1.0. Introduction

All individuals are unique and hence, special education is bound to cater to the needs of all these individuals in compliance with the constitutional provision of equal opportunities. However, there are some individuals who, by virtue of their physical and mental abilities require a more relevant (or) appropriate instruction than is usually available within formal and informal educational structure. We call these people exceptional (or) special, and a domain of education has been constructed to satisfy their learning requirements (Laura and Ashman, 1985).

The educational system is successful only if it meets the diversified needs of heterogeneous groups of students. Any inclusive classroom must provide specially designed instructional programme to compensate/overcome the difficulties called learning difficulties. In America, the term learning difficulties is widely used in the place of learning disabilities. In India, usage of the term learning disability is more frequent for learning difficulties due to exposure to the American literature.

Teachers play an important role in any educational system. He/she is an artist who moulds and shapes the physical, intellectual and moral powers of the student. In any normal school one can find students with different disabilities like visual, hearing, mental retardation and orthopaedically handicapped apart from students with slow learning and learning difficulties. In many times, the children with severe disabilities are entered into the special schools meant for them. But the students with mild and moderate disabilities are in normal schools.
In many cases, these disabilities are unnoticed, unanswered and ignored. Unless and until such student’s needs are met in regular classroom or special classroom within the school, we can not fulfil the aim of Universalisation of Elementary Education and Equalization of Educational Opportunity to All. Integration of disabled students with normal students in normal schools is nothing but the provision of least restrictive environment for the disabled student. This approach helps the disabled student to grow and develop like normal student.

It promotes healthy social relationships between normal and disabled students by enhancing their growth and development on par with their normal peers. It gives an opportunity to participate in all academic and non academic activities in the society. It reduces the psychological problems of the disabled students. Basic readiness skills are required to integrate disabled student more effectively in normal schools. The normal school teachers require multiple talents to play diversified roles to handle these students. Special techniques are used only in case of student with severe disabilities and for developing only the basic academic skills. The mildly disabled do not require such special skills and require only modifications in the instruction. After learning special skills even the severely disabled can be educated in regular schools with suitable assistive devices. Special educational needs of most of the student with disabilities can be met effectively in mainstream schools, which in turn leads for better inclusive education practices.

1.1. Special Education and Learning Difficulties

Special education is an interesting new field of professional activity in education. Special education is meant to provide specially designed instructional programme to compensate or overcome the disabilities in students. Learning difficulties is the most recent classification to be included as a category of disability. Since the term was introduced, its use has become widespread in education but still educators remain unsure about the nature of its category.
In India, special education is an emerging discipline and an essential part of the modern education system. It includes all aspects of education, which are necessary to successfully run the courses and training programmes for abnormal students. The stream of special education requires specially designed courses and a particular type of instruction to be used for teaching the students, who are uncommon. In fact, special education demands special techniques, tacts and strategies to be adopted for a successful exercise.

In fact, special education is not a separate system, it is an integral part of the total programme of education. The teachers and trainees in the field of special education are supposed to be apt in normal teaching first and further require special acumen in this discipline, for imparting education to those student and students, who are not ordinary. They lack some capabilities and have a special knack for some other things.

As generally considered, special education is not a total programme which is entirely different from the education of ordinary student. Rather it includes those aspects of education which are specific in addition to the regular programme for all students. In some developed countries like USA and UK, these types of schools are mostly residential. But in a developing country like India, residential schools are very rare and now care is being taken to provide certain facilities to these students.

The field of special education encompasses heterogeneous groups who demand varied services: visually impaired, hearing impaired, mentally retarded, orthopedically handicapped, student with behavior disorders, gifted or talented and finally the learning disabled. The special needs students from the major category of horn and the learning disabled form a sub group.
1.2. Concept, Meaning and Definition of Learning Difficulties

1.2.1. Concept of Learning Disability

The field of learning disabilities is the newest challenging sub area of the broader field of special education. It was at a parents meeting in New York city in the early 1960’s this term was proposed by Samuel Kirk as a compromise because of the confusing variety of labels that were being used then to describe the child with relatively normal intelligence who has learning problems. Learning disability refers to learning problems which manifest in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write or do mathematical calculation which are not primarily due to visual impairment, hearing impairment, motor handicap, mental retardation environmental or economic disadvantages, but due to a disorder in the pathological process involved in understanding or in using language.

Learning disabilities were not officially named until 1963, but the historical roots of the field go back to the early 1800s. Starting in 1802 with Gall’s work, there is documented concern with dysfunction of the brain and the relationship of such dysfunction to observed disorders of spoken language. The advent of twentieth century witnessed increasing concern with what a person might be able to learn and how to teach him with the elements of overall mental ability that were intact or functional.

In 1962, Kirk concluded that language disorders do not necessarily mean a loss of other abilities like mechanical aptitude and disorders in language are based on integrated functions higher on the neural hierarchy than motor or sensory abilities and thus can not necessarily be classified as motor, visual or auditory disorders.

The term Learning Difficulties was first introduced in 1963. Kirk coined the term learning disability that used it to describe a group of students with specific learning deficits, he stated that a learning disability refers to a
retardation, disorder or delayed development in one or more of the process of speech, language, reading, spelling disability results from a possible cerebral dysfunction and (or) emotional (or) behavioral disturbances, not from mental retardation, sensory deprivation, or cultural (or) instructional factors.

In 1969, the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Students (NACHS) developed an acceptable definition under Kirk’s leadership. The definition was incorporated into Public Law 91-230, the Specific Learning Difficulties Act of 1969. Student with special learning difficulties exhibit a disorder in one or more of basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written languages. These may be manifested in disorders of listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling or arithmetic. They include conditions which have been referred to as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, developmental aphasia etc. They don’t include learning, visual, hearing or motor handicaps, to mental retardation, emotional disturbance or environmental disadvantage (USOE, 1968).

US Office of Education (USOE) released the 1977 Federal Register which included the revised definition. Specific Learning Difficulties means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological process involved in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, and spell or to do mathematical calculation. In 1981, the National Joint Committee on Learning Difficulties revised the definition and agreed on the following. Learning disability is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may occur consonantly with other handicapping conditions or environmental influences, it is not the direct result of those conditions or influences (Hammill et al. 1981).
The Interagency Committee of Learning Disabilities (ICLD 1988) is a government committee that was commissioned by the U.S Congress to develop a definition of learning disabilities. The major points of the ICLD definition are as follows. The students have difficulties in listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, mathematics or social skills. Unlike the federal definition, the ICLD includes social disabilities. Learning disabilities can occur concomitantly with other conditions. This definition specially mentions socio environmental influences and attention deficit disorders. Learning disabilities are intrinsic to the individual and are presumed to be caused by central nervous system dysfunction. The disorder in learning is presumed to be caused by impairment in brain function.

Dorothy Smith (1996) shares her view that student with specific difficulties are those who, in the absence of sensory defect or over organic damage, have an intractable learning problem in one or more of reading, writing, spelling, and mathematics and who don’t respond to normal teaching.

Joy Pollock and Elizabeth Waller, (1997) used the term specific learning difficulties is one of the categories in special education. Difficulties with reading and spelling and associated problems are known as specific learning disability or dyslexia.

The National Joint Committee on Learning Difficulties (NJCLD 1997) defined Learning disabilities as a heterogeneous groups of disorders, individuals with learning disabilities exhibit many kinds of behaviors and characteristics. Learning disabilities result in significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, and/or mathematical skills. The problem is intrinsic to the individual. Learning disabilities are due to factors within the person rather than to extent factors, such as the environment or the educational system. The problem is presumed to be related to a central nervous system dysfunction. There is a biological basis to the problem. Learning disabilities may occur along with other
disabilities or conditions. Individuals can have several problems at the same time, such as learning disabilities and emotional disorders.

Silver (2001) explains that it is important not to confuse the term learning difficulties with other proposed terms, such as learning differences or learning difficulties the notion of learning differences applies to all student in the general population. Learning difficulties, however, refers to a small group of student with underlying neurological disorder.

The definition of Learning Difficulties in the Federal Law (IDEA-2004) defined the term specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of basic psychological process involved in understanding or in using language spoken or written, which disorder may manifest it self in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations. Such term includes conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and development aphasia, such term does not include a learning problem, that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of mental retardation; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. Student with specific learning difficulties constitute 15% to 20% of student in Indian classroom. The student with physical disabilities and specific learning difficulties combined together constitute 25% of students in classrooms. In fact, these students are the potential drop outs from the schools.

1.2.2. Learning Disabilities: A New Definition

Learning disabilities refers to a variety of disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization or use of verbal and/or non-verbal information. These disorders result from impairments in one or more psychological processes related to learning in combination with otherwise average abilities essential for thinking and reasoning. Learning disabilities are specific, not global impairments and as such are distinct from intellectual disabilities.
1.2.3. Learning Differences / Learning Difficulties

The term learning difference, which is the concept that all individuals have variations in learning abilities in various areas, was proposed by Levine (2002) to describe a broad group of students who are struggling to learn and are failing in school. It is important not to confuse the term learning disabilities with other proposed terms, such as learning differences or learning difficulties. The notion of learning differences applies to all students in general population. Learning disabilities, however, refers to a small group of students with underlying neurological disorders. The rights of student with learning disabilities are recognized as a category of special education in the special education law and should be protected. The terms learning differences and learning difficulties are not recognized in the law (Silver 2001).

1.2.4. Learning Difficulties in Indian Context

In a country like India, having over a billion people, problems like poverty, illiteracy and unemployment are very common. With such a huge population and with so much of poverty to educate a normal student itself difficult, and therefore, to train special student gets more difficult. There are many students who look normal and behave normal but academically are not as good as their peers. They suffer from a lesser-known condition called learning disability, which refers to a group of disorders in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and mathematics. Such students are subjected to constant act of public humiliation. Today, a large number of schools and institutions across India are sensitive to the fact that 15 percent of all school-going students have some degree of learning difficulties. Learning difficulties are intrinsic to the individual and may affect learning and behavior in any individual, including those with potentially average, average or above average intelligence.

Implicit in most definitions of learning difficulties would be a discrepancy between what the student is actually learning - based on his
present achievement and what the student ought to be learning according to normal developmental standards as estimated using different systems of measurement. It is important to understand that these students have to be assisted in dealing with academic learning not because they are deficient in any general sense, but because our academic system depends on and recognizes only certain types of performance as an indication of scholastic achievement. At this point, it would be appropriate to mention that the term learning difficulty as opposed to learning disability is a more acceptable term because the child is perceived to have a disability in the context of our restricted educational framework, which largely depends on the visual and auditory modes of learning.

A learning difficulty could also be viewed as a normal deviance of brain function. Everyone has a difficulty in one area or the other. Most of the time, it does not interfere with day-to-day life, but when the area of difficulty is in the cognitive region it impedes development, since dissemination of information in our educational framework is largely through reading and writing. One could see these students as differently abled rather than learning disabled. For instance, a child excelling at music is not seen on the same terms as a child who is excellent at math. The two students are differently abled and equally good at their areas of specialty, yet one will be thought of as clever and the other will not.

Research conducted in specific learning difficulty in India has been primarily done over the last two decades (Ramaa, 2000) and is today comparable with the research carried out in the west nearly half a century ago (Karnath, 2001). India is thought to have approximately ninety million people with varying degrees of learning disabilities and an average class in schools has about five students with learning disabilities (Sunil Thomas, Bhanutej and John, 2003). Yet we do not have a clear idea about the incidence and prevalence of learning disabilities in India (Karnath 2001).
Epidemiological studies of learning disabilities in India are burdened by problems ranging from identification, assessment, to socio-cultural factors unique to India. The number of students with specific learning difficulty may be much larger than five to a class of fifty and sometimes sixty students. In India identification and diagnosis of learning disabilities is extremely difficult as: Even though there is some research done in the field (Ramaa, 2000), at school level learning disabilities still goes undetected because of the lack of teacher training. Students with learning disabilities are considered as burden to the school. Therefore suggests Padegar, coordinator of Maharastra Dyslexia Association (Birla, 2001) it is easier to label such students as dumb or lazy and forget it…or simply ask them to leave the school. Often due to ignorance, parents refuse to accept that their child has learning disability.

Thus even if a school has a special education cell, the child cannot be supported, as the parents are uncooperative. A majority of schools in India are not equipped to deal with the special needs of the student with learning disabilities (Birla, 2001; Sunil Thomas, Bhanutej and John, 2003; Spaeth, 2003, Srivastav, 2004; Times India Network, 2004). The insufficiency of trained persons in the field of special education in India makes assessment a frustrating procedure for parents (Nakra, 1996; Birla, 2001; Banerjee, 2003; Shrinivasan, 2004; Times India Network, 2004, 2005).

Standardized tools for testing are not easily available in India, nor are indigenous tools for identification of processing deficits, intelligence testing and testing for proficiency in reading and writing available. India has a multilingual and multicultural background. There are fifteen official languages, including English, which are recognized by the Indian constitution and these are spoken in over 1600 dialects. Additionally, an estimated 850 languages are in daily use (OCLC, 2004). The language of the testing
instruments is occasionally unsuitable to Indian students who may not be proficient in English.

The first reason is that students with minimum learning disabilities do not reveal obvious signs of their disabilities, like for example student who are physically challenged. Therefore they are expected to attain model performance and behavior standards. Thus when a student with minimum learning disabilities behaves atypically or falls below the level of academic performance of an average student in class they are looked on as an indifferent student.

Teachers have brief and token interactions with student they perceive as indifferent students (Cook 2001; Silberman, 1971; Good and Brophy, 1972). In a typical Indian class of fifty students, student with specific learning difficulty, including the student with minimum learning disabilities, fall outside the teacher’s tolerance level (Cook, 2001). Secondly, students with minimum learning disabilities are not well accepted by their non-disabled peers (Cook and Semmel, 1999). They are rejected precisely because they are perceived to be just like everyone else, yet their academic achievements and classroom behavior suggests they are disparate.

Thirdly, the reason student with specific learning difficulty, including student with Minimum Learning Disabilities are especially vulnerable, particularly in the Indian milieu, is that teachers do not know how to deal with these student (Edwards, 1994). There is a visible lack of teacher training in the field of learning disabilities. Even though, in India, the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) suggests that schemes will be provided for the programme of training with regard to inclusive education to special teachers, general teachers and educational administrators, this is only on paper. There are many provisions made for student with learning disorder, however, a few are actually implemented.
1.2.5. Types of Learning Difficulties

Some of the major types of learning difficulties are,

(1) Oral Language Disabilities

➢ **Dysphasia**

It is partial inability to comprehend the spoken word (Receptive dysphasia) and to speak (expressive dysphasia) which is believed to be the result of injury, disease or maladjustment of the brain.

➢ **Aphasia**

It is loss of ability to comprehend manipulate or express words in speech, writing or gestures. It may be auditory aphasia.

(2) Reading Disabilities

➢ **Dyslexia**

A severe difficulty in understanding or using one or more areas of language, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and spelling. This involves a partial inability to read or to understand what one reads aloud.

➢ **Alexia**

Loss of ability to read what has been written or in printed language

➢ **Hyperlexia**

A difficulty with text comprehension, despite much more fluent and skilled oral reading.

(3) Writing Disabilities

➢ **Dysgraphia**

A severe difficulty in producing handwriting that is legible and written at an age-appropriate speed. This refers to partial inability to write which is
due to visual or motor integration disorder and execution of motor patterns needed to write or copy letters, words and numbers.

- **Agraphia**
  
  It refers to total inability to write.

- **Spelling problems**
  
  Most of the learning disabled students have spelling problem.

- **Dysnomia**
  
  A marked difficulty in remembering names or recalling words needed for oral or written language.

- **Dyspraxia**
  
  A severe difficulty in performing drawing, writing, buttoning, and other tasks requiring fine motor skill, or in sequencing the necessary movements.

(4) **Arithmetic Disabilities**

- **Dyscalculia**
  
  A severe difficulty in understanding and using symbols or functions needed for success in mathematics. It involves partial inability to perform calculations.

- **Acalculia**
  
  This denotes the total inability to read or write isolated number or its series or the way they are spoken (fifty one =51 &not as 501) recognizing place value or doing computational operations.

(5) **Phonological Difficulties**

  Difficulties in perceiving, manipulating and/ or articulating the segments of sound that makes up words.
(6) Social awareness and Communicative Difficulties

Difficulty with social awareness, empathy and functionally effective communication (may be linked to or described as Aspergers, high functioning Autism, semantic-pragmatic disorders or visual-perceptual/non-verbal difficulties)

(7) Expressive/ Receptive Language Difficulties

A motor and/or cognitive weakness with processing and organizing expressive and/or receptive language.

(8) Processing Speed Difficulties

Difficulties experienced by a child in processing information, and in reading or writing at the speed that might be expected. The quality and accuracy of a pupil’s writing or reading may be at the expected level – but for these students, cognitive, perceptual and/or motor factors means that their processing is unduly slow and laborious.

(9) Auditory Perceptual Problem

Trouble in taking information through the sense of hearing and or processing that information. People with this problem frequently hear inaccurately. A sequencing of discrimination error can change the meaning of the entire message. Some auditory perceptual handicaps are:

- **Auditory Discrimination Problem** – Trouble in telling the difference between similar sounds, such as 'th' and 'f' or 'm' and 'n'; hearing "seventeen’s" instead of "seventy"; hearing an angry rather than a joking tone of voice.

- **Auditory Figure-Ground Problem** – Trouble in hearing a sound over background noise: for example, being unable to hear the telephone ring when one is listening to the radio, or having difficulty hearing someone talking at a party when music is playing.
➢ **Auditory Sequencing Problem** – Trouble in hearing sounds in the correct order, for example, hearing 'nine-four' instead of 'four-nine'; hearing 'treads' instead of 'street', hearing music garbled because the melody is perceived out of order.

(10) **Catastrophic Response**

An involuntary reaction to sights, sounds, extreme emotions or other strong stimuli. This may result in losing one's temper, becoming dazed or unaware of one's surroundings, or "freezing" for a short time.

(11) **Cognitive Disorganization**

Difficulty thinking in an orderly and logical way; people with this problem often jumps to conclusion and have difficulty planning tasks.

(12) **Crossing the Midline**

Trouble with moving one's limbs across the centre of the body. This could include difficulty writing across a page, sweeping a floor or controlling a steering wheel.

(13) **Directional Problem**

Trouble in automatically distinguishing left from right; learning north, south, east and west; learning the layout of a large symmetrical building.

(14) **Inter Sensory Problem**

Trouble using two senses at once or associating two senses, for instance, not realizing that the letter "d" which is seen, is the same as the sound "d" when it is spoken; being unable to feel someone tap you on the shoulder while you are reading; being unable to listen to conversation and drive at the same time.
(15) **Memory Problem**
Short term, Trouble remembering; names, numbers, specific facts, what happened a few minutes ago. A poor memory makes academic success difficult.

(16) **Motor Problems**
Trouble moving one's body efficiently to achieve a certain goal. Some motor problems are;

- **Perceptual Motor Problems** - Trouble performing a task requiring coordination because of inaccurate information received through the senses. This may result in clumsiness, difficulty in participating in simple sports, awkward or stiff movements.

- **Visual Motor Problem** - Trouble seeing something and then doing it; learning a dance step while watching a teacher, copying something off a blackboard, throwing something at a target

- **Auditory Motor Problem** - Trouble hearing something and then doing it, following Verbal directions, dancing to a rhythmic beat, taking notes in a lecture.

(17) **Perceptual Problems**
Trouble taking information in through one's senses and/or processing that information.

(18) **Pro Perceptive Perceptual Problem**
Trouble knowing where one is in space. A person with this problem might not be able to tell the position of her limbs with her eyes closed.

(19) **Soft Neurological Signs**
Signs of central nervous system dysfunction that can be observed; staring, turning the head instead of moving the eyes, inability to look people in the eye, not holding the head straight, being easily startled.
**Tactile Perceptual Problem**

Trouble taking information in through the sense of touch. Some tactile handicaps are:

- **Immature Tactile System** - People with this problem dislike being touched lightly, but crave pressure touch, such as being hugged hard or huddling with knees to their chest. Until the immaturity is overcome, tactical discrimination cannot develop.

- **Tactile Defensiveness** - Tendency to avoid being touched because of an immature Tactile system.

- **Tactile Discrimination Problem** - Trouble feeling the difference between similar Objects, such as bond or regular typing paper, light or heavy sandpaper, silk or cotton, ripe or unripe cantaloupe.

- **Tactile Pressure Problem** - Trouble judging the right amount of pressure needed to perform motor acts, holding an egg in two fingers without breaking or dropping it, tapping someone playfully rather than hitting them.

**Vestibular Perceptual Problem**

Problem with one's senses of balance, for example, a tendency to lose one's footing on a curb.

**Visual Perceptual Problem**

Trouble taking information in through the sense of sight and/or processing that information. Some of these are:

- **Visual Figure-Ground Problem:** Trouble seeing a specific image within a competing background; finding a face in a crowd, finding keys on a crowded desk, picking out one line of print from the other lines in a book. People with this problem cannot see things that others can see; to them, the keys on a crowded desk are not there.
Visual Discrimination Problem: Trouble seeing the difference between two similar objects, such as, the letters 'v' and 'u' or 'e' and 'c'; the difference between two shades of one colour or two similar types of leaves. The person with this problem sees the two similar objects as alike.

Depth Perception Problem: Trouble perceiving how far away (or near) an object may be; For instance, we may not know how close the fork is to our hand or how far to reach to put a glass of water on the table.

1.2.6. Causes of Specific Learning Difficulties

Literature cites many different causes of specific learning difficulties such as organic, biological, genetic and environmental causes.

Neurological Causes

Student with learning difficulties share several characteristics found in persons with brain damage unused by injury or infection. Neurological damages can also occur during pre-natal and post natal periods. Factors such as prolonged labor (Colletti,1979) premature birth, birth complications, maternal age, use of drugs and alcohol, maternal fetal blood incompatibility, maternal use of tobacco (Lovitt,1989) and low birth weight are some of the variables associated with learning difficulties. Learning difficulties could be either inherited or acquired. Very often, such difficulties run in families. On the other hand, trauma at birth, accidents involving neurological damage and certain medications could lead to a learning difficulty.

There have been varied interpretations of the neurological correlates of this condition. A lot of research has been done and is yet being carried out to understand this apparent 'dysfunction' of the brain. One of the rather interesting theories is that of 'incomplete programming'. This theory is based on the fact that to keep something in working order, constant stimulation is required. In the case of the brain, it needs to be programmed for performing
various functions and this takes place very early in life. If a child does not have enough opportunity to practice processing a certain type of information at an early age, the brain may always struggle with that type of processing. Incidentally, this theory provides one basis on which programmes for very young student are designed, involving multi-sensory stimulation.

Learning difficulties arises because of Minimal Brain Dysfunction (MBD). The dysfunction occurs in central nervous system which consists of the brain and spinal cord. The malfunctioning is not due to dysfunction which is only minimal. Minimal brain dysfunction arises due to (a) cerebral hemorrhage, cerebral disease because of high fever, head injury; (b) intrauterine environment premature birth, anoxia, physical trauma, (c) constitutional-genetic-neuro-chemical dysfunction. It must be noted that all brain dysfunction are not associated with learning disability and all types of learning disability do not arise due to brain dysfunction. Hypoglycemia or low blood sugar is a cause of learning problem. Any factor that can cause neurological damage can cause learning problems.

Fetal brain develops throughout pregnancy from a few all purpose cells into a complex organ made of billions of specialized, interconnected nerve cells called neurons. If the brain development is disturbed at early stages of pregnancy, the fetus could die or the infant may be born with widespread disabilities and sometimes mental retardation. It is when this disruption occurs at the later stage of pregnancy that it could result in learning disorders.

Problems during pregnancy and/or delivery can cause learning disabilities too. In case the mother’s immune system reacts and an infection and attacks it, this disruption could cause newly formed brain cells to settle in the wrong part of the brain. During delivery, the umbilical cord may become twisted and temporarily cut off oxygen to the fetus which can impair brain functions and lead to learning disabilities. Even after birth new brain cells and neural networks continue to be produced for a year or so after the child is
born. These cells are also vulnerable to disruption even through toxins in the environment. Cadmium and lead are the leading focus for research by researchers to analyze the effects of them in causing learning disabilities.

Complications during pregnancy such as anoxia (loss of Oxygen), birth injury causing brain damage, and student who received neo-natal intensive care subsequently become learning difficulties.

- **Genetic Factors**

  Evidence suggests that members within a family have a tendency towards learning difficulty. Research studies by Childs and Finnicci (1988) Eldridge, Denckal, Bien et.al. (1989) and Raises and Friend (1990) proved that genetics is one of the causative factors of learning disability. Hallagren (1950) found that 88% of families of dyslexic student showed similar learning problems. Hermann (1959) examined dyslexia in twins and reported that of the twelve sets of identical (monozygotic) twins, all members were dyslexic. but, when the study was conducted with thirty- three pairs of fraternal (dizygotic) twins, only one-third members were found to be dyslexic, therefore, more research is needed in this area to prove a definite relationship between learning disability and family genetic patterns.

Impairments which cause or contribute to learning disability can happen before, during or after birth.

- **Those present before birth (prenatal)** are known as ‘congenital’ causes and include Down syndrome and Fragile X syndrome.

- **During birth (perinatal)** oxygen deprivation can result in conditions such as cerebral palsy.

- **After birth, (postnatal)** illnesses such as meningitis, injury or environmental conditions can cause brain damage: student deprived of their basic needs and undernourished, neglected or physically abused may also suffer negative effects to their learning ability.
It may be useful to know the causes of a child’s learning disability, as some syndromes are thought to be associated with particular learning characteristics (eg, Down Syndrome), but it is important to get to know each one as an individual, with unique strengths and personalities which will affect the nature of the support they might need. Learning problems and hyperactivity run in families. Nearly 20% of hyperactive students had one parent hyperactive. Student with Turner’s syndrome have higher incidence of learning disability.

➢ Biochemical Factors

Chemicals play an important role in brain activity, absence or excessive amount of biochemical substances causes a biological imbalance there appears to be some relationship between these chemicals and hyperactivity, which is associated with learning difficulty. Research studies by Ramsey, Berman, Denckla, McAnulty and Holmes (1988), Livingstone, Rosen, Drislance et al. (1991) reported that organic is one of the causative factors of learning difficulties.

There are many other factors that can affect the development of the brain like, genes, substance abuse, pregnancy problems and toxins. The most recent theory is that learning disabilities can appear from even the slightest disturbances in brain structures and functions. Scientist believe that in most cases, the disturbances begins before birth. For example errors in fetal brain development can result in learning difficulties after birth.

Learning disabilities may also appear in student who undergone treatment for cancer with chemotherapy or radiation at an early age. This is mostly seen in student with brain tumors who received radiation to the skull. These are all results of studies done to find out the causes for learning disabilities. The studies are still being conducted to find more data and ways in preventing learning disabilities as much as possible in the future.
➢ **Nutritional Deficiency**

Poor diet and severe malnutrition can reduce the child’s ability to learn.

➢ **Role of Environment**

There are several factors in the child’s environment, which may lead to learning disability. In economically deprived homes, the child may not be exposed to adequate sensory linguistic and cognitive activities. An emotionally unstable home life may deprive the child of any motivation to learn. Some researchers (Bruner, 1971 and Coles, 1987) believe that poor quality teaching in schools can also cause a learning disability. Very often, teachers themselves are not equipped to teach a particular subject.

A poor teaching style—not giving time to learner to acquire basic skills, moving too fast and failure to understand how best a child learns, can result in learning difficulties. Usage of inappropriate materials and curriculum are other factors, one must be sensitive to.

Maternal factors known to have a negative effect include use of drugs, the consumption of alcohol and contraction of rubella. Learning disability may be caused due to insufficient early experience and stimulation. It also caused by poor or inadequate instruction.

**1.3. Characteristics of Students with Learning Difficulties**

The Students with learning difficulties constitute a heterogeneous group. Some have reading problems and some others have writing problems. Some have problems of comprehension whereas others may have problems in telling the time, locating a place on the map. Thus, it is difficult to mention the characteristics which are noticed in all learning difficulties student. The most frequently mentioned characteristics of learning difficulties include the following:
➢ **Ability Level**

The ability level of learning difficulties student varies from near average to average and to above average.

➢ **Activity Level**

The learning difficulties student may be either hyperactive or hypo-active. If they are hyperactive they show the following behaviors such as constant motor activity, restless, tapping of finger or foot, jumping out of seat, skipping from task to task, etc. If they are hypo-active they fail to react or seem to do everything in slow motion.

➢ **Attention Problems**

The learning difficulties students have short attention span; they are easily distractible: they are unable to concentrate on any task for a very long time. Their attention becomes fixed upon a single task which is repeated over and over; this may be motor or verbal activity.

➢ **Motor Problems**

The learning difficulties students are generally clumsy or awkward with poor, fine and gross motor co-ordination. They demonstrate poor tactile, discrimination, excessive need to touch poor writing and drawing performance.

➢ **Visual Perceptual Problems**

The learning difficulties students are unable to distinguish between visual stimuli (visual discrimination): They are unable to perceive a figure against a background (visual figure-ground). They are unable to fill in missing parts when only part of a word or object is seen (visual closure); they are also unable to remember and revisualise images or sequences very well (visual memory).
**Auditory Perceptual Problems**

The students with learning difficulties are unable to distinguish between sounds (auditory discrimination) they are unable to obtain meaning from the spoken word and or environmental sounds (auditory comprehension). They are unable to attend to important auditory stimuli by pushing all other auditory into the background (auditory figure-ground).

They are unable to fill in missing sounds when only parts of the word are heard (auditory closure); they are also unable to remember auditory stimuli or sequences very well (auditory memory).

**Language Problems**

The students with learning difficulties demonstrate delayed or slow development of speech articulation, and an inability to organize words to form phrases, clauses, or sentences.

**Social Emotional Behavior Problems**

The students with learning difficulties are impulsive in nature. They fail to think about consequences of their behavior. At times they exhibit explosive behavior. They display rare reactions or throw tantrums when crossed. They lack social competence. Their social competence is often below the average for their age and ability. They are unable to adjust to changes. They exhibit rapid mood variation, even from hour to hour.

**Orientation Problems**

The students with learning difficulties process poorly developed concept of space, and distorted body image. They have difficulty in judging distance and size and in discriminating figure from ground, parts from the whole and left from right. They are disoriented in time and experience trouble relating to concepts like before and after, now and then, today and tomorrow.
➢ **Work Habits**

The students with learning difficulties organize work poorly. They work slowly and frequently confuse directions or rush through work carelessly.

➢ **Academic Disabilities**

The students learning with difficulties have problems in reading, arithmetic, writing, spelling, telling time and even locating places on the map.

In general learning difficulties student possess these characteristics. But not all learning difficulties students demonstrate these characteristics. Some learning difficulties student may have one or more such characteristics.

1.3.1. **General Characteristics of Neurological Impairment**

There have been many attempts to categories the major characteristic of learning disabled student. One of the earliest attempts was made by Clements (1966) through a task force on learning difficulties. They observed 10 most general characteristics based on the assumption that learning difficulties is a neurological impairment:

➢ Hyperactivity,
➢ Emotional liability,
➢ Disorders of attention,
➢ Disorders in memory and thinking,
➢ Disorder of speech and language,
➢ Equivocal neurological sings and electro encephalographic irregularities,
Perceptual motor impairments,
General coordination deficits,
Impulsivity,
Specific learning disabilities in the areas of reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling.

1.3.2. Social and Emotional Characteristics of Students with Learning Difficulties

Students are more anxious and withdrawn, have more problems in interacting with teacher and parents, have behavior problems and are less socially skilled. Many learning difficulties students had little insight into nature of their problem and attributed these to luck. They show lower self-concept more external locus of control and lower level of aspiration than non learning difficulties peers.

- They are quiet obedient but day dreaming and cannot read.
- They have frequent temper outburst, sometimes for no apparent reason.
- They are nervous.
- They jump from one thing to another, and mind everyone’s business but their own.
- They talk of self control but cannot work with other students.
- They are emotionally liable and unstable.

1.3.3. Cognitive Characteristics

- Cognitive and Meta Cognitive Deficits

The meta cognitive and cognitive processes of students ranked second and third as an influence on student learning. Meta cognition refers to a learner's knowledge (awareness) of thinking processes or strategies (such as
planning, evaluating effectiveness of ongoing activities, checking the outcomes of effort, and correcting difficulties) and the ability to regulate or monitor these processes or strategies to learn successfully. Knowledge about a student's meta-cognition appears to hold promise for designing instruction. Several researchers (Kulak, 1993; Montague & Applegate, 1993 and Swanson, 1990) claim that viewing students with learning disabilities as having meta-cognitive or cognitive deficits is only partially accurate. They note that many of these students are not deficient in using cognitive strategies, instead they apply different strategies.

❖ **Low Academic Achievement**

Low academic achievement occurs in all areas (i.e., language, reading, math, spelling, written expression, and content subjects) and is a primary characteristic of students with disabilities. Language and reading problems are the most prominent. Because language skills and academic functioning are closely related, it sometimes is difficult to determine whether a student's major problem is understands a language or reading.

❖ **Poor Memory**

Many students with disabilities have difficulty in remembering information presented visually or orally. Teachers frequently report that these students forget spelling of words, math facts, vocabulary words, and directions. Some authorities maintain that these students do not spontaneously use techniques that facilitate to remember (e.g., rehearsal or forming associations).

❖ **Attention Problems and Hyperactivity**

To succeed in school, a student must recognize and maintain thought on relevant classroom tasks and must be able to shift attention to new tasks. Students with attention problems are unable to screen out extraneous stimuli and are attracted by irrelevant stimuli.
Perceptual Disorders

Perceptual problems (such as inability to recognize, discriminate, and interpret sensation) become a factor in math learning for some students. Visual perceptual processes appear to be important to reading and math achievement at young ages and, in very subtle ways, relate to some later spelling, writing, and conceptual difficulties.

1.3.4. Affective Characteristics

Poor Social Skills

Difficulties with social skills can be as debilitating as academic problems to students with disabilities. Examples of social skills in which some students with disabilities lack competence include greeting someone, accepting criticism, receiving compliments, saying ‘no’ and giving positive feedback. The social skills deficits of some students are caused by their inability to understand social cues. Because of their inability to interact appropriately with teachers and peers, students with social skills deficits frequently have low social status among their peers.

Poor Self-Concept

Frustrated by their learning difficulties, many students with disabilities act disruptively and acquire negative feelings of self-worth. Rather than learning and developing attitudes about tasks they can do, youngsters with disabilities often learn what they can't do. This lack of positive self-regard often results in poor self-concept and self-esteem.

Poor Motivation

With the repeated academic failure that many students with disabilities experience, it is not surprising that they are less motivated to perform than their peers without disabilities. When early attempts to succeed in school meet with failure, it is common for students to believe that success is beyond their
abilities and efforts. Consequently many develop a learned helplessness and lose their intrinsic motivation to prove their competence.

- **Debilitating Mood States**

  Little research on the mood states of students with disabilities exists; however, some research on students with disabilities offers noteworthy findings. This research indicates that students with disabilities have higher levels of anxiety, worry, over sensitivity, minor somatic complaints, loneliness, and depression than students without disabilities.

1.3.5. Behavioral Characteristics

- **Adaptive Behavior Deficits**

  Students with disabilities frequently exhibit adaptive behavior deficits that interfere with academic achievement and social relationships. Adaptive behaviors or adaptivity is a proactive process through which individuals organize their lives in purposeful, flexible, and advantageous way to meet the demands of multiple environments. Generally speaking, it is how one copes in his environment. It is often divided in four domains: social coping, relationships, pragmatic language, and production.

- **Disruptive Behavior**

  Disruptive behavior may be the result of social skills deficits or frustration over lack of academic success. Disruptive behavior generally includes acts that interrupt or interfere with appropriate activities.

- **Withdrawal**

  Bender and Smith report that some students with disabilities exhibit significantly more shy and withdrawn behavior than do their normally achieving peers. Social withdrawal may result from the students previous failures at interaction or a feeling of incompetence because of academic failure. Some students may become so socially isolated that they are unable to interact in a positive manner with peers and adults.
1.4. Symptoms of Learning Difficulties

The symptoms commonly related to learning disabilities are:

- poor performance on group tests
- difficulty in discriminating size, shape, color
- difficulty with temporal (time) concepts
- distorted concept of body image
- reversals in writing and reading
- general awkwardness
- poor visual-motor coordination
- hyperactivity
- difficulty copying accurately from a model
- slowness in completing work
- poor organizational skills
- easily confused by instructions
- difficulty with abstract reasoning and or problem solving
- disorganized thinking
- often obsesses on one topic or idea
- poor short-term or long-term memory
- impulsive behavior; lack of reflective thought prior to action
- low tolerance for frustration
- excessive movement during sleep
- poor peer relationships
- over excited during group play
- poor social judgment
- inappropriate, unselective, and often excessive display of affection
- lags in developmental milestones (e.g. motor, language)
behavior often inappropriate for situation
> failure to see consequences for his actions
> overly gullible; easily led by peers
> excessive variation in mood and responsiveness
> poor adjustment to environmental changes
> overly distractible; difficulty concentrating
> difficulty making decisions
> lack of hand preference or mixed dominance
> difficulty with tasks requiring sequencing

When considering these symptoms, it is important to remain mindful of the following:

- No one will have all these symptoms.
- Among learning difficulties populations, some symptoms are more common than others.
- All people have at least two or three of these problems to some degree.
- The number of symptoms seen in a particular child does not give an indication as whether the disability is mild or severe. It is important to consider if the behaviors are chronic and appear in clusters.

1.4.1. Warning Signs in Secondary School Students

Some learning disabilities go undetected until secondary school. Physical changes occurring during adolescence and the increased demands of middle and senior high school may bring the disabilities to light. Inappropriate social skills may lead to changes in peer relationships and discipline problems. Increased frustration and poor self-concepts can lead to depression and angry outbursts. Warning signs of learning disabilities in secondary school students include the following, which again, should occur as a pattern of behaviors, to a significant degree, and over time.
1.5. Identifying Learning Disabled Students

Students of today are the citizens of tomorrow, they are going to be the pillars of the country. Hence it is essential to ensure that each pillar is as strong as the other is. From psychological point of view also, it would be more beneficial to identify the learning disabled as early as possible. The earlier they are identified, the sooner they can be subjected to remedial instruction. Earlier identification leads to prevention before complication and timely intervention. Identifying and intervening at early stage will be more feasible, fruitful and economical and will diminish wastage and stagnation to a considerable extent. Assessment is an integral part of the educational process. There are various assessment procedures for gathering various types of information necessary for identification as well as for planning Integrated Education Programme (IEP). These assessment procedures can be classified into two broad categories as informal assessment and formal assessment. These assessments complement each other and one without the other may not provide all the vital information required for identification and programme planning.

Informal assessment is evaluating of information primarily gathered through observations of everyday student behavior through the examination of student products such as papers, tests, and presentations and through discussion with students to establish goals, select strategies, and measure outcomes. Informal assessment provides the means for systematically collecting student’s performance data that are instructionally relevant, it is critical to the development of effective instructional programmes.

Informal assessment can be classified into four types as curriculum-based assessment, criterion-referenced tests, observation, and interviews, questionnaires and checklists. Curriculum based assessment is the process of determining instructional needs by directly assessing specific curriculum
skills. It is defined as any approach that uses direct observation and recording of a student’s performance in a local school curriculum as a basis for gathering information to make instructional decisions. The most widely used types of curriculum-based assessment are curriculum-based measurement, response and error analysis, task analysis and teacher made tests.

Criterion referenced tests are another form of informal assessment. They are defined as assessments that rate how thoroughly students have mastered specific skills or areas of knowledge, whereas norm-referenced tests are measurements that compare the performance of one student against the performance of others. Since criterion-referenced tests bring to light who has trouble and in which area(s) he or she has trouble, these can be effectively used by the teachers to identify the learning disabled students.

Naturalistic observation is defined as the process of observing and recording behaviors in a naturalistic environment. This can be done in simple as well as controllable conditions. Observation techniques enable the teachers to notice manifestations of certain lacks and disorders which are unique characteristics of learning disabled student. There are three types of naturalistic observation namely a) direct observation, b) anecdotal reports / records, c) eco-behavioral assessment. Direct observation, which is an effective complement to more formal assessment systems, is the process of systematically collecting information on target behaviors. Anecdotal records are factual records of the students’ behaviors and their intervention with the environment. Eco-behavioral assessment is a method for considering all elements of the instructional programme and it enables the teachers to examine instructional practices, environmental characteristics, and student behavior for a more comprehensive view of student performance.
Finally, informal assessment data can be collected through the use of interviews, checklists and questionnaires. Interviews and questionnaires are effective informal data collection procedures that provide an opportunity for the teacher to ask questions and obtain reactions that assist in determining areas of further assessment. Checklists can be used to assess whether the descriptive statements in the checklist are representative of student behaviors. These procedures provide additional data on student performance that may not be readily available to the classroom teacher through direct observation or assessment.

Formal assessment refers to assessment made on the basis of student’s performance in individually administered tests that have been standardized in that they consist of a set of tests given with uniform directions and compare performance to an identified standard. Tests that may be used to identify learning disabled students and in many instances, to plan intervention strategies may be considered in three major categories: (1) measures of intelligence, (2) measures of academic functioning, and (3) measures of certain cognitive areas.

Measures of intelligence are very essential to verify that a child is or is not learning disabled. Intelligence tests, which are used to measure intelligence, are designed in many areas of intellectual functioning. There are a number of widely used intelligence tests including Terman-Merrill Scale, Wechsler-Intelligence Scale, and Slosson Intelligence Test for Student for Adults and Kaufman Assessment Battery for Student (K-ABC) for identifying learning disabilities.

Measures of academic functioning are necessary to establish a student’s academic levels for comparisons with age or grade peers. They enable the teachers to assess significant discrepancy if any between potential to learn and actual level of functioning which is an indication of existence of
learning disability. Also, they enable the teachers to know as much as possible about the student’s abilities in all academic areas in order to plan meaningful educational intervention. Some of the tests that can be used to measure academic functioning are the Wide Range Achievement Test, the Peabody Individual Achievement Test, and the Brigance Diagnostic Inventories.

Measures of certain cognitive areas are a wide variety of tests that are used for the purpose of identifying learning disabled as well as planning educational interventions for them. Some are single purpose tests, whereas others are broad scale psycho-educational batteries. These tests may be diagnostic tests in the various academic or skill areas, tests, of language development, and visual or auditory discrimination tests. Auditory Discrimination Test, Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt Test, Basic concept Inventory, Clinical Evaluation of Language Functions, Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration, Test of Language Development, Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery are a few examples for measures of certain cognitive areas.

1.6. Intervention Strategies

Education is the nucleus of national development warrants that backward student like learning disables, slow learners, should be enabled to reach their optimum level of performance. This is not possible without adequate intervention strategies. Intervention strategies can be classified on the basis of aim or purpose of the procedure.

This classification is made, considering the most deficient areas of learning disabled student, as intervention strategies for each stage of learning, behavioral interventions, and interventions for attention problems.
During the acquisition stage of learning, the aim is to imbibe the target skill in the student’s repertoire. There are quite a number of useful intervention strategies available to help students perform skills, and ability at rudimentary levels. These are called priming tactics. They serve to prime or bring the skill into the repertoire of the young learner. Priming tactics include physical guidance, shaping, modeling, match-to-sample, telling, time delay, cueing, and prompting, programming procedure and reinforcement tactics. There are various tactics such as instructional tactics and reinforcement tactics that decisively increase rate of performance, and ultimately promote proficiency. Instructional tactics include modeling, telling, and drill.

Reinforcement tactics include effective uses of positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement and premack principles. Proper use of reinforcers by the teacher can ensure better learning for students. Effects of reinforcement depend on schedule of reinforcement. In the maintenance stage, the aim is to retain the mastery level of performance of students attained during direct intervention. The learning disabled student need direct intervention strategies such as over learning, reinforcement schedules, social reinforcement, and intrinsic reinforcement to build up retention.

Generalization is an area of great deficiency for learning disabled student. For learning disabled student the teacher should programme for generalization rather than expect it to occur. The teacher can promote generalization by ensuring similar settings, varying stimulus conditions, providing reinforcement for correct responses and promoting self-management. Generalization has not been adequately probed into as far as educational research and learning disabled student are concerned.

Adaption stage has not received considerable attention either from the researchers or from the teachers. Adaption abilities can be enhanced by using discovery approach or problem solving approach. Adaption can be prompted
by encouraging independence, allowing students to follow their natural interest, and by planning curriculum in such a way that the teacher should periodically return to important concepts.

Behavioral responses can be altered by manipulating antecedent stimuli or by manipulating the consequence that follows the behavioral response. The antecedent sets the occasion for a specific response to occur, while the consequence alters the probability that the behavior will increase or decrease in the future. Behavioral intervention strategies include direct instruction and errorless learning.

Numerous teachers report attention problems among students with learning disabilities, and researchers have fairly worked into the attention problem of learning disabled students. A diagnosis of attention problems requires a multi method behavioral assessment.

This assessment is necessary for making appropriate administrative decisions as well as designing intervention strategies. After making proper assessment of the attention problems, an appropriate course of action should be devised. Intervention strategies for circumventing attention problems include behavioral intervention, cognitive behavioral intervention, and medically based interventions.

1.7. Learning Disabilities: Theories and Models

As the term learning disabilities includes a host of related but different conditions it is not possible to explain adequately these conditions by a single theory. It would be possible to bring learning disabilities under one umbrella of a single theory, if all the students identified as learning disabilities were much more similar. Hence there are various theories and models on learning disabilities. The most important ones are specific-area brain defect model, the perceptual motor model, the language development model, information processing model, learning strategy deficit model, and behavioral theory model.
A specific area brain deficit model emphasizes that learning disabilities are associated with specific-area brain defects. There are adequate studies, which provide evidence for this fact. These studies may be classified on the basis of their focus as studies of localization of function, neuron imaging studies, postmortem studies, and electrophysiology studies. The perceptual motor model is a more complex model that relates learning disabilities to intermediate problem which are, in turn caused by brain dysfunction.

The intermediate effects brought about by brain dysfunction / defects are visual perception disorder and language disorder. The perceptual-motor theoretic models emphasize various activities to promote and strengthen the perceptual ability of learning disabled student. Kephart, Jean Res and Bryant Cratty are prominent recognized perceptual-motor authorities.

Language development model emphasizes the role of language in the development of all other abilities. Unlike perceptual-motor based programmes, which were considerably criticized, remedial programmes based on language development theory have not become the targets of mordant criticism and charges of ineffectiveness. The theoretic model and remedial suggestions provided by Johnson and Myklebust can be used in parallel with other models as well. Further, they have much in common with information processing model.

Information processing model is the most influential model in cognitive psychology to data. Sensory register, short-term memory, working memory and long-term memory are the components of memory system. This model provides ways and means to promote processing, storage, and retrieval of information from the mind.
Learning strategy refers to application of techniques or principles by the learner and/or teacher to promote the acquisition, manipulation, interpretation, retention and recollection of information in learning situations. Learning strategies include various strategies such as rehearsal strategies, transformational strategies, organizational strategies, mnemonic strategies, monitoring strategies and motivational strategies. This model furnishes ways and means to circumvent the learning strategy deficits of learning disabled students.

Behavioral learning theories tend to emphasize observable behavior, such as classroom behaviors or new skills or knowledge that can be demonstrated. The underlying principle of behaviorism is that human behavior is made up of a variety of responses that can be observed and related to mother observable events. Many of the more popular behavioral techniques have been used to good advantage with learning disabled students. Most important of them are direct instruction, programmed instruction, mastery learning and the Keller Plan. The practitioners can make use of these procedures and methods to adapt both learning environments and instruction based on individual student need.

Finally, there is a possibility of using more than one of these models, even in application to one particular student. A combination of methods is of great value and more effective. In almost every case in which behavioral model is used, an obvious use of two models can be seen. In such cases where behaviorist techniques are used, it is the use of another model that determines what is to be taught.

1.8. History of the Field of Learning Disabilities

The field of learning disabilities has had a relatively short history. This section offers a brief review of the important events. The origins of the field of learning disabilities have passed through three distinct phases each of which stretches over a period of time. The three phases are:
- The Foundation Phase-(Early Brain Research) 1800-1930.

**The Foundation Phase**

The foundation phase ranges right from 1802 to 1946. In the foundation phase researches were carried out relating to three types of disorders. The three types of disorders are

a. Disorders of spoken language.
b. Disorders of written languages.
c. Disorders of perceptual and motor processes.

A clear knowledge of the studies related to each of the aforesaid disorders is very essential for better perception of the concept.

**The Traditional Phase**

The traditional phase witnessed expanded interest in this area. The contribution of Head (1926), Myklebust (1954-67), Kirk (1961), Lehtinen (1947), Kephart (1955), Cruickshanlk (1961), Getman (1962) and Frostig (1964) was in deed immense.

Interest has expanded to include concerns about any student who has apparently normal learning ability but could not learn in the normal manner as others did through standard educational methods. This interest paved the way for classes for brain-injured students, dyslexic students, aphasic students, and others.

**The Recognition Phase**

From the aforesaid diverse roots learning disabilities became an integrated field under an umbrella-like definition in the mid 1960’s. Our elaborate discussions of the first two phases also focus on the relationship
of various persons, types of disorder, and other social and environmental influences on the developments of this interesting, complex field of learning disabilities. Thus learning disabilities as an integrated field came to be named in 1963, even though the historical roots of the field go back at least to the early 1800s. In 1963, Samuel Kirk suggested the term ‘learning disabilities’. He did not mean to suggest it as another label, but the term was embraced by parents as a potential point of focus for advocacy efforts on behalf of their students, many of whom had been denied free and effective public education. Since 1963, the fields of leaning disabilities has grown in a very rapid, through sometimes disorderly manner, and to-day it is the largest of the recognized sub areas of special education.

Factors that influenced the development of the field of learning disabilities. Three distinct factors have influenced the development of field of learning disabilities in a definite chronological order. They are:

- Scientific interest in abnormal and unusual behavior
- Interest in teaching methods
- Parents legislators and educators interest in providing programmes.

1.9. Teacher’s Role in Overcoming Learning Difficulties in Students

The teacher should play the following roles in dealing with learning disabled student. The students with learning disabilities needs in one or more of his areas of disability. There is a resource teacher available to determine how much of this instruction will be assumed by the regular class teacher. It is a fact that the regular classroom teacher and the resource teacher should have cooperative working relationship.
The regular teacher should work with the resource teacher to determine exactly what the duties of each of them are. The regular classroom teacher who deals with both student-abled and disabled-has much opportunity to observe their behavioral characteristics, identify the learning difficulties of the student and refer the suspected cases to the resource teacher for taking steps for assessment and diagnosis of their difficulties and deficiencies. He is sure of the specific deficiencies of such students should plan his instruction in a systematic and sensitive way in consultation with the resource teacher. If there is no resource teacher in his school he must plan everything himself. As such they require a variety of technique approaches as well as materials to satisfy their unique educational needs at different levels of development.

At the pre-school level, the environment should be arranged to promote efficiency accessibility, independence and functionality. Safety is also a factor in the pre-school setting. Heavy breakable and dangerous materials should be out of reach of these students. At the elementary level student classroom should not be noisy, visually distracting and sterile. The special educator and the regular classroom teaching should provide a less distracting environment for students who are overtly destructible and hence learning disabled. Such student can be placed in the centre of the classroom where more often teacher’s attention is focused.

Although small group permits individualized instructions yet have demonstrated the efficacy of peer tutoring in instruction, seat work and special projects. Care should be taken to select a good regular peer. Structure in planning the instructional programme is a must for learning disabled student. The curriculum should be organized sequential and routine based so that the students with learning difficulties can attend to it carefully. For this task analysis procedure is most relevant. This enables the teacher to break the task into components and helps the student at each stage. The teacher should also provide a summary presentation after each sub-plan of teaching so that
students with learning difficulties can learn well in school and this will provide as an advance organizer for learning. The equipments and materials must be ready to be used in ‘dead time’ when the students with learning difficulties have nothing, to do. They cannot waste their times.

There are number of specific teacher procedures that have been used to remedial academic deficits of failure among students with learning difficulties. One of the general approaches is learning strategies by actively involving them in the learning process mostly consisting of self-instruction and verbalization.

Students with learning difficulties lack abilities for meta cognition. Hence, teacher can initiate self-underline, answering questions, writing down, asking himself the purpose of reading etc., self-instructional techniques have been found quite effective for learning difficulties student. Precision teaching is a system of elevating and improving instruction. It is direct, continuous and precise measure of student progress where the teacher records a wide range of behaviours. They help teachers on track and make accurate instructional decisions. As regards teaching contents and materials it should be motivating, non-complex, and appropriate for child’s level of functioning, is one way a teacher can make assignments more motivating. Illustrations too much use of colours in the students’ attention and make learning exciting.

The teacher has to frame activities related to planning, teaching, and guidance and counseling roles. To perform different activities under the above stated roles, the teacher requires specific competencies in the major competency areas such as nature of learning disability, characteristics of students with learning disability and their parents. Only such competent teachers facilitate the way for better inclusive education in ordinary schools. To accomplish this task effectively, it is essential to spell out the specific competencies required for a teacher to be effective in towards
learning difficulties in students. Such an attempt helps to identify to what extent the teachers possess each competency and require that particular competency.

In specific terms, it emphasizes the following roles of the teachers

- Teaching and guidance of pupils.
- Research, experimentation and innovation.
- Extension and social services.
- Management of a variety of services and activities that institutes undertake to implement as their programmes.
- Diagnosis of student’s needs and potentialities.
- Encouraging curiosity in students.
- Teaching by example as well as by percept.

Learning disabled individuals are found across all ages, socio-economic levels, and their problems range from mild to severe. The teacher should have a thorough understanding of the nature of the learning difficulties and the process of diagnosis of academic and non-academic problems emanating from them. So it is essential that the classroom, teacher who are most successful with special needs students are those who realize that all students are special, that they have both strengths and weakness and that their individuality is to be valued. Thus, a teacher has to play a vital role to handle students with learning difficulties.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi has developed “functional assessment guide to be used by teachers”. After identification and assessment, such student should be placed in an appropriate environment for their education and training. Mildly handicapped student can be placed in regular classroom with provision of resource room help.
Severely handicapped student cannot profit from regular classroom instruction. They may be educated and trained by competent professionals in special class settings. After identifying students with learning difficulties the teacher should see that such students are assessed properly by experts. Such assessment may be medical and psychological. In most cases experts such as doctors and psychologists are not available for medical and psychological assessment of learning difficulties student. In rural areas particularly, trained professionals are not available. In such cases the teacher can conduct functional assessment. Functional assessment which is not a replacement of medical or psychological assessment indicates what a student can do and what he cannot do. Based on functional assessment the teacher can plan and provide specialized service and help in the school.

Teacher as a Planner

Planning educational programme for special needs student starts with identification and assessment. Assessment of young student is difficult than tests of developmental progress which usually compare the child to other student of the same age; there are very few standardized tests.

A good teacher has the ability to develop and conduct informal tests to assess the learning disabled student. Effective placement helps to plan remedial strategies based on the child’s level. If this important task is rightly carried out by a teacher, pitfalls in the educational programmes can be avoided. Ability to plan individualized instructional programmes by setting long term and short term goals. For each level or sub task the teacher must be able to plan activities that will allow for rehearsal, practice, transfer and generalization. These are the various activities of a teacher to carry out planning role effectively.
Teacher as a Facilitator

Sequence of instructional objectives enables the teacher to achieve the goal. Good communication skills and providing learning environment enrich teaching learning process. A good teacher promotes group instruction to improve social and interactional skills. Independent work activities, self learning methods should be encouraged by the teacher to promote self confidence. Periodic assessment and record keeping is an important task that has to be done by an effective teacher. Developing interest, motivation and promoting learning is done effectively by the teacher.

Teacher as a Counselor and Guide

Effective guidance to peer group by teachers will promote peer acceptance. This in turn, facilitates the student with learning difficulties to develop self-confidence, self esteem and self-realization. Peer tutoring will enhance the learning process of student with learning difficulties. When a teacher is able to involve parents in the educational programme, it will help the child to progress in a better way. Communication between teacher and parents is essential to facilitate coordination in identifying objectives and consistency in handling the child, arranging for parent’s meetings and discussion by the teacher helps parents to interact with other professional namely psychologists, audiologists, speech therapists, pediatric etc. their decisions and suggestions can be effectively incorporated in the educational programme by a competent teacher to attain a greater success in the education of student with learning difficulties.

Management of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties

To manage the students with learning difficulties in regular classroom the following are the teaching approaches to be followed. Reading writing, spelling and math’s skills should be explicitly taught, leaving nothing to chance.
The skills must be utilized in a meaningful way so that reading, writing and arithmetic are used for real purposes, not merely as a drill exercise.

Phonological awareness should be an essential component for remedial teaching in literacy area.

More attention must be given to phonic skills development than the contemporary approaches to the teaching of reading.

Metacognitive and self-monitoring strategies: Metacognition can be described as understanding and controlling one’s own thinking.

It refers to an individual’s capacity to monitor and regulation of his/her mental processes while approaching a new learning task on problem solving (Ashman and Conway, 1989). Metacognition has two main components. Awareness of the skills needed to perform a specific task effectively (a knowledge of the appropriate attack strategies to use), and the ability to use self-regulation to ensure successful completion of the task. (i.e. planning one’s own move, evaluating the effectives of one’s actions, checking progress) and coping with any difficulties as they arise.

1.10. Competencies Required for Teachers to Deal Students with Learning Difficulties

A teacher should possess certain professional competencies to perform the assigned work successfully. He should have a through knowledge about the curriculum specified for teaching. Once he/she attains mastery over the subject he/she automatically develops confidence to deal any problem. Teaching Provides a way of national development. A good teachers inculcates good character and personality in their student who work for the progress of a nation. This is achieved only if a teacher possesses some necessary characteristic and competencies to deal students with learning difficulties.
Teacher Competencies is one of the most significant studies as it serves for the development of teacher’s status that is considered among the corner stones of education. Generic competencies consist of six main competencies.

- Personal and Professional Values-Professional Development
- Knowing the Student
- Learning and Teaching Process
- Monitoring and Evaluation of Learning development
- School-Family and Society Relationships
- Knowledge of Curriculum and Content

31 sub-competencies and 233 performance indicators. Thus, teacher competencies consist of knowledge, skills and attitudes that teachers should have for attaining these objectives. Within this regard, teacher competencies constitute the second most important stage of the education reform for supporting the curriculum approach prepared in accordance with the latest developments in pedagogical theories and applications.

Teacher competencies is a document which states transformations to be implemented with a holistic approach in; Identifying policies for teacher training, Pre-service teacher training programmes of institutions of higher education for teacher training, In-service training of teachers, school-based professional development of teachers, selection of teachers, evaluation of teacher performances, self-knowledge and self-development of teachers. It will function as a guide by ensuring harmonization of all future activities in these fields.

Based on the role and responsibilities mentioned above, the regular educators should inculcate the following competencies.
- **Class Management:** This includes developing skills in selecting appropriate techniques to manage individuals and group behavior. It requires proficiency in techniques of behavioral analysis, group altering, guiding transitions, material arrangement and crisis intervention.

- **Professional Consultation and Communication:** Mainstreaming makes imperative that regular classroom teacher develops competence in ways to consult and communicate with these professionals. Teachers should know how to collect and report the type of information that will be most useful to the specialists. Teacher should know how to collect useful data for diagnosis and how to refer the child.

- **Individualized Teaching:** Teacher needs to be adept at assessing a student’s individual needs and in designing instruction to meet these needs. This does not mean that each child should be taught individually. It means permitting child to pursue a preferred mode of learning. Teacher should be able to interact successfully with the parents, siblings, and student. He/ She should be able to interact and collaborate with others in the school.

- **Orientaional Strategies:** For entry into for mainstreaming teachers should be able to prepare special students as well as regular class for mainstreaming. This also includes preparing parents of all students for normalization. He/ She should be able to develop positive attitudes towards mainstreaming.

- **Identification and Assessment of Student:** Teacher should be able to observe student in various settings without affecting their behavior. Teacher should be able to identify student with special needs and assess their needs, use and interpret individual assessment measures.
**Goal setting:** Teacher should be able to establish appropriate goals for the exceptional child. The goals should be realistic, measurable and also give opportunity for optimum development of potentials of such student.

**Adjusting Curricula:** Teacher should be able to adjust curricula to suit the ability, needs and interests of disabled student.

**Use of Teaching Strategies:** Teacher should be able to plan and implement a variety of instructional techniques.

**Promoting Classroom Climate:** Teacher should be able to promote acceptance of individual difference among all students. Teacher should be able to conduct class activities to encourage interaction among students.

**Resources Managing:** Teacher should be able to manage resources which can be used for instruction of disabled student.

**Evaluation and monitoring:** Teacher should be able to assess the extent to which the needs of disabled student are met in the classroom and evaluate the appropriateness of the resources for these students modify his methods, materials to meet these needs.

**Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities in the General Education Classroom**

There are some instructional strategies for student with learning disabilities, which include: (a) accommodations for students with learning disabilities, (b) peer tutoring, (c) explicit teaching, (d) promoting active learning, (e) scaffolded instruction, (f) reciprocal teaching, and (g) learning strategies instruction.
Most students with learning disabilities (83%) spend at least a portion of their school day in general education classrooms. About 46% of these students have full placement in the general education class, while 38% are in resource rooms for a portion of the day and in the general education class for the rest of the day (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

**Accommodations for the General Education Teacher**

- **Modify the Setting**: Giving instructions or test in a separate room, in a carrel, or in a small group.

- **Modify the scheduling**: Extending the time and the breaks for testing and instruction.

- **Modify the presentation**: Using large print; give verbal directions instead of written directions or tape-record the directions.

- **Modify response**: Having students answer questions orally or point to the answer; students can mark in a booklet instead of on an answer sheet.

- **Use a Team Approach**: General education classroom teachers are sometimes hesitant and even fearful about providing for the needs of special students in their classrooms. The general education classroom teacher should use a team approach and share responsibility with special education teachers and related professionals.

- **Provide supportive services**: When students with learning disabilities are served in the general education classroom, they often need supportive services. The special education teacher can be helpful in obtaining and providing supportive services.
Plan for social acceptance: Many students with learning disabilities experience difficulty in being accepted socially by their peers in the general education classroom. By itself, placement in a general education classroom may not lead to greater social interaction or increased social acceptance. Social planning is needed.

Teach students appropriate classroom behavior: Acceptable classroom behaviors are even more important than academic competencies as predictors of success in the classroom. Important behaviors for classroom success include: (1) interacting positively with other students, (2) obeying class rules, and (3) displaying proper work habits.

Use co-teaching strategies: The general education teacher and the special education teacher should use collaborative planning and teaching in the classroom.

The responsibilities of the general education classroom teacher are increasing as the inclusion movement continues to expend. Classroom teacher are accountable for a wider range of students, including more student with disabilities and other special needs. Teachers need many supports if inclusion is to work. The kinds of supports should be provided for general education teachers who are responsible for inclusion are as follows.

Participation in the IEP: The individuals with disabilities education improvement act of 2004 requires that general education classroom teachers be part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, being on the IEP team helps these classroom teachers understand the problems, strengths, and needs of students with disabilities.

Reduced class size: Having many students with special needs in a general education classroom makes the teaching task more difficult. A smaller class size could help teacher cope with this added responsibility.
- **Time for planning:** Time should be allocated during the school day for general education classroom teachers to plan with the special education teacher and other professionals for meeting the needs of student’s disabilities.

- **Para professionals:** Para professional personnel and aides in the classroom can help general education classroom teachers meet the needs of each student.

- **Volunteers:** Many schools are successful in attracting volunteers to help in the classroom. Senior citizens and volunteers from business organization sometimes can be recruited to assist.

- **Collaboration with special educators:** It is essential that special educators are available to help general education classroom teachers solve problems, discuss issues and manage the many situations that they confront in the classroom.

- **Continuum of alternative services:** Some students with special needs require more than the inclusive, general education classroom can offer. For these students, other placement options, such as the resource room or special classes, are needed.

- **Availability of related professional:** The IEP may indicate that the services of related professionals, such as speech-language experts or occupational therapies, are needed. It is important that such services be provided.

- **Opportunities for learning:** General education classroom teachers need to be supported when seeking additional training by attending conferences, seminars, or related activities.
1.11. Need and Importance of the Study

Special education needs of most students can be met effectively in mainstream schools. Successful provision for students with learning difficulties require a whole school approach in which teachers play a major role. Teacher has the responsibility for overall curricular experiences of students with learning difficulties in their classes. Co-operative working with support teachers and assistants is also required by a teacher. As already stated, the teacher should possess some specific competencies in assessment, planning and intervention programmes. A good number of researches have been conducted on different aspects of teachers (attitude of teachers, teaching success, role performance teacher competencies, etc.) in India and Abroad.


From the above studies it is clear that most of the studies concentrated on identification and providing remedial instruction. But effective remedial instruction can be planned, developed and implemented only by a competent teacher. So more number of studies are wanted to assess the existing competencies and to identify the required competencies of teachers to deal students with learning difficulties.

1.12. Title of the Problem

Competencies Required for High School Teachers to Deal Students with Learning Difficulties.

1.13. Operational Definition of the Terms Used in the Study

Competencies

Houstan (1987) stated that competencies are the requirements of a competency based teacher education, which included the knowledge, skills and values the student (the teacher trainee) must demonstrate for successful completion of the programme.

Selvam (1996) defined competence as referring to fitness to undertake efficiency to withstand and capacity to excel.
In the International Encyclopedia of Education Torsten Husen T. Neville Postlethwaite (1985) defines competence as “adequate for the purpose; suitable, sufficient, or as ‘legally qualified, admissible’ or as capable”. In a sense, it refers to adequate preparation to begin a professional career and has a direct linkage to certification requirements.

Webster’s New World College Dictionary (2000) explains competence as “condition or quality of being competent, ability, fitness”.

Weber (1972) defines competency as ‘the broad sense of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors that facilitate intellectual, social, emotional and physical growth in student’. Competencies require knowledge, skills and attitudes required to perform duties of a specific profession effectively and efficiently.

The International Encyclopedia of Education (1985) defines competence as “adequate for the purpose; suitable, sufficient, or as legally qualified, admissible or as capable”. In a sense, it refers to adequate preparation begin a professional career and has a direct linkage to certification requirements. Webster’s New World College Dictionary (2000) explains competence as condition (or) quality of being competent, ability, fitness. In this study, competencies refer to the knowledge and performance skills required for the high school teachers to deal students with learning difficulties.

**High School Teachers**

The Chambers 20th Century Dictionary (1983) describes teacher ‘as one whose profession is or whose talent is the ability to impart knowledge, practical skill or understanding’.

In this study High school teachers refers to ‘those who are working in High schools or Higher secondary school (i.e.) from VI to X standards in Government, Private and Aided schools’.
Learning Difficulties

Webster’s Dictionary (1979) states learning as ‘an acquired knowledge or skill, especially, much knowledge in special subject erudition’.

‘Learning disability’ is the common usage in American and ‘Learning difficulty’ is the normal usage in European culture. Both the terms refer to the difficulties in learning. In Indian context, Learning disabilities and Learning difficulties are synonymously used to express the difficulties that may arise due to significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities.

Kirk (1963), who coined the term ‘Learning disabilities’, defines Learning disability as retardation, disorder or delayed development in one or more of the processes of speech, language reading, writing, arithmetic or other school subjects resulting from psychological handicap caused by a possible cerebral dysfunction and / or emotional or behavioral disturbances. It is not the result of mental retardation, sensory deprivation or cultural and instructional factors.

The National Joint Committee for Learning Disabilities (1981) defines ‘Learning disabilities as a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance) or environmental influences (e.g., cultural differences, insufficient / inappropriate instruction, psychogenic factors), it is not the direct result of those conditions or influences (Hammill, Leigh, McNutt & Larsen, 1981).
These definitions of Learning disabilities explain that Learning disability is a disorder in the processes of speech, language, reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic and other school subjects. This disability is a result of psychological, neurological, emotional, behavioral and cultural abnormalities of student.

In the present study the term learning difficulties refer to the difficulties experienced by the students to Read, Write, Spell and Arithmetic difficulties, which are given under five categories in fifty statements.

1.14. Objectives of the Study

1) To develop a questionnaire to identify the required competencies for the high school teachers to deal students with learning difficulties.

2) To find out the significant differences, if any, in the required competency on various aspects (Nature of learning difficulties, Identifying the causes and characteristics of leaning difficulties, Identification and assessment of students with learning difficulties, Development and use of instructional materials, media and devices, Guidance and Counseling to the students with learning difficulties and their parents) of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to the variation in their Gender (Men / Women).

3) To find out the significant differences, if any, in the required competency on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to the variation in their Age (21-30/31-40/41-50/51 and above).

4) To find out the significant differences, if any, in the required competency on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to the variation in their Community (FC/BC/MBC/SC/ST).
5) To find out the significant differences, if any, in the required competency on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to the variation in their Education Qualification (Second Grade with B.Ed / Graduate with B.Ed / Postgraduate with B.Ed / Postgraduate with M.Ed).

6) To find out the significant differences, if any, in the required competency on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to the variation in the Training Attended (Yes / No).

7) To find out the significant differences, if any, in the required competency on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to the variation in the Type of Training Received (In service Training / APL Training / SSA Training).

8) To find out the significant differences, if any, in the required competency on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to the variation in their Years of Experience (0-5 years / 6-10 years / 11-15 years / 16 and above).

9) To find out the significant differences, if any, in the required competency on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to the variation in the Type of Schools (Government / Aided / Private).

10) To find out the significant differences, if any, in the required competency on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to the variation in the Location of Schools (Rural / Urban).
11) To find out the significant differences, if any, in the required competency on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to the variation in the Classes the Teachers Handling (6-8 standard / 9-10 standard).

12) To find out the significant differences, if any, in the required competency on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to the variation in the Subjects the Teachers Teaching (Tamil / English / Maths / Science / Social Science).

1.15. **Assumptions of the Study**

1) It is possible to develop a questionnaire to find out the required competencies of high school teachers to deal students with learning difficulties.

2) It is possible to list out the specific competencies required for high school teachers to deal students with learning difficulties.

3) The required competencies of high school teachers to deal students with learning difficulties may vary based on their personal and demographic variables.

1.16. **Hypotheses of the Study**

1) There is significant difference in the required competencies on various aspects (Nature of learning difficulties, Identifying the causes and characteristics of leaning difficulties, Identification and assessment of students with learning difficulties, Development and use of instructional materials, media and devices, Guidance and Counseling to the students with learning difficulties and their parents) of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to variation in their Gender.
2) There is significant difference in the required competencies on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to variation in their Age.

3) There is significant difference in the required competencies on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to variation in their Community.

4) There is significant difference in the required competencies on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to variation in their Educational Qualification.

5) There is significant difference in the required competencies on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to variation in their Training Attended.

6) There is significant difference in the required competencies on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to variation in their Type of Training Received.

7) There is significant difference in the required competencies on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to variation in their Years of Experience.

8) There is significant difference in the required competencies on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to variation in their Type of Schools.

9) There is significant difference in the required competencies on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to variation in their Location of Schools.

10) There is significant difference in the required competencies on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to variation in their Classes the Teachers Handling.
11) There is significant difference in the required competencies on various aspects of learning difficulties in students by the high school teachers due to variation in their Subjects the Teachers Teaching.

1.17. Scope of the Study

In most populous countries like India, one cannot just ignore a large mass of disabled people. As per the statistics, one tenth of our entire population suffers from a disabling condition of one kind or the other. Learning difficulties is high in all categories of disability. This group requires immediate attention and care to have education and lead a better life like the other people.

In India, special education is an emerging discipline and an essential part of the modern education system. It includes all aspects of education, which are necessary to successfully run the courses and training programmes for students with diverse needs. The stream of special education requires specially designed courses and a particular type of instruction to be used for teaching the students, to be adopted for a successful exercise.

Special education is not a separate system; it is an integral part of the total programme of education only. The teachers and trainees in the field of special education are supposed to be apt in normal teaching first and further require special acumen for students who are not ordinary. Identification and assessment procedures of students with learning difficulties are of paramount importance in educational system particularly at school stage. Teaching and training strategies, guidance and counseling activities should be planned based on the assessed needs of these students. In fact, the teacher plays a vital role in the identification and assessment, teaching and training and guidance and counseling activities. In this context, he/she has to perform various roles in complex situations. In other sense, the complexity of the roles to be performed by the teachers demands specific competencies to deal students with learning difficulties.
The prime focus of the study is to list out the competencies required for high school teachers to deal students with learning difficulties. The study also aimed at development of a questionnaire to identify the required competencies of high school teachers to deal students with learning difficulties. It also focuses it’s attention to find out the effects of the variables such as gender, age, community, educational qualification, training attended type of training received, years of experience, type of school they are working and location of school, class they are handling, subjects their are teaching on the required competencies of high school teachers.

1.18. Limitations of the Study

- The area of the study is limited to Salem district of Tamil Nadu State.

- The study is confined to the teachers working in high schools selected from Salem district only.

- The Questionnaire is the only tool to assess required competencies of high school teachers to deal students with learning difficulties.

- Competencies are listed in the form of Questionnaire ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ type and the required competencies for the high school teachers to deal students with learning difficulties are identified.

- Self ratings of the teachers are the only criteria used to assess and identify the required competencies.

It is very essential to understood the past research to carry out this present study. Hence, the next chapter present the studies conducted in the field of learning difficulties and teacher competencies.