning, thus pose emotional, social, and behavioural concern (Backenson, et al., 2015). It should be noted that children with LD experience more negative emotions compared to their peers (Danopoulou and Pittas, 2020). Students with Learning Disabilities (LD) may have varying educational experiences, since each child has condition specific needs. These students are typically viewed as outsiders, with a small circle of friends, or do not have the same quality of social interactions with their peers, who do not experience such disabilities (Rose, Forber-Pratt, Espelage and Aragon, 2013).

Moreover, reviews have shown a connection between Learning Disabilities (LD) and both internalising (such as anxiety, depression) and externalising issues (such as anger and delinquency). These awkward behaviours affect the normality of social and psychological development of children with learning difficulties. Literature emphasises that there is high comorbidity between LD and internalising problems. Low academic performance at school can worsen these problems and increase their prevalence (Sorrenti, et al., 2019).

#### **Socialising Problems**

The existence of learning difficulties in students is not only related to their academic performance, but also affects their mental and social development (Alevizou and Papadatos, 2016). Undeniably, integration class, separating the students from the general population, often affects their psychological adjustment and their acceptance by their peers, since there is a relative labelling that characterises them as someone with 'learning difficulties.' Thus, often interacting with interlocutors is difficult, and there is often rejection from their classmates who do not face similar difficulties.

Often, students with Learning Disabilities face additional social and emotional difficulties, and adjustment problems at school (Jolade, 2007). They usually feel frustration, anger, diminished self-perception, and difficulty in social situations. Repeated failure is associated with low academic motivation, decreased sense of satisfaction with cognitive work, negative attitudes toward reading, low levels of self-efficacy, and lack of interest in continuing work (Alevizou and Papadatos, 2016). A vicious circle of negative experiences and emotions is created, that is usually accompanied by social dissatisfaction, loneliness, symptoms of depression and lack of social interaction, affecting the psychosocial adjustment of students in the school-educational context. Students with Learning Disabilities are less accepted by their peers, which is directly related, not only to levels of loneliness, social dissatisfaction and depressive symptoms they may experience, but, also, to their levels of self-awareness and self-esteem.



## **Depression**

Students with Learning Disabilities indicated a higher prevalence of depressive symptoms. Longitudinal and epidemiological studies documented how depressive symptoms increase in a linear way by creating a continuity from the early depressive episodes to the major depression in adults (Alesi, Gaetano and Pepi, 2014). Analogously, students with LD present chronic low levels of depression and anxiety and are more depressed than peers who do not have LD, therefore more susceptible to emotional and social difficulties (Sahoo, Biswas, and Padhy, 2015). At long term, they perceive themselves as failures and develop depressive episodes. More specifically, depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, low self-esteem, and guilt are more prevalent in students with learning difficulties. So far, anxiety disorders are frequently associated with depressive symptoms with rates ranging from 16 to 50% increasing in chronicity and severity (Alesi, et al., 2014).

However, the diagnosis of childhood depression is arduous since a great deal of the criteria for the diagnosis is common among child psychopathologies. Supplementary, students are not capable of easily recognising their emotions and thoughts (Rodrigues et. al., 2016), since a growing area of research suggests that emotion processing may be impaired in children with Learning Disabilities. Thus, making it essential for caregivers to recognise possible symptoms and seek help (Hendren, Haft, Black, White and Hoeft, 2018). Assessing comorbidity in depression and anxiety in children with Learning Disabilities, may present serious challenges, since deficits in understanding emotions, depressive and anxious symptoms may be reported. Thus, self-report measures may not be sufficient to assess comorbid depression and anxiety in youth with Learning Disorders.

## **Self-Esteem Issues**

Series of studies have shown that there is an association between poor school achievement or Learning Disabilities and low self-esteem. It has been found that 70% of students with learning disabilities have low self-perception (Padeliadu, 2011). A student's self-worth may affect and simultaneously be affected by school achievement and one negatively affects the other (Alesi, et al., 2014). Student with LD usually come across academic failure due to the school's high demands (Padeliadu, 2011). Failure and poor performance lead them to doubt their academic abilities, which discourage them, and causes fear of potential failure (Okore, 2007).

In this cyclical context, students with LD tend to use self-protective strategies in order to reduce the stress associated with failure and protect their self-worth, such as avoiding challenging situations which demand effort (Alesi, et al., 2014). Regardless of parents' and teachers' work to help a child achieve academic success, the fact that many student with Learning Disabilities are repeatedly disappointed and lack progress can result in what is known as "learned helplessness." Learned helplessness occurs, after someone has experienced unpleasant situations repeatedly, which leads them to believe that they are unable to change those situations (Pandy, 2012). They give personal interpretations to their previous failures or successes and avoid projects they consider to be beyond their capabilities. By doing this, they accept failure as a normal process, refuse to make an effort

and show less interest in school projects (Padeliadu, 2011).

According to Weiner's theory of motivation (Okore, 2017), individuals attribute failure or success to five variables: the ability of the individual, the effort he has made, the ease or difficulty of the task, and the help or obstruction by others (Santrock, 2020). The majority of pupils with Learning Disabilities believe their work is controlled solely by external factors such as teachers, the difficulty of the work, and random events (Padeliadu, 2011). A student's low self-worth can also be an obstacle in social relationships with classmates by encouraging feelings of isolation and depressed behaviours (Alesi, et al., 2014). Students with Learning Disabilities also tend to compare themselves with their classmates, who do not encounter such difficulties. They are unable to grasp things as easily as their classmates, which makes them feel ashamed, and thus avoid social activities. They may shun themselves from school activities due to the way of viewing themselves, in an effort to avoid judgment (Pandy, 2012).

### **Intervention Strategies in Management of Children with SLD**

Often, pupils/ students with Learning Disabilities possess the required mental abilities to cope with school material, but do not develop the appropriate strategies that allow them to combine the already existing knowledge with the new data, to build new knowledge. Thus, for example, they do not develop effective strategies for the decoding of language symbols; the processing of verbal stimuli; the relationship between them; and the automation of arithmetic calculations. The absence or incomplete development of such strategies imply the inability to build concepts, which makes the pupils/students learning efforts even more difficult in the next step. Consequently, it is very important to apply some intervention strategies to help children with these difficulties (Padeliadu, 2011). Students with Specific Learning Disabilities fail to engage in self-regulation activities and do not comprehend the usefulness of such strategies in their learning process (Reid, Lienemann and Hagaman, 2013). They also have a false attribution of failure or success; therefore, it is important to teach that both failure and success depend on their efforts (Santrock, 2020). However, there has been a lack of sufficient engagement and practice of intervening strategies, as far as the school environment is concerned, due to several limitations, such as time, resources and teacher training in assessment and intervention in students with LD (Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, and Barnes, 2018).

Firstly, self-regulation plays an important role in emphasising that poor academic performance depends on their efforts and the strategies that accompany the learning process. The most effective self-regulation techniques are self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-instruction, self-reinforcement, and goal setting activities (Reid, et al., 2013). According to these techniques, students observe their own behaviour and actions to control or change them (self-monitoring). Evaluating their own actions (self-evaluation), organising their studying for instance, by keeping notes (self-instruction) and providing themselves with reinforcement by setting goals for the future (Schunk and Zimmerman, 2012), are vital for the learning processes. Those techniques can be taught by teachers and should be implemented in cooperation with them, so that students learn how to apply them on their own (Reid, et al., 2013)

Another intervention strategy for helping pupils/ students with Learning Disabilities, is “Response to Intervention,” This technique is associated with early elementary grades, because much of the research on screening, assessment, and interventions concern children in kindergarten through third grade (Vaughn and Fletcher, 2012). Students whose learning trajectory shows little improvement, may be considered for additional, more intensive, intervention or evaluated for special education services (O'Connor, Bocian, Sanchez, Beach and Flynn, 2013). “Response to Intervention” constitutes a prevention and remediation framework. In specific, “Response to Intervention” can provide continuous and thorough progress observation, universal screening and/or curriculum-based measurements with classroom instruction based on research and increasingly layering of more intensive interventions to satisfy students' instructional or behavioural needs.

There are two ways that Response to intervention can be executed. The first one, is about efforts which school makes, in order to prevent and treat behaviour problems. These approaches try to identify students with behaviour problems, after school wide approaches to managing behaviour effectively are implemented. Specifically, there are some decision-making teams which are responsible for problem-solving processes. They identify the behaviour problem and propose research-based practices for addressing the problem, implement the right practices, evaluate their outcome, and then reconvenes to consider whether the problem has been resolved, leading to improvements in behaviour (Zhang, Yan, Zhao and Yuan, 2014).

The second way “Response to Intervention” has been implemented is associated with reading and mathematics difficulties in children. Universal screening is utilised in order to identify those students facing learning difficulties in reading and/or mathematics, after having implemented research-based classroom practices (Wood, 1992). Thus, students with learning needs in reading and mathematics are provided increasingly intensive interventions, often using standardised protocols to carry out interventions and monitor students' responses. Data which are derived from both the above-mentioned approaches, are very useful for future interventions or for assisting in referral and identification for special education.

## **Major Stakeholders' Roles and Psychological Distress**

### **1. Social Support Strategies**

Most students with learning disabilities perform poorly in their academic work when compared to their without learning disabilities counterparts (Flisher, Malhotra, Nikapota and Patel, 2008; Sahoo, Biswas and Padhy, 2015; Walsh, 2018). Research has shown that, the level of social support offered to students with learning disabilities has a direct effect on their mental well-being. In other words, children who receive higher social support from significant others (such as family, friends and peers) are more likely to experience less psychological distress, when compared to those who receive little or no social support from significant others (Waters, Lester and Cross, 2013; Zhang, et al., 2014).

Hence, social support serves as a buffer against psychological distress (for example

stress, anxiety and depression) and psychological disorders (such as post-traumatic stress disorder) (Ozbay, et al., 2007; Gerich, 2013). Similar to their other counterparts, most children with learning disabilities easily perceive negative behaviours towards them, and when this persists, it dents their ability to adaptively cope with their disability. Yet, when people around them (especially their parents) offer them the needed social support, it helps protect them from being psychologically distressed (Zhang, et al., 2014).

Social support as defined by Cukor and Kimmel (2017) is the extent to which one experiences a sense of belongingness within a society where one can provide and receive affection, from family, peers, and other members of the society. Scott (2020) has classified social support into four main types: emotional social support, informational social support, esteem social support and tangible social support. Tangible social support is offered when an individual is supported with assistance (e.g. given money, food, etc.) to help them manage a problem. Meanwhile, esteem social support is offered when people express their confidence and encouragement to a child with the aim of boosting their self-esteem (i.e. belief in themselves). On the other hand, informational social support has to do with giving a someone guidance, suggestion, useful information or an advice. Finally, emotional social support often involves physical comfort such as hugs or pats on the back, as well as listening to and empathizing with others (Scott, 2020).

Studies such as that of Hapke (2005) and Bane, Deely, Donohoe, Dooher and Flaherty (2012) have revealed that having the needed social support among students with learning disabilities goes a long way to help them cope with their condition. Explicitly, it was discovered that students with learning disabilities gain a lot from a robust social support network system from parents, siblings, teachers and schoolmates (Hakpe, 2016). Nevertheless, Heiman's (2006) study which targeted 191 students with learning disability and 190 students without learning disability discovered that, students with learning disabilities saw themselves as not having much support compared with their nonhandicapped counterparts. Heiman's (2006) result reinforced that of Pavri and Monda-Amaya (2001) who discovered that even though students with learning disability usually feel lonely especially when they are in school. As a result of this, students with learning disabilities actively seek social support from significant others like parents, siblings, among others (Bane, et al., 2012).

## **2. Pupils/Students with SLD Strategies Roles specific Learning Strategies Roles**

One of the reasons why looking into the level of social support sought and received by students with learning disability is important, is because social support correlates with their psychological well-being (Fauziah and Muslihati, 2018). In other words, social support (from family members, peers, teachers, and coaches) leads to lower psychological distress and vice versa (Hapke, 2015). Given its benefits to people's mental health, a strong and reliable social support network may be particularly critical during adolescence because it is one of the most critical developmental stages in life (Hapke, 2015). This is because adolescents, usually, experience rapid biological, social, emotional and cognitive changes that redefines the ways they engage with family members, peers, friends, and teachers awareness and anticipation of the activity.

- i. Pupils and students need to be encouraged to reflect overtly and in a detailed way on their achievements.
- ii. Pupils and students need to be enabled with appropriate degrees of support, to progress from monitoring and recording activities to being evaluative about their performance.
- iii. Self-evaluation skills include the development of comparison with previous achievement, supported by the use of easily understood and accessible methods.
- iv. Choice and the expression of preferences underpin the earliest participation in decision making.
- v. Self-evaluation is also aided through sharing opinions with others.
- vi. Developing confidence and raising self-esteem are integral parts of this process.

### **3. Teachers' Strategies**

This type of learning calls for teacher styles which promote reflection and problem solving. The case study observations illustrated a range of strategies that teachers used to support pupils/ students.

- i. Shared attention, communication and dialogue were found to be fundamental.
- ii. Creating scenarios that nurture curiosity and interest supports these processes. Allowing sufficient wait time for pupil responses encourages reflection.
- iii. Strategies for promoting dialogue include the careful use of questioning to help students remember and elaborate on their responses;
- iv. Active demonstration of reflective behaviour, which involves considering alternatives and their implications provides pupils and students with a potent model.

### **Conclusion**

It is always apt to treat children with a spirit of grace, showing understanding, compassion, love and acceptance to the students with Learning Disabilities, or any child for that matter, is necessary and rightly demanding, because in this way discrimination towards the child who has learning difficulties, or any other difficulties is eliminated. Finally, further research is vital for us to understand the origins and effects of Learning Disabilities on a child's social and emotional development and academic experiences. Thus, additional studies need to be conducted for us to predict deficits in the student population and to recognise social and language problems to intervene adequately and promptly.

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