

## Reaching out the Dyslexic to offer support for building resilience and the Student teachers

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### Abstract

The identification of learning disability begins when parents or teachers suspect that a student is having problem coping with everyday school tasks because it is always an educational one. The teacher's rapport with a learning disabled child is proved to be vital in helping the child succeed. According to learning disabilities services, students can greatly benefit when the teacher takes a little time and thought to accommodate these needs. Today's children are tomorrow citizens. All children who can succeed life with the right support of schools and teacher as school is a first place where children's behavior and future education is shaped. The reason is that all students depend on the teacher is everything the teacher says and helping the children to learn. Teachers are in an ideal position to help families in early identification of problem and to provide appropriate guidance. This study discusses the perception of student teachers about the students with dyslexia and their knowledge and understanding the concept during pre- service teacher training course. The research was conducted in one pre-service teacher education institute. Data were collected through interview and focus group discussion of student teachers regarding various concepts and dimensions of dyslexia. They responded the interview questions and gave their opinion to the open ended questions of a focus group discussion as they perceive the term dyslexia. As improving the health of children is one responsibility for teacher. The researcher found that the student teachers should have adequate knowledge and understanding. It was found that teacher trainees are having lack of knowledge and understanding of the concept as well as the identification. Pre-service secondary teachers admitted they did not feel ready to work with students with dyslexia but acknowledged they will have students with dyslexia in their classrooms. While research continues to progress, continued adjustments to student teachers' knowledge regarding dyslexia and how to address it in the classroom may improve early intervention and student learning in the primary years. Implications and thoughts for future studies are addressed. This study can be a motivation to modify the pre-service curriculum and including different learning disability concepts and understanding them.

**KEYWORDS:** - Dyslexia, Role of Teachers, Student Teachers

### Introduction

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2006) believes that comprehensive interdisciplinary education programs are necessary for the preparation of all education professionals. To serve the needs of students with learning disabilities most effectively, all teacher trainees should have preparation that includes the competencies in the area of learning disability. The identification of learning disability begins when parents or teachers suspect that a student is having problem coping with everyday school tasks because it is always an educational one. The teacher's rapport with a child with learning disability is proved to be vital in helping the child succeed. According to learning disabilities services, students can greatly

benefit when the teacher takes a little time and thought to accommodate these needs. These students may need accommodation in some class room activities, assignments and exams. Making the child aware of a disability is a great service to the child. Unless such children are identified and properly treated, they may develop secondary emotional, social and family problems. It is in this context, the teacher's role become vital in safe guarding and promoting the mental health of children and early identification of deviations from normal. The school is one of the most organized and powerful systems in the society which presents opportunity to work through it and to influence the health and wellbeing of those who come in contact with it. This is especially true in Indian setting where there is a considerable shortage in mental health facility for children. Hence the researcher felt that it is important to understand the knowledge and opinion of teacher training students towards the child's disabilities as they who would become the future teachers and therefore it is essential that they should have the knowledge regarding the learning disabilities in children. By doing a thorough review of teacher education, the researcher felt that after the thorough analysis of the curricula and also the question papers of the teacher education in India showed that there is only one unit on the childhood psychological problems, the teacher trainees hardly remember the utterance of the word learning disability during their course period. Hence, learning disabilities is one such area where the teachers need adequate knowledge in handling these children in classroom situation. There are many reasons in children for school failure, but a common one is a specific learning disability. Children with learning disabilities usually have a normal range of intelligence. They try very hard to follow instructions, concentrate, and "be good" at home and in school. Yet, despite this effort, he or she is not mastering school tasks and falls behind. Learning disabilities affect at least 1 in 10 school children. Dyslexia is one of the learning disabilities. It is typically characterized by an unusual balance of skills. Dyslexia is a syndrome, a collection of associated characteristics that vary in degree and from person to person. These characteristics encompass not only distinctive clusters of problems but sometimes also distinctive talents. Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. (Lyon, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 2003, p. 2) It is neurobiological in origin, meaning that the problem is located physically in the brain. Dyslexia is not caused by poverty, developmental delay, speech or hearing impairments, or learning a second language, although those conditions may put a child more at risk for developing a reading disability (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Children with dyslexia will often show two obvious difficulties when asked to read text at their grade level. First, they will not be able to read as many of the words in a text by sight as average readers. There will be many words on which they stumble, guess at, or attempt to "sound out." This is the problem with "fluent word recognition" identified in the previous definition.

### **The teacher**

The teacher is a dynamic force in the school. A teacher's role is importance to bring a child's up. Teachers strive with heart and soul to raise children up to highest perfections of mankind to such a degree so that every one of them will be trained in the use of mind in acquiring knowledge. Teacher trainee also must have knowledge

about dyslexia because without proper knowledge and perception cannot motivate the future the student. Dyslexia is most common problem among children. Many teachers are unaware of dyslexia. Reading and Learning are the two things that determine the success of a child during his school career. First he learns to read, and then he reads to learn. Reading is therefore a paramount importance in the educational process, Lanser (2007). Dyslexia friendly classroom begins with a dyslexia friendly teacher. The first step toward making your classroom a welcoming learning environment for students with dyslexia is to learn about it. Understand how dyslexia impacts a child's ability to learn and what the main symptoms are. Unfortunately, dyslexia is still misunderstood. Many people believe that dyslexia is when children reverse letters and while this can be a sign of dyslexia in young children, there is much more to this language based learning

disabilities. The more a teacher knows about dyslexia, the better teacher can help their children with dyslexia. The dyslexia friendly approach involves building on what is known about dyslexia to date and applying that knowledge in the regular classroom, in day to day teaching, on the grounds that what benefits children with dyslexia, benefits all children. In addition, it requires a commitment by schools to acknowledge, respect and support dyslexia by including among the staff at least one person who is trained in learning disability and who will disseminate this knowledge to other staff members. By doing a thorough review of teacher education, the researcher felt that after the thorough analysis of the curricula and also the question papers of the teacher education in India showed that there is only one unit on the childhood psychological problems. Early detection of the dyslexia is very much important to prevent psychological problems and other complications in children. Hence, dyslexia is one of the aspects of learning disabilities where adequate knowledge in handling these children in class room situation.

### **The importance of teacher's knowledge and awareness of dyslexia**

Learning disability constitutes one of the major health problems which affect the educational processes. Journal of Global Pharma Technology (2005) says that researchers have been studying about learning disability in children for a long time. Many teachers today are unaware of the legal ramifications for negligence. The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1998) believes that comprehensive interdisciplinary education programs are necessary for the preparation of all education professionals. To serve the needs of students with learning disabilities most effectively, all teacher trainees should have preparation that includes the competencies in the area of learning disability. In many countries, the role and functioning of schools are changing and so is what is expected of teachers (Davis & Watson 2000). In addition to the foregoing, several studies have examined teacher knowledge and awareness of dyslexia and generally found weaknesses in some areas of awareness and knowledge and strength in others (Elias 2014; Furnham 2013; Knight 2018). Teachers' awareness and knowledge of dyslexia is significant in order to be able to help learners with dyslexia most effectively by implementing the best methods to help these learners. According to Dyslexic Action (2012), teachers who lack understanding of the nature of dyslexia run the risk of being unhelpful and use damaging comments that have long-lasting detrimental effects to the learners with dyslexia. It is thus important that teachers and schools have adequate understanding of dyslexia, as this understanding is likely to affect teachers' practice. Knight (2018) is of the view that teachers' awareness and knowledge about dyslexia is significant so

that teachers could identify those learners at risk and can develop relevant interventions. A number of studies conducted in the developing countries reveal that teachers have minimal readiness to identify learners with dyslexia (Abraham 2014; Peires et al. 2021). Few studies have been conducted in the developing countries on the learning challenges faced by learners with dyslexia. One of the prominent studies is a study conducted by Shetty and Sanjeev Rai (2014) in India. The results of their study concluded that only 1 in 3 teachers had adequate knowledge of dyslexia. Alawadh (2016) conducted a similar study on teachers' perceptions of the challenges related to provision of services for learners with specific learning difficulty (dyslexia) in Kuwait. The results of this study revealed that dyslexia was conceptualized differently by teachers in Kuwait as compared to their counterparts in the developed countries. The overall conclusion was that teachers were disempowered, lacked training and did not have sufficient knowledge of dyslexia or how to provide suitable early interventions.

### **Operational definitions**

**Dyslexia:** - In this study dyslexia means a learning disability that impairs a person's fluency or comprehension accuracy in being able to read.

**Student Teachers:** - Refers to individuals who are studying in I and II Year B.Ed course in a degree autonomous college of Cuttack, Odisha.

### **Objectives**

- To assess the level of knowledge regarding dyslexia among the student teachers.
- To assess the understanding of dyslexia among the student teachers.

### **Population:**

The population of the study is the student teachers of all teacher training institutes of Cuttack Odisha.

### **Sample:**

In this present study, sample is the student teachers of one Govt. degree autonomous college of Cuttack, Odisha who fulfilled the inclusion criteria are selected as sample.

### **Criteria for Sample Selection:**

#### **Inclusion criteria:**

Those who are undergoing teacher training programme to teach in secondary schools.

Those who can understand English.

Those who were interested to participate in the study.

### **Sampling techniques and sampling size:**

Non-probability Convenient Sampling Technique was used to select the sample for the study. The total sample for this study is 100.

**Method:** Survey method was used for the study.

### **Description and interpretation of the tools:**

For this present study the following instruments were developed by the researcher. The tools were prepared with the help of review of literature, suggestions and recommendations from experts and by the past experience of the researcher. The tool was organized into the following sections.

**Tool-I: Demographic data for Student Teachers:** It deals with demographic data, which includes as age ,gender, marital status, number of children at home, type of family, religion, no of student handle in the classroom, source of information, basic educational qualification etc. Collected data was analysed with frequency and percentage distribution.

**Tool-II: Structured interview questionnaire:** To assess the knowledge on dyslexia: Structured knowledge questionnaire consist of 40 items based on general aspects of dyslexia and prevention and management of dyslexia. Each item has 4 options. Among the 4 options one answer is correct. Each correct answer carries “1” mark and wrong answer carries “0” mark. Total score was 40. Based on the percentage of scores, the knowledge was interpreted as above 75% was adequate knowledge; 51-74% was moderate knowledge and below 50% was inadequate knowledge.

**Tool-III: Focus Group Interview:** A focus group comprised of student teachers who completed the above-mentioned structured interview questionnaire was convened. Among all those who participated, seven student teachers volunteered to be part of the focus group. These seven student teachers discussed open-ended questions written by the researcher that were based on findings and information from current research. The purpose was to gather data regarding student teachers' knowledge and understanding about dyslexia and their perceived preparation level regarding teaching dyslexic students.

### **Data collection procedure**

Data collection is the gathering of information needed to address a researcher problem. The data has been collected to be for one month in the month of December, 2022. The investigator has collected the data after obtaining permission from the principal of the institute. Introduction about self was given and the student teachers were selected by convenient sampling technique based on sample criteria.

### **Data analysis and interpretation**

This deals with the analysis and interpretation of data from the student teachers at a selected teacher training institution of Cuttack (Odisha) to assess the knowledge regarding dyslexia. The findings based on the description an inferential analysis tabulated as follows:

Section I: Distribution of demographic variables of student teachers.

Section II: Analysis of level of knowledge and understanding of student teachers regarding Dyslexia.

**Table- 1**

S.No.	Demographic Variables	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
1	<b>Age in years</b> a) 20-25 years b) 25-30 years	92 08	92% 8%
2	<b>Gender</b> a) Male b) Female	- 50	- 100%
3	<b>Basic Educational qualification</b> a)M.A/M.SC b) BA c) B.Sc d) Any other degree	10 46 41 3	10% 46% 41% 3%
4	<b>Marital status</b> a) Married a) Unmarried	4 96	4% 96%
5	<b>Family type</b> a) Nuclear b) Joint	85 15	85% 15%
6	<b>Religion</b> a) Hindu b) Muslim c) Christian d) Other	96 2 2	96% 2% 2%
7	<b>Source of information</b> a) Electric media b) Print media c) Health personnel d) Not received any information	7 10 7 76	7% 10% 7% 76%

The table shows that distribution of demographic variables of the student teachers regarding age of student teachers, out of 100 sample 92 (92%) belong to 20-25 years, 8 (8%) were belong to 25-30 years. Regarding gender all the samples were female 100 (100%) were female though that was a women's college. Regarding marital status of the samples only 4 student teachers (4%) were married, 96 (96%) was unmarried. Regarding type family 85(85%) were lived in nuclear family, 15(15%) were lived in joint family. Among them 96 (96%) belong to Hindu religion, 2 (2%) belong to Muslims, 2 (2%) belong to Christian religion. Regarding basic educational qualification of student teachers 10(10%) have M.A/M.SC degree, 46(46%) have completed their B.A degree and 41(41%) have B.Sc and only 3 (3%) student teachers are having other degree. Regarding the sources of information received about dyslexia only 7 (7%) received their information through Electronic media, 10 (10%) received

information through Print media and 7 (7%) received information through health personnel and 76(76%) were not received any type of information about dyslexia.

### **Section II Assessing the level of knowledge on dyslexia among student teachers.**

Structured interview questionnaire method was used to assess the knowledge regarding dyslexia among student teachers. There are total 4 sections in the questionnaire measuring the knowledge and understanding of dyslexia. The sections are such as Introduction to dyslexia, Causes and types of dyslexia, Identification and assessment of dyslexia and management and prevention of dyslexia as well. During the assessment around overall 96(96%) of student teachers showed inadequate knowledge, most of the teacher trainee 4 (4%) demonstrated moderately adequate knowledge. In analyzing section wise, in first section (Introduction to dyslexia) 50% of students were able to answer the questions and some have given the wrong answers. Most of them didn't even attend the questions. In section II (causes and types of dyslexia), around 10% of the total students are able to answer the questions related to dyslexia, its types and causes. 60% of the sample was unable to attend the questions and 30% gave the wrong answers. In section III (Identification and assessment of dyslexia) there are total seventeen questions, out of that around 90% of total population didn't attend the questions they have left it unattended. Only 10% student teachers have attended the questions but out of that 2% have answered correctly. In section IV (Management and prevention of dyslexia) there are 13 questions related to management and prevention of dyslexia from very early age. In this no one has attempted any question.

### **Focus group discussion**

A focus group comprised of student teachers who completed the above mentioned structured interview questionnaire was convened. Of all those who participated, seven student teachers volunteered to be part of the focus group. These seven student teachers discussed open-ended questions written by the researcher that were based on findings and information from current research. The purpose was to gather data regarding student teachers' knowledge and understanding about dyslexia.

**Question:** What is student teachers' knowledge and understanding of dyslexia?

To answer this question, a focus group of seven student teachers was formed. Questions that were posed to them to address this question included the following:

What do you know about dyslexia?

What characteristics might a student with dyslexia show in the classroom?

Describe what effective instruction for a student with dyslexia might include?

Do students with dyslexia learn in the same way as a typical learner?

### **What do you know about dyslexia?**

Answers to this question, when asked Participant 1 replied, "I think there are different types of learners existing in a common classroom, what I know the students who are not able to read are called dyslexic." Two more Participants said the same thing. 4 more participants didn't answer anything even if asked many times. They said they are little bit confused about the term. They didn't feel very much confident to say anything about the problem dyslexia. The participants who answered were not able to

give any more information about dyslexia. Somehow they managed to answer a bit about, what they know. Though they didn't feel confident enough to answer the question because they don't have this information in their B.Ed syllabus. They said they only have the knowledge of inclusive education but not in details. What they know about dyslexia only what they got from other sources. The researcher gave some hints about the students with dyslexia and the issues they face in the classroom. After the discussion participants felt confident to recall and answer something.

### **What characteristics might a student with dyslexia show in the classroom?**

Characteristics of students with dyslexia were discussed. Some of them said the poor readers and poor achievers are dyslexics. Whereas some felt they could be high achievers, and others felt they could have both low and high achievers depending on the subject. Some of the participants explained their experiences of practice teaching, how some students had difficulty with word recall, which they can correlate to the issue performed by dyslexics. One participant recalled an incident when a student wanted to add to the class discussion, but she was having problem to say exactly what she wanted. Another participant explained her experience of internship time when a group of students could not able to make differences between the words Bus and Put. One participant said, she also has experienced one incidence when practice teaching was going on 2/3 students were struggling to read words such as they said "tactor" to "tractor", 'boos' to 'bus'.

### **Describe what effective instruction for a student with dyslexia might include?**

All of them have opined that paying attention is the most important way to deal with the students with dyslexia. They added that students must need modifications and accommodations. All of them could give the general statements about what could be done for them and some remedies of the problems the students have. They are not very much sure about the effective instructions. The participants gave their opinion that the students should have given more attention and first of all identification of those students in a proper way is most necessary. Two of them explained that they had some students with this problem in their classroom. One of them said, she thought from the beginning this is a poor reader and checked his background and came to know that the student is belong to a slum area. So she thought this might be the influence of bad environment. She said, "now I think, I was wrong". I could have tried to find out the real reason. It may be the same case what we are discussing. All the participants felt confident that the students should refer for assessment when they are having the particular issue.

### **Do students with dyslexia learn in the same way as a typical learner?**

When the group was asked that whether the students with dyslexia learn in the same way as a typical learner, they all agreed that they would not learn in the same way. Reasons they gave for their answer that exactly they don't know the proper way but they must learn in a different way as they have a special need. They should be given more attention while teaching because the non- dyslexic have the balance in learning and articulating the learned things. The dyslexics may need the different ways and space for learning according to their own pace. Some of the participants opined about the parental involvement in the learning process of the dyslexic. Parents should be aware about their child's need. The student has very little support at home, where maybe there's a right amount of support at home.

## Discussion

Teachers' awareness, understanding and knowledge of dyslexia is significant for teachers, several studies have examined teacher awareness and knowledge of dyslexia and generally found weaknesses in some areas of awareness, understanding, knowledge and strengths in others (Uma,2014; Joshi, Washburn & Kahn-Horwitz 2016; Elias 2014; Furnham 2013; Knight 2018). Another study that conducted by Khaliq et al. (2017) in Pakistan. Their findings revealed that's teachers were not aware of the term dyslexia and only few of them were able to identify the students with dyslexia and also they are not confident enough to manage it in their classrooms. These studies support the findings of the current study. This can be attributed, perhaps, to the different contexts and methodologies implemented. Dalton, Mackenzie and Kahonde (2012) discovered that in South Africa, the implementation of inclusive education is limited by a lack of teachers' skills and experience in customising the curriculum to suit a wide range of learning needs. This could be one of the reasons why all student teachers in the current study yearned for training on how to cope with learners with special education needs. This study also finds out there is a lack of knowledge and skills of dyslexia in their pre service teacher education curriculum. The participants in the study complained about their lack of skills on how to identify and assess the learners with dyslexia. This is a cause for concern because these learners do not take the time taken by the 'normal learners' when it comes to classroom activities and examinations. The same has been observed in this study. The student teachers have explained their experiences of their practice teaching time. As they perceived the dyslexic are very slow in reading and delivering the answers in time. Therefore, the teachers should be made aware that these learners need extra time in order to finish their tasks. It is also recommend that teachers give the remedial support to assist learners according to their identified reading difficulties. This move is likely to allow the learners with dyslexia to catch up with their peers. In this way we can say all the stakeholders should have the collaborative effort and adequate training of teachers to ensure effective support for learners with dyslexia.

## Conclusion

This study has explored the level of knowledge and understanding of dyslexia among student teachers who are in 2 year B.Ed course. The major finding emerging from this study is that the student teachers of Odisha are lack knowledge and understanding about dyslexia. The results of this study carry the notion that the lack of knowledge and understanding among student teachers regarding dyslexia and dyslexics may create difficulties for affected students in a great extent. To this end, it was mentioned in the introduction that learners with dyslexia needed trained teachers. As such, it is concluded that there is room for improvement as far as learning how to teach learners with dyslexia in the classroom is concerned. Because the pre -service curriculum is the main part of the teacher training. A trained teacher The findings of the study further revealed that most student teachers demonstrated some understanding of their practice teaching time about the solutions on how to deal with learners with dyslexia in the classroom although their coping strategies with these learners.

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